

Srimad Bhagavad Gita

Chapter 11
Vishwaroopa Darshana Yogah:
Yoga of the Vision of the Universal Form

Transliterated Sanskrit Text

Free Translation

&

Brief Explanation

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Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 11 (Part-1)
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Yoga of the Vision of the Universal Form
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Preamble

:

In the previous Chapter the Lord explained His presence in all things and beings in His different manifestations indicating that the Self is the substratum for the world of multiplicities. In this Chapter He provides Arjuna with a practical demonstration to show that everything exists in the Self. It is easier to see the Self in finite objects than to cognize the entire Universe in one Reality, the Self.

The concept of space divides the individual objects from one another. If there is no space in between them all objects will come together so closely that they become one single entity. In this mass of things there will certainly be different shapes and forms of all things at one and the same place and time. This is the picture of the Universal or Cosmic Man, the vision of the world viewed from a mind wherein there is no concept of time and space.

Sri Krishna removes the concept of space from Arjuna's mind and assumes Himself the form of one universal structure to demonstrate that everything in the Universe is in Him. Having seen this form of The Lord, Arjuna re-visits his faith and understanding. In this Chapter we see Arjuna full of emotions of wonder, amazement, fear, reverence, devotion etc. In its concept and description, this Chapter is considered as one of the highest philosophical poems in all the sacred books of the world.

A major part of this Chapter is solely devoted to a description of the Cosmic Body and praises offered by Arjuna to the Lord manifested in that form; hence it has been given the title Vishwaroopa Darshana Yogah: Yoga of the Vision of the Universal Form.

The Text

On hearing the Lord declaring that the entire universe is held in a mere fraction of His being, Arjuna is desirous of seeing with his own eyes the form of the Lord that so sustains the world system. Therefore, extolling the Lord and His teachings, Arjuna requests Him to grant him a direct vision of His Cosmic Body.

arjuna uvaacha
madanugrahaaya paramam guhyamadhyaatmasamjnitam
yattwayoktam vachastena moho'yam vigato mama // 11.1 //

Arjuna said

Out of compassion towards me, You have spoken words of ultimate profundity concerning the Self and they have dispelled my delusion.

Removal of delusion or misunderstanding is not equivalent to acquiring knowledge of the Real. The illusion that things of the world exist in themselves and maintain themselves, that they live and move apart from God and hence he is responsible for his relatives being killed and that he would be committing sin etc., have disappeared from Arjuna but he has not yet experienced the Unity in diversity.

**bhavaapyayau hi bhootaanaam shrutau vistarasho mayaa
twattah kamalapatraaksha maahaatmyamapi chaa'vyayam // 11.2 //**

I have learnt from You at length, O Lotus-eyed Lord, of the origin and dissolution of beings, and also Your inexhaustible greatness.

Although Arjuna says that he has understood that The Lord is immanent in all names and forms still some doubts linger in his mind which could be removed only through practical demonstration. This verse is preparing him to demand such a proof. In this Chapter the Lord out of His sheer kindness shows His Cosmic form to Arjuna just because he asked for it.

Kamalapatraksha: Lotus-eyed, having eyes like lotus leaves. It also means knowledge of the Self. He who can be obtained by the knowledge of the Self is Kamalapatraksha.

**evametadyathaatha twamaatmaanam parameshwara
drahstumicchami te roopamaishwaram purushottama // 11.3 //**

(Now) O Supreme Lord, as You have thus described Yourself, in that way, O Supreme Purusha, I wish to see actually Your Ishwara Form.

Ishwara Form: As possessed of omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, infinite strength, infinite virtue and infinite splendor. These are the six qualities which characterize the God - Principle. Arjuna tells the Lord that he desires to see that Ishwara or Divine or Cosmic Form of His.

**manyase yadi tacchakyam mayaa drashtumiti prabho
yogeshwara tato me twam darshayaa'tmaanamavyayam // 11.4 //**

O Lord, if you think it possible for me to see it, then You please, O Lord of Yogis, reveal to me your form of Imperishable Self.

It is one thing to know that the Eternal Spirit dwells in all things and another to have the vision of it. Arjuna now wishes to see the Cosmic Form of The Lord, the visible embodiment of the Unseen Divine, how He is the 'birth and passing away of all beings'. The idea is that the abstract metaphysical truth should be given a visible reality.

Yogeshwara: Lord of Yogis - A yogi is one who is endowed with the eight psychic powers. A Yogeshwara is the Lord of such Yogis. Yoga is the identification of the

individual soul with the Self. He who bestows this realization of identity on the deserving spiritual aspirant is a Yogeswara.

THE REVELATION OF THE LORD

**sri bhagavaan uvaacha
pashya me paartha roopaani shatasho'tha sahasrashah
naanaavidhaani divyaani naanaavarnaakriteeni cha // 11.5 //**

*Sri Bhagavan said
Behold, O Partha, by hundreds and thousands, My different forms celestial, varied in colors and shapes.*

To see gold in different types of ornaments is easy because it involves mere physical perception. But to see different types of ornaments in total gold is comparatively difficult because it requires the vision of the intellect. Similarly, Sri Krishna helped Arjuna to gain the necessary insight to enable him to perceive The Lord, who is already in front of him, in the form he desired. Sri Krishna did not transform Himself in the cosmic form but only bestowed His grace on Arjuna to enable him to perceive the Divine form of The Lord and hence Sri Krishna says `Behold'. The stupendous self-revelation of Divine power is manifested to Arjuna who understands the true meaning of the cosmic process and destiny. The vision is not a myth or a legend but spiritual experience.

**pashyaadityaan vasoon rudraan ashwinau marutas thathaa
bahoonadrishtapoorvaani pashyaa'shcharyaani bhaarata // 11.6 //**

Behold the Adityas, the Vasus, the Rudras, the (two) Ashwins and also the Maruts; behold many wonders never seen before, O Bharata.

