

Arjuna said:

You are of recent origin, while the birth of Vivasvān dates back to remote past. How then am I to understand, that Thou did declare it to him, in the beginning? 4

Comment:—

'Aparam bhavato janma param janma vivasvataḥ'— Arjuna asks Lord Kṛṣṇa, that He was born in the house of Vasudeva a few years ago, while Vivasvān (the sun-god) was born earlier at the beginning of creation. So how could he believe, that He had taught this Yoga to the sun-god.

This question of Arjuna expresses his curiosity, rather than argument or blame. He wants to hear from Lord Kṛṣṇa, the secret of His Divine descent, because only He was capable of revealing this secret, to him.

'Kathametadvijāniyām tvamādaḥ proktavāniti'— Arjuna asks Lord Kṛṣṇa, how he should understand that He had taught this Yoga at the beginning of creation; because He was born later while the sun-god had been born earlier at the beginning of creation. As the Lord had recounted about several generations of the sun-god, it proves that He had imparted this knowledge, much earlier.

Link:—In response to Arjuna's question, the Lord reveals His omniscience, to manifest His Divine descent.

श्रीभगवानुवाच

बहूनि मे व्यतीतानि जन्मानि तव चार्जुन ।
तान्यहं वेद सर्वाणि न त्वं वेत्थ परन्तप ॥५॥

śrībhagavān uvāca

bahūni me vyatītāni janmāni tava cārjuna
tānyaham veda sarvāṇi na tvam vettha parantapa

The Blessed Lord said:

Many births of Mine have passed as well as of thine, O Arjuna;

I know them all, but thou knowest not, O scorcher of foes. 5

Comment:—

[In the third verse, the Lord said to Arjuna, "You are My devotee and My friend." So Arjuna put to Him a question, quite frankly and without any hesitation. Arjuna was curious to know, the secret of His Divine descent. So the Lord reveals the secret. When a devotee has curiosity to know some secret, the saints also reveal it to him.* Saint Tulasīdāsa also declares in the Rāmācaritamānasa—"Sages do not conceal a secret, when they come across, a deserving hand" (1/110/1).]

'Bahūni me vyatītāni janmāni tava cārjuna'—Lord Kṛṣṇa, says to Arjuna that both of them have passed many births. But His manifestation (which will be described in the sixth verse) is different from his birth, (which will be described in the nineteenth verse of the eighth chapter and the twenty-first and the twenty-sixth verses of the thirteenth chapter).

In the twelfth verse of the second chapter, the Lord declared, "Never was there a time when I was not, or when you or these kings were not, nor will there ever be, a time hereafter, when we all shall cease to be." It means that God and His fraction, soul—both are without beginning and eternal.

'Tānyaham veda sarvāṇi'—There are some Yogīs (ascetics), who by practising spiritual discipline possess an intuitional knowledge, and come to know of their previous births. Such Yogīs, are called 'Yuñjāna yogīs'. On the other hand, there are

* The saints remain concealed and don't reveal themselves. But they reveal themselves in the following three cases.

(i) When a devout devotee having great reverence for those saints, has curiosity to know them.

(ii) When a devout devotee's body is cast off.

(iii) When the saint goes to cast off his body.

In the second and the third cases the saints reveal themselves even to those devotees who have not so much of reverence for them, but they respect them from their heart and want to know them.

other Yogīs, who naturally know everything of the past births of all beings, without practising any spiritual discipline. The Lord is such a 'Yuktayogī' Who knows of the beings of the past, the present and the future (Gītā 7/26). Knowledge of God, knows no bounds of past, present and future and it is constantly present. The Lord in spite of pervading everywhere, everything, every person, and every circumstances etc., transcends, them all.

[The Lord's statement, "I know them all" should thrill strivers with delight, because the Lord knows them and has an eye on them, whatever they are.]

'Na tvam vettha parantapa'—A man does not possess intuitional knowledge to know of previous births as he is attached to perishable objects and persons etc. Similar, was the case with Arjuna. He did not want to fight, because his kith and kin would be killed. He declared, in the thirty-third verse of the first chapter, "Those for whose sake we desire kingdom, enjoyments and pleasures, stand here in battle, renouncing their lives and riches." It shows, that Arjuna desired kingdom, enjoyment and pleasure and so he did not know about his previous births.

Accumulation of materials, such as riches etc., for enjoyment and pleasure, is called 'parigraha'. When a person, totally renounces this tendency for accumulation, he develops an intuition, which enables him to know of previous births (Pātañjala yogadarśana 2/39).

The world, actions and objects are changing and unreal. So it naturally suffers deficiency, while the self has no such shortage, at all. But when he assumes his affinity for the world, he feels shortcoming in him and wants to make these up, by having desires. In order to satisfy those desires, he remains absorbed in different activities day and night but desires are never to be satiated. Due to desires man acts as if he is unconscious. Not to speak of the knowledge of several births, he does not even know his duty, of the present i.e., what he should do and what he is doing.