The Lord enumerates the most important and striking factors to be seen in His Cosmic Form. The various forms mentioned here were already explained in the previous Chapter except the term Ashwins. There are various interpretations about the twins, Ashwini Kumars. They are called Dawn and Dusk or Morning and Evening stars.

**ihai'kastham jagatkritsnam pashyaadya sacharaacharam
mama dehe gudaakesha yacchaanyad drashtumicchasi // 11.7 //**

Now behold today, O Gudakesa, the whole universe of the moving and the unmoving and whatever else you desire to see, all concentrated in My Body.

The entire universe comprising of both moving and static objects and beings is being shown by Sri Krishna as compressed within the frame work of His own physical structure. As explained earlier the concept of space as a divider between objects is being removed from Arjuna's mind by The Lord leaving in him the concept of `total space' which is equivalent to Sri Krishna's own physical dimensions. It is the vision of all in the One.

**na tu maam shakyase drashtum anenaiva swachakshushaa
divyam dadaami te chakshuh pashya me yogamaishwaram // 11.8 //**

But with these your own eyes you cannot see Me; I give you the divine eye; behold now My sovereign Yoga power.

It was already explained under verse 5 that to see many in the one requires right intellectual power through philosophical understanding. The Lord says that Arjuna cannot see Him in the Cosmic Form with his own fleshy eyes (*Mamsa Chakshu*) and hence gives him the divine eye (*Divya Chakshu*). Human eyes can see only the outward forms, the inner soul is perceived by the eye of the Spirit.

There is a type of knowledge that we can acquire by our own efforts, knowledge based on the perceptions by the senses and intellectual activity. Another kind of knowledge is possible when we are under the influence of grace, a direct knowledge of spiritual realities. The god-vision is a gift of God. All these indicate the unity of the cosmic manifold in the Divine nature.

The vision is not a mental construction but the disclosure of a truth from beyond the finite mind. The spontaneity and directness of the experience is highlighted here.

SANJAYA DESCRIBES THE FORM

**sanjaya uvaacha
evam uktvaa tato raajan mahaa yogeshwaro harih
darshayaamaasa paarthaaya paramam roopamaishwaram // 11.9 //**

*Sanjaya said
Having spoken thus, O King, the great Lord of yoga, Hari revealed to Partha His supreme and divine form.*

King: This verse is addressed to Dhritarashtra by Sanjaya. Hari: The one who maintains the champions of Truth by destroying the powers of falsehood. Sanjaya now starts describing the list of things that were visible within the frame work of The Lord.

**anekavaktra nayanam anekaadbhuta darshanam
anekadivyaabharanam divyaanekodyataayudham // 11.10 //**

With many faces and eyes, with many wonderful sights, with many divine ornaments, with many divine weapons uplifted (such a form He showed)

**divyamaalyaambaradharam divyagandhaanulepanam
sarvaashcharyamayam devam anantam vishwatomukham // 11.11 //**

Wearing divine garlands and apparel anointed with divine perfumes and creams the all-wonderful, resplendent, endless, with face turned everywhere.

Total cosmos is not a subject matter that is amenable for easy mental comprehension. Sanjaya therefore stumbles for words to give its description. He means to say that Arjuna looked at this Cosmic Form in all its magnificence and saw The Lord everywhere, at all times and in every thing indicating that He is beyond the three limitations of place, time and thing. The Self is everywhere as it is all pervading. It exists in the past, present and future. It dwells in all parts. It is therefore endless.

**divi sooryasahasrasya bhavedyugapadutthitaa
yadi bhaah sadrishee saa syadbhaasastasya mahaatmanah // 11.12 //**

If the radiance of a thousand suns were to burst forth at once in the sky, that would be like the splendor of that Mighty One. (The Cosmic or the Universal Form).

The splendor of the Cosmic Form excels all others; it is indeed beyond comparison.

**tatraikastham jagatkritsnam pravibhaktamanekadhaa
apashyaddevadevasya shareere paandavastadaa // 11.13 //**

There, in the body of the God of Gods, Arjuna then saw the whole Universe with its manifold divisions all gathered together in one.

In the Cosmic Form of The Lord, Arjuna perceived the entire world of multiple varieties brought together and made to rest at one and the same place. This does not mean that the Universe has shrunk into the physical structure of Sri Krishna. It means that Arjuna could intellectually comprehend the sense of oneness in the world of matter. He could see many in the one and the One in the many. The vision is a revelation of the potential divinity of all earthly life.

ARJUNA ADDRESSES THE LORD

**tatah sa vismayaavishto hrishtaromaa dhananjayah
pranamyaa shirasaa devam kritaanjalirabhaashata // 11.14 //**

Then, Dhananjaya, overcome with wonder, with his hair standing on end, bowed down his head to The Lord, joined his hands in salutation and thus addressed Him.

Sanjaya tells the blind King about the strong emotions and humility passing through Arjuna on seeing the Cosmic Form of The Lord. Arjuna was struck with wonder causing his hairs to stand on end. He bent his head low and with folded hands spoke as under.

**arjuna uvaacha
pashyaami devaamstava deva dehe
sarvaamstathaa bhootavisheshasangaan
brahmaanameesham kamalaasanastham
risheemshcha sarvaanuraagaamshcha divyaan // 11.15 //**

Arjuna said

I see all the Gods, O Lord, in Your body and hosts of various classes of beings; Lord Brahma seated on the lotus, all the sages and the celestial serpents.

These descriptions indicate not only the things of this world but also the Devas are represented in the Cosmic Form. Even the creator, Brahma, the annihilator, Siva and the sustainer, Vishnu could be seen by Arjuna. These names belong to `Samashti' (Macrocosm). The things of microcosm (Vyashti) like serpents and sages also were seen.

“The vision of God widens our horizon and takes us beyond the earthly tumults and sorrows which so easily obsess us. God's creation is not limited to this small planet, which is only an insignificant part of the cosmos. Arjuna sees the great and various companies of spirits filling the Universe”. - Dr.S.Radhakrishnan.

**anekabaahoodaravaktranetram
pashyaami twaam sarvato'nantaroopam
naantam na madhyam na punastavaadim
pashyami vishweshwara vishwaroopa // 11.16 //**

I behold you infinite in form on all sides with manifold arms, stomachs, faces and eyes ; neither your end nor your middle nor also your beginning do I see, O Lord of the Universe, O Cosmic Form.

Various organs of the body mentioned here should not be taken literally. They only indicate the Truth from which all names and forms emanate, in which they exist and into which they merge back at the end of their temporary play on the earth. These verses show the oneness that runs through mortal beings and finite things of the world making a single entity of them all.

**kireetinam gadinam chakrinam cha
tejoraashim sarvato deeptimantam
pashyaami twaam durnireekshyam samantaad
deeptaanalaarka dyutimaprameyam // 11.17 //**

I see you with your crown , mace and discus; a mass of radiance shining everywhere, very hard to look at, all around blazing like burning fire and sun and immeasurable.

Arjuna is giving more and more details of what he is seeing in that Cosmic Form. The items mentioned here are the symbolic insignia of Lord Vishnu.

The reference to radiance shining everywhere like blazing sun and fire does not mean tremendous amount of light in its physical sense but it indicates the glory of Pure Awareness. Consciousness is the light through which we see our own thoughts and emotions. It is the light which illumines for us various objects, sound etc. Hence Sri Krishna who Himself is Infinite Awareness is described as resplendent light immeasurable. Although the Universal Form is painted here in an objective manner it is only a subjective experience and is not an object of even intellect.

**twamaksharam paramam veditavyam
twamasya vishwasya param nidhaanam
twamavyayah shaashwatadharmagoptaa
sanaatanastwam prusho mato me // 11.18 //**

You are the Imperishable, the Supreme Being to be realized. You are the Supreme Support of the Universe; you are the imperishable protector of the eternal Dharma; in my opinion you are the Primal Person, Purusha.

Imperishable, Supreme Being: Arjuna states that the Supreme is Brahman and Isvara, Absolute and God. He is the eternal Truth and Supreme worthy to be known because He is the substratum from which the pluralistic world rises up, exists in and merges into. He is the sum total of experiences of every one at their physical, mental and intellectual levels. He is the changeless 'knowing principle' through which all changes are perceived.

Protector of eternal Dharma: For Hindus the protector of Dharma is The Lord Himself and not any mortal. He is the guardian of the *sattvata dharma*.

Purusha: That which dwells in the body is Purusha; the Consciousness principle is the presiding deity which rules the body and hence it is the Purusha.

**anaadimadhyaantamanantaveeryam
anantabaahum shashisooryanetram
pashyaami twaam deeptahutaashavaktram
swatejasaa vishwamidam tapantam // 11.19 //**

I see You as one without beginning, middle or end, infinite in power, of endless arms, the sun and the moon being Your eyes, the burning fire Your face, whose radiance burns up this Universe.

The Supreme Self is the one essential strength behind every thing.

Sun and Moon: sources of entire light energy, the oneness of the individual and the Cosmic Form.

Burning fire your face: power of speech and taste.

Heating the whole Universe with your radiance: The light of Consciousness not only illumines but gives warmth to life. The light here is its own light and not that of any external source.

**dyaavaaprithivyoridamantaram hi
vyaaptam twayaikena dishashcha sarvaah
drishtwaa'dbhutam roopamugram tavedam
lokatrayam pravyathitam mahaatman // 11.20 //**

The space between the earth and the heaven and all the quarters are filled by You alone; having seen this, Your wonderful and terrible form, the three worlds are trembling with fear, O Exalted One.

As the Lord is eternal and infinite He fills the whole universe with innumerable objects, animate and inanimate. The all-pervading, omnipresent Being penetrates and interpenetrates the entire creation. As the Cosmic Form is of unusual nature Arjuna says everybody is wonder-struck and trembling to look at it.

**amee hi twaam surasanghaah vishanti
kechid bheetaah praanjalayo grinanti
swasteetyuktwa maharshisiddhasanghaah
stuvanti twaam stutibhih pushkalaabhih // 11.21 //**

Verily, into You enter these hosts of Devas ; some extol You in fear with joined palms ; 'May there be peace' thus saying, bands of great Rishis and Siddhas praise You with sublime hymns.

So far Arjuna described the Cosmic Form in Its static state. Now he describes it in its active state. He says some are entering and disappearing in His Form, some are praying with fear and some more praise Him singing hymns of His glory and lost in ecstatic worship.

**rudraadityaa vasavo ye cha saadhyaa
vishwe'shvinau marutashchoshmapaashcha
gandharvayakshaasura siddhasanghaa
veekshante twaam vismitaashchaiva sarve // 11.22 //**

The Rudras, Adityas, Vasus, Sadhyas, Vishwa Devas, the two Ashwins, Maruts, Ushmapas and hosts of Gandharvas, Yakshas, Asuras and Siddhas - they are all looking at You, all quite astonished.

The terms used here were already explained in the previous Chapter. They are all of the Vedic concepts.

**roopam mahat te bahuvaktranetram
mahaabaaho bahubaahoorupaadam
bahoodaram bahudamshttraakaraalam
drishtwa lokaah pravyathitaastathaa'ham // 11.23//**

Having seen Your immeasurable form with many mouths and eyes, O Mighty-armed, with many arms, thighs and feet, with many stomachs and fearful with many tusks, the worlds are frightened and so am I.

These terms of poetic description bring about the universality and omnipresence of the Supreme. The Universal form of the Lord reveals to Arjuna the malevolent and

benevolent aspects of the creation both of which are necessary to complete the picture and understand the whole containing the pairs of opposites.

**nabhahsprisham deeptamanekavarnam
vyaattaananam deeptavishaalanetram
drishtwaa hi twaam pravyathitaantaraaatmaa
dhritim na vindaami shamam cha vishno // 11.24 //**

On seeing You (Your Form) touching the sky, shining in many colors, with mouths wide open, with large fiery eyes, I am terrified at heart and find neither courage nor peace, O Vishnu !

The vision experienced by Arjuna here is not actually a physical appearance but a wide, all pervading manifestation of the Lord signifying the omnipotence of the Supreme. Arjuna feels that His Universal Form has a definite shape and color which is so uncommon and terrifying that he has no courage to face it.

**damshttraakaraalaani cha te mukhaani
drishtwaiva kaalaanalasannibhaani
disho na jaane na labhe cha sharma
praseeda devesha jagannivaasa // 11.25 //**

When I behold your mouths striking terror with their tusks, like Time's all-consuming fire, I am disoriented and find no peace; be gracious, O Lord of the Devas, O Abode of the Universe.

Pralaya Fires: The fires which consume the worlds during the final dissolution of the universe. Time (Kala) is the consumer of all that is manifested. The tremendous experience has in it elements of astonishment, terror and rapture. In this condition of extreme wonder an individual loses his vanity and stands before the Cosmic Power with utter humility and self-surrender.

**amee cha twaam dhritaraashtrasya putraah
sarve sahaivaavanipaalasanghaih
bheeshmo dronah sootaputraastathaa'sau
sahaasmadeeyairapi yodhamukhyaih // 11.26 //**

**vakraani te twaramaanaa vishanti
damshttraakaraalaani bhayaanakaani
kechidwilagnaa dashanaanthareshu
sandhrishyante choornitairuttamaangaih // 11.27 //**

All the sons of Dhritarashtra with hosts of kings of the earth, Bhishma, Drona and Karna, along with the chief warriors on our side too - enter, hurriedly, your mouths with terrible teeth and fearful to behold. Some are found sticking in the gaps between the teeth with their heads crushed to powder.

These strange descriptions of The Lord or the Cosmic Form are to reassure Arjuna as to how the forces are entering into the inescapable mouth of time `kala' and disappear. Destruction always precedes construction. Here the power of destruction of the Supreme as well as His ugly and bitter forms is given.

The Multiplicity that has risen from the Totality, after its play upon the surface of Truth, must necessarily rush back in all hurry into the very whole from which it had risen up. Arjuna thus observes Bhishma, Karna etc entering into the mouth of the principle of destruction as represented by the Cosmic Form. This sight not only frightens Arjuna but generates in him self-confidence to face the events of future.

In the Universal Form of The Lord wherein He expresses Himself as the entire world of phenomena indicating the principle of oneness, the concepts of space and time disappear. Therefore, when the whole Universe is brought together at the same time and place Arjuna could see the past, present and the future.

**yathaa nadeenaam bahavo'mbuvegaah
samudramevaabhimukhaah dravanti
tathaa tawaamee naraloka veeraa
vishanti vaktraanyabhivijwalanti // 11.28 //**

Verily, as many torrents of rivers flow towards the ocean, so these heroes in the world of men enter your fiercely flaming mouths.

**yathaa pradeeptam jwalanam patangaa
vishanti naashaaya samriddhavegaah
tathai va naashaaya vishanti lokaas
tavaapi vaktraani samriddhavegaah // 11.29 //**

As moths hurriedly rush into a blazing fire for their own destruction, so also these creatures hurriedly rush into your mouths for destruction.

The essential oneness between the manifest (river) that has come out of the unmanifest (ocean) and the very unmanifest which is the source of all manifestation has been illustrated in this verse. It is also to be noted that the manifest loses its name and form and becomes one with the unmanifest at the end of its journey. The projection of unmanifest to the manifest-condition is the process of creation and that the manifest merging back to its own sanctuary of the unmanifest is destruction or death.

These two verses vividly illustrate how the assembled warriors rush to destruction, out of their own uncontrollable nature, with or without discrimination.

As the rivers flow towards the ocean, as the moths fly into the fire, so too all names and forms must, that too willingly, rush towards the unmanifest. If anyone realizes this, he can live without fear of death with the full understanding that life is nothing but a process of continuous change.

“These beings blinded by their own ignorance are rushing to their destruction and the Divine Controller permits it, as they are carrying out the effects of their own deeds. When we will a deed, we will its consequences also. The free activities subject us to their results. As the law of cause and consequence is an expression of the Divine mind, the Divine may be said to execute the law. While we think consecutively, Divine mind knows all as one. There is no past or future to It”. Dr.S.Radhakrishnan.

**lelihyase grasamaanah samantaal
lokaan samagraan vadanair jwaladbhih
tejobhiraapoorya jagatsamagram
bhaasastavograah pratapanti vishno // 11.30 //**

Swallowing all the worlds on every side with Your flaming mouths, You are licking (in enjoyment) Your lips. Your fierce rays, filling the whole world with radiance, are burning, O Vishnu!

The principle of destruction is never ending. Hence Arjuna exclaims 'You are swallowing the entire world and licking Your lips in enjoyment'. This verse gives us an idea about the Trinity viz. Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara. Death, birth, sustenance and again death is the continuous process of existence which is revealed in the Cosmic Form. Arjuna thus notices Its resplendency and wonders about the fiery radiance of the fierce rays of The Lord.

**aakhyaahi me ko bhavaanugraroopo
namo'stu te devavara praseeda
vijnaatumicchaami bhavantamaadyam
na hi prajaanaami tava pravrittim // 11.31 //**

Tell me who You are so fierce in form. Salutations to You, O God Supreme, have mercy. I desire to know You, the Primeval One. I know not indeed Your purpose.

The disciple seeks for deeper knowledge. Arjuna, realizing the sanctity and divinity of The Lord's power, bows down and humbly requests Him to tell him who He is. He refers to The Lord as Primeval One (Original Being).He asks Him His purpose or His mission in taking such a terrible form and presenting Himself before him exhibiting how the Kaurava forces are going in all hurry towards their destruction.

GOD AS THE JUDGE

**sri bhagavan uvaacha
kaalo'smi lokakshayakrit pravridhdho
lokaan samaahartumiha pravrittah
ritepi twaam na bhavishyanti sarve
ye'wasthitaah pratyaneekeshu yodhaah // 11.32 //**

Sri Bhagavan said

I am the mighty world-destroying Time now engaged in subduing the world. Even without you, none of the warriors arrayed in the opposite armies shall live.

The power that is behind destruction and construction is that which rules over things and governs the lives of beings. Sri Krishna declares that this power is the all destroying 'Kala'. Kala or Time is the prime mover of the Universe. If God is thought of as time, then He is perpetually creating and destroying. Time is the streaming flux which moves unceasingly. Time absorbs in its womb of oblivion all names and forms.

The Supreme Being takes up the responsibility for both creation and destruction. The doctrine that God is responsible for all that is good and Devil is responsible for all that is evil is a clumsy device. If God is responsible for mortal existence, then He is responsible for all that it includes - life and creation, anguish and death, pain and pleasure and so on. The Gita teaches us to see Reality as a whole. God, the bountiful and prodigal Creator and Preserver is also the God, the Destroyer and Devourer.

God has control over time because He is outside of it. As the force behind this, He sees farther than us, knows how all events are controlled and so tells Arjuna that causes have been at work for years and are moving towards their natural effects which we cannot prevent by anything we know of. The destruction of the enemies is decided irrevocably by acts committed by themselves long ago. There is an impersonal fate, a general cosmic necessity, the will of the Sovereign Personality, which pursues its own unrecognizable agenda. All protestations, abstentions, non-interventions of the individuals against it are of no avail before the divine will. On the contrary such complaints increase confusion.

**tasmaat twam uttishtha yasho labhaswa
jitwaa shatruon bhungkshwa raajyam samriddham
mayaiwaite nihataah poorvameva
nimittamaatram bhava savyasaachin // 11.33 //**

Therefore, stand up and win glory. Conquer your enemies and enjoy an opulent kingdom. Verily, by Me and none other they have been already slain; you be a mere instrument, O Arjuna!

Savyasaachin : Arjuna, the one who could shoot arrows with his left hand as well as his right.

**dronam cha bheeshmam cha jayadratham cha
karnam tathaa'nyaanapi yodhaveeraan
mayaa hataamstwam jahi maa vyathishthaa
yudhyaswa jetaasi rane sapatnaan // 11.34 //**

Do Slay Drona, Bhishma, Jayadratha, Karna and other great warriors as well who have already been slain by Me ; be not distressed with fear ; fight and you shall conquer your enemies in the battle.

Sri Krishna says whatever be the strength of the negative forces they have already been destroyed by the all powerful 'Time' and Arjuna has only to act as an instrument in their ruin and claim victory to himself. In fact during all actions in our lives we are merely the instruments in the hands of The Lord. The concept of self surrender for serving the world in the constant awareness of The Lord is the only way for claiming glory in our lives. The God of destiny decides and ordains all things and Arjuna is to be the instrument, the flute under the fingers of the Omnipotent One who works out the mighty evolution. Arjuna is self-deceived if he believes that he should act according to his own imperfect judgment. No individual soul can encroach on the prerogative of God. In refusing to take up arms, Arjuna is guilty of such mischievous presumption.

The doctrine of Divine Predetermination is upheld here that indicates utter helplessness and insignificance of the individual and the futility of his will and efforts. The decision is made already and Arjuna can do nothing to change it. This however does not mean that the cosmic process is a mere unveiling of a ready made scenario. It only affirms the meaning of eternity in which all moments of the whole of time, past, present and future, are contemporary to the Divine Spirit. Each moment of evolution in time has no novelty in it nor does it project any inconsistency in the Divine Eternity.

The ideas of God are worked out through human instrumentality. Nothing exists save the Lord's will. He alone is the doer and we are only the instruments. Judged from the human standards the consequences of war are abhorrent and hence none should encourage it. But once the purpose of the Almighty behind the war is revealed Arjuna acquiesces in it. What he desires or what he gains do not count any more. Behind this world of space-time, inter-penetrating it, is the creative purpose of God. We must understand that Supreme Design and be content to serve it. The consciousness of the divine agency and its constant application in all works release man from responsibility.

Every act is a symbol of something beyond itself. Sri Krishna specifically mentioned the names of the four great warriors because they were considered invincible and even then they were eliminated by the Principle of Destruction and therefore He advises Arjuna not to be afraid of incurring sin by killing them and others though they are venerable to him.

When Krishna tells Arjuna that he will conquer his enemies in the battle we have to understand it as the divine will and that Arjuna is not permitted to take credit for his victory.

Concepts and Issues

After hearing the secret of divine manifestation and its glory Arjuna says his delusion has gone and expresses his eagerness to see the Lord's Cosmic Form. As the Cosmic Form cannot be seen by the ordinary physical eyes Sri Krishna bestows Arjuna with Divine Vision to enable him to see such form.

Sanjaya who was witnessing everything happening in the battlefield describes to Dhritarashtra the Cosmic Form of the Lord as seen by Arjuna.

It is an extraordinary form with myriads of faces, ornaments and weapons. Decorated with divine garlands and garments, the wondrous cosmic form is more brilliant than a million suns. The whole world of variegated forms constitutes only a small part of his being.

Excited by wonder and joy, Arjuna starts praying to that Divinity. This beautiful hymn of 17 verses gives nice description of the Cosmic Form. All beings- divine, human and subhuman- are being seen in Him. He has several arms, stomachs and faces. He is extraordinarily brilliant. He has pervaded the whole space. All beings like gods and sages, are praising Him with folded hands. The various heroes arrayed on the battlefield are entering into Him and getting destroyed like moths in the fire. Grippled with fear and wonder, Arjuna prays to Him to reveal who He is.

The Lord replies that He is Time, the eternal destroyer. He has come to annihilate the warriors in the enemy armies. Since this task will be achieved by Him even without Arjuna's involvement, the Lord advises Arjuna to fight merely as an instrument and get victory, fame and kingdom.

The underlying concept behind this Chapter is that Brahman is the substratum behind the phenomenal universe and that every thing therein moves according to the Divine Law irrespective of what man thinks or does.

Live as the Gita Teaches You to Live

The advice is surrender to the Allmighty and to do our duty as His chosen instruments without any egoism.

Points to Ponder

1. What is the significance of the Cosmic Form?
2. Elucidate the contrast between this Chapter and the previous one.
3. What is meant by acting as an instrument?
4. What is the requirement for seeing the Cosmic Form?

Next time we will proceed from the Verse 11.35

HARIH OM

Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 11 (Part-2)
Vishwaroopa Darshana Yogah:
Yoga of the Vision of the Universal Form
T.N.Sethumadhavan

Preamble

Seeing the Lord's cosmic form Arjuna is struck with awe and wonder. He sees the entire universe in a single immeasurable form as also His destructive, all-devouring expression. Fraught with fear and overwhelmed with adoration, Arjuna surrenders completely to that colossal form. He bows; he prostrates and begs forgiveness for his lack of reverence towards Krishna in their relationship.

The vision of the Lord's cosmic form terrifies Arjuna. He pleads with Krishna to resume His original form, the form of Vishnu. Krishna assumes His gentle form. Arjuna regains his composure when Krishna explains the difficulty in gaining the state of God-realization. He points out the way to reach the Supreme Being. The Lord tells him that all spiritual practices like study of scriptures, austerities, charity, performing sacrifices etc. by themselves cannot lead one to the Supreme. They will at the most make one an introvert. Thereafter, deep meditation only is the means to become one with the Absolute.

The Text

sanjaya uvaacha
etacchrutwaa vachanam keshavasya
kritaanjalirvepamaanah kireetee
namaskritwaa bhooya evaaha krishnam
sagadgadam bheetabheetah pranamya // 11.35 //

Sanjaya said

Having heard these words of Kesava, the crowned-one (Arjuna), with joined palms, trembling, prostrating himself, again addressed Krishna, in a choked voice, bowing down, overwhelmed with fear.

Arjuna was extremely terrified on seeing the Cosmic Form and so he spoke in a choked and stammering voice. These words of Sanjaya are very significant because he thought that at this late moment (after knowing fully well the impending destruction of all in the Kaurava side) King Dhritarashtra would halt the war and call for peace to save at least his own son from being killed. But the blind king was obstinate and did not consider Sanjaya's indirect advice worthy.

ARJUNA'S HYMN OF PRAISE

arjuna uvaacha
sthaane hrishheeksha tava prakeertyaa
jagat prahrishyatyanurajyate cha

**rakshaamsi bheetaani disho dravanti
sarve namasyanti cha siddhasanghaah // 11.36 //**

O Hrishikesh! It is proper that the world delights and rejoices in your praise; rakshsas flee in fear in all directions and all the hosts of Siddhas bow to you.

In an ecstasy of adoration and anguish, Arjuna praises The Lord. He sees not only the destructive power of Time but also the spiritual presence and law governing the cosmos. While the former produces terror, the latter gives rise to a sense of peace.

**kasmaaccha te na nameran mahaatman
gareeyase brahmano'pyaadikartre
ananta devesha jagannivaasa
twamaksharam sadasattatparam yat // 11.37 //**

And why should they not bow to You, O Mighty Being, greater than all else, the Primal Cause even of Brahma, O Infinite Being, O Lord of Lords, O Abode of the Universe, You are the Imperishable, the Manifest and the Unmanifest, that which is Supreme (that which is beyond the being and non-being).

Arjuna clarifies as to why the great men of knowledge bow down before Sri Krishna by enumerating the majestic and divine qualities of The Lord.

**twamaadidevah purushah puraanas
twamasya vishwasya param nidhaanam
vettaasi vedyam cha param cha dhaama
twayaa tatam vishwamananta roopa // 11.38 //**

You are the Primal God, the Ancient Purusha, You are the Supreme refuge of this Universe, You are the Knower, the Knowable and the Supreme Goal. The Universe is pervaded by You, O Being of Infinite Forms.

Param Dhaama: Just as the rope (the substratum for the superimposed snake) pervades the snake, so also the Self, through its nature of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss absolute, pervades this entire Universe.

**vaayuryamo'gnirvarunah shashaankah
prajapatistwam prapitaamashcha
namo namaste'stu sahasrakritwah
punascha bhooyo'pi namo namaste // 11.39 //**

You are Vayu, Yama, Agni, Varuna, the Moon, Prajapati, and the Great Grandfather, Salutations! Salutations! unto You, a thousand times and again salutations, salutations unto You.

Great Grandfather: The Creator of even Brahma who is known as the Grandfather.

**namah purastaadatha prishthataste
namostu te sarvata eva sarva
anantaveeryaamitavikramastwam
sarvam samaapnoshi tato'si sarvah // 11.40 //**

Salutations to You, in front and behind; salutations to You on every side! O All! You, infinite in power and infinite in prowess, pervade all; therefore You are the All.

The Supreme dwells everywhere within, without, above, below and around. There is no place where He is not. He is the all pervading essence like space in the Universe and also the source of all potentiality, power and capability. Since nothing can exist without Him He is Pure Existence. Hence He is the All and He alone is the All. (Ocean alone is all the waves or mud alone is all the pots).

**sakheti matwaa prasabham yaduktam
he krishna he yaadava he sakheti
ajaanataa mahimaanam tavedam
mayaa pramaadaat pranayena vaapi // 11.41 //**

Whatever I have rashly said from carelessness or love, addressing You as O Krishna, O Yadava, O Friend, regarding You merely as a friend, unknowing of this fact of Your greatness....

**yacchaavahaasaartham asatkrit' si
vihaarashayyaasanabhojaneshu
eko' thavaapyachyuta tatsamaksham
tat kshaamaye twaamaham aprameyam // 11.42 //**

In whatever way I may have insulted You for the sake of fun, while at play, reposing, sitting or at meals, when alone (with You), O Achyuta or in company - that I pray to You, Immeasurable One, to forgive.

The vision of God produces a deep sense of unworthiness and sin. Arjuna, beholding the Cosmic Form of The Lord, seeks forgiveness for his past familiar conduct with Him. He says he was treating Him with casualness and intimacy not knowing His greatness and glory. He asks The Lord for forgiveness for his misconception of His powers. So long, Arjuna was thinking of Sri Krishna as a mere cowherd boy with whom he, a prince, made patronizing friendship. But when he realized His true nature, Arjuna bows down before Him in adoration and pleads for His mercy and forgiveness for whatever impropriety he might have committed either knowingly or unknowingly.

**pitaasi lokasya characharasya
twamasya poojyashcha gururgareeyaan
na twatsamostyabhyadhikah kuto'nyo
lokatraye'pyapratimaprabhaava // 11.43 //**

You are the father of this world, moving and unmoving; the object of their worship; You, the greatest Guru, for there exists none who is equal to You; for how can there be another, superior to You in the three worlds, O Being of incomparable greatness.

Our experiences in the three states of existence - waking, dream and deep sleep - are the interpretations of the same Eternal from the levels of gross, subtle and the causal bodies. The Truth that illumines these experiences is everywhere one and the same. Hence there cannot be anything superior to That.

**tasmaatpranamy pranidhaaya kaayam
prasaadaye twaamahameeshameedyam
piteva putrasya sakheva sakhyuh
priyah priyaayaarhasi deva sodhum // 11.44 //**

Therefore, bowing down, prostrating my body before you, I crave Your forgiveness, adorable Lord! As a father forgives his son, a friend his friend, a lover his beloved, even so should You forgive me, O Deva.

God as a father is a familiar conception in all religions. The Supreme is not to be regarded as a transcendent mystery but as close to us as a father to the son, a friend to the friend or as a lover to the beloved. These human relations find in God their fullest realization.

**adrishtapoorvam hrishito'smi drishtwaa
bhayena cha pravyathitam mano me
tadeva me darshaya deva roopam
praseeda devesha jagannivaasa // 11.45 //**

I am delighted having seen what was never seen before; and yet my mind is distressed with fear. Show me that previous form only, O God; have mercy, O God of Gods, O Abode of the Universe.

Eventhough Arjuna experienced immense joy on seeing the Cosmic Form of The Lord yet the sudden expansion of consciousness caused in him great fear and distress. Hence he prays to Sri Krishna to resume His usual form and give up the terrifying aspects of the transcendent and the universal.

**kireetinam gadinam chakrahastam
icchaami twaam drashtumaham tathaiva
tenaiva roopena chaturbhujena
sahasrabaaho bhava vishwamoorte // 11.46 //**

I desire to see You as before, crowned, bearing a mace, with a discus in the hand, in Your former form only, having four arms, O Thousand Armed Cosmic Being !

Arjuna describes the exact form in which he wants Sri Krishna to appear before him. The four hands of God represent the four facets of the inner instruments in Man Viz. mind, intellect, *chitta* and the ego-sense. Blue color represents the Infinite. Yellow clothes mean the earth. Thus the Infinite clothed in the finite leading the life through four inner instruments is the symbolism of Lord Vishnu. In short Arjuna wants The Lord to appear before him in a serene form with quiet attitude.

THE LORD'S GRACE AND ASSURANCE

**sri bhagavan uvaacha
mayaa prasannena tavaarjunedam
roopam param darshitamaatmayogaat
tejomayam vishwamanantamaadhyam
yanme twadanyena na drishtapoorvam // 11.47 //**

Sri Bhagavan said

O Arjuna, by My grace, through My own Yoga power, I have shown you this Supreme Form, resplendent, universal, infinite and primeval, which none but you have ever seen.

The revelation of the Lord depends upon His grace alone, besides His lordly power in the Godhead; man cannot force it by his efforts. The Lord has shown His grace on Arjuna because he is His beloved devotee.

**na vedayajnaadhyayanairna daanair
na cha kriyaabhirna tapobhirugraih
evam roopah shakya aham nriloke
drashtum twadanyena kurupraveera // 11.48 //**

Neither by the study of the Vedas and sacrifices, nor by gifts, nor by rituals, nor by severe austerities, can I be seen in this form (Universal Form) in the world of men by any one else but you, O great hero of the Kurus.

By human endeavor through knowledge, austerities, sacrifices etc., one can see a particular aspect of Godhead. But Arjuna has seen the Lord in His Universal Form, reconciling all the aspects of divinity at one and the same time and in one and the same vision.

In an indescribable oneness are revealed all the facets of the Godhead - spirit and matter, being and becoming, creation and destruction, infinite and finite, space and time, past and future. This vision is granted only to the devotee who adores the Lord with single-minded, all-consuming, and unswerving love.

**maa te vyathaa maa cha vimoodhabhaavo
drishtwaa roopam ghorameedringmamedam
vyapetabheeh preetamanaah punastwam
tadeva me roopamidam prapashya // 11.49 //**

Be not afraid nor bewildered on seeing such a terrible form of Mine as this; with your fear dispelled and with gladdened heart, now behold again this former Form of Mine.

The Lord saw Arjuna in a state of distress and terror. Therefore, He withdrew the Cosmic Form and assumed once more His usual gentle form. He consoled Arjuna and spoke to him with kindness. The microcosmic representation of Truth in the form of gentle and smiling Sri Krishna is macrocosmic Universal Form representing the essence in all forms and names.

**sanjaya uvaacha
ityarjunam vaasudevastathoktwaa
swakam roopam darshayaamaasa bhooyah
aashwaasayaamaasa cha bheetamenam
bhootwaa punah saumyavapurmahaatmaa // 11.50 //**

Sanjaya said

Having thus spoken to Arjuna, Vaasudeva again revealed to him His own form. The Exalted One (Sri Krishna) having assumed again the form of grace, comforted the terrified Arjuna.

Sanjaya confirms to Dhritarashtra that Sri Krishna came back to his usual form i.e. the very form in which He was born in the house of Vasudeva.

**arjuna uvaacha
drishtwedam maanusham roopam tava saumyam janaardana
idaaneemasmi samvritah sachetaah prakritim gatah // 11.51 //**

Arjuna said

Having seen this Your gentle human form, O Sri Krishna, now I am composed and restored to my normal nature.

Arjuna admits that when he sees the normal and gentle form of Sri Krishna he feels relieved from his inner tensions and agitations.

**sri bhagavan uvaacha
sudurdarshamidam roopam drishtwaanasi yanmama
devaaapyasya roopasya nityam darshanakaangkshinah // 11.52 //**

Sri Bhagavan said

Very hard indeed it is to see this form of Mine which you have seen. Even the Gods are ever eager to see this form.

Sri Krishna says that even the Gods are eager to see the Universal Form but their wishes do not materialize even in their dreams. Such is the marvelous vision seen by Arjuna so easily.

**naa ham vedairna tapasaa na daanena na chejyayaa
shakya evamvidho drashtum drishtavaanasi maam yathaa // 11.53 //**

Neither by the Vedas nor by austerity nor by charity nor by sacrifice can I be seen in this form as you have now seen Me.

This is a repetition of Verse-48.

**bhaktyaa twananyayaa shakyamaham evamvidho'rjuna
jnaatum drashtum cha tattvena praveshtum cha parantapa // 11.54 //**

But by the single-minded devotion, can I, of this form (Cosmic Form) be known and seen in reality and also entered into, O Arjuna.

The reason why The Lord has shown the Cosmic Form to Arjuna only and to none else is given here. Devotion is the sole means to the realization of the Cosmic Form. In unbroken devotion which seeks none but The Lord alone, nothing other than The Lord is experienced by the sense organs wherein egoism and dualism totally vanish. Such experience by means of direct and immediate perception is what is called seeing in reality. 'Entered into' means that the devotee attains final liberation in the Lord after giving up the body. Thus the fulfilled seeker becomes the very essence of the sought.

**matkarmakrinmatparamo madbhaktah sangavarjitah
nirvairah sarvabhooteshu yah sa maameti paandava // 11.55 //**

He who does all actions for Me, who looks upon Me as the Supreme Goal, who is devoted to Me, who is free from attachment, who bears enmity towards none, he comes to Me, O Pandava.

This verse is the substance of the whole teaching of the Gita. He who practices this teaching will attain supreme bliss and immortality.

He who dedicates all works to the Lord, seeking no rewards to himself, who serves Him with all his heart and soul, who regards Him as his supreme goal, who lives for Him alone, who works for Him alone, who sees Him in everything, who sees the whole world as His Cosmic Form, cherishing no feeling of hatred or enmity towards anyone, who has no attachment to worldly objects, who seeks nothing but The Lord - such a one realizes Him and becomes completely one with Him. He enjoys eternal Bliss, peace and immortality. Thus the art of right living consists of the following five ingredients viz.

1. Dedication of work to The Lord
2. Keeping The Lord as the goal
3. Devotion to The Lord
4. Freedom from all worldly attachments and
5. Absence of enmity towards anyone.

Whatever be our vacation and character, whether we are creative thinkers or contemplative poets or humble men and women with no special gifts, if we possess the one great gift of the love of God, we become God's tools, the channels of His love and purpose. When this vast world of living spirits becomes attuned to God and exists only to do His will, the purpose of life is achieved.

“The Gita does not end after the tremendous experience of the celestial vision. The great secret of the Transcendental Atman, the source of all that is and yet itself unmoved for ever is seen. The Supreme is the background for the never ending procession of finite things. Arjuna has seen this truth but he has to live in it by transmuting his whole nature into the willing acceptance of the Divine. A fleeting vision however vivid and permanent its effects may be, is not complete attainment. The search for abiding reality, the quest of final truth cannot end, in emotional satisfaction or experience”. Dr.S.Radhakrishnan.

Hence the Lord continues his advice to Arjuna in the following chapters of the Gita till Arjuna exclaims that all his delusions and confusions are cleared.

Omtatsatiti srimadbhagavadgeetaasu upanishatsu brahma vidyaayaam yogashaastre sri krishnaarjuna samvaade vishwaroopa darshanayogo naama ekaadasho'dhyaayah ||

Thus in the Upanishads of the glorious Bhagavad Gita, the science of the Eternal, the scripture of Yoga, the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, ends the eleventh discourse entitled: The Yoga of the Vision of the Universal Form

Concepts and Issues

Arjuna once again prays to The Lord praising Him and asking for forgiveness for having treated Him lightly during the moments of their intimate friendship. He then requests Him to withdraw His Cosmic Form and reappear in His usual four-armed form with the crown, mace and discus. After doing so, Sri Krishna tells him that His Cosmic Form cannot be seen by the study of the scriptures or performance of sacrifices or even austerity, but only by single-minded devotion. The Lord adds that those who are free from attachment and hatred and who dedicate all their actions to Him with unswerving faith, knowing Him to be the supreme goal surely reach Him.

Live as the Gita Teaches You to Live

This Chapter reveals that the Cosmic Form of The Lord is not perceivable by study of scriptures, performing penance, giving gifts etc. It can be known only by single-minded devotion. For this one should be free from attachment, have deep faith and engage in constant meditation.

The principles of right living laid down in this Chapter are:

1. Dedication of work to The Lord
2. Keeping The Lord as the goal

3. Devotion to The Lord
4. Freedom from all worldly attachments and
5. Absence of enmity towards anyone.

Points to Ponder

1. What are the ingredients for right living and attaining the Supreme?
2. Why The Lord continues His discourses to Arjuna even after granting the Cosmic Vision?

Next time we will proceed from Chapter 12

HARIH OM