

The White Light, The *inner* God and The All Attractive Personality

Eighteen year old Anvesh had stepped into Bangalore for getting an engineering degree and landing a good software job in the IT capital of India, thereby 'settling down in life', as his parents put it. He had set out on the same aspirations as scores of youth who enter Bangalore with ambitions like him. However much he tried to get that 'happiness' by all his pursuits it continued to elude him. Anvesh was somehow convinced thoroughly from his childhood that this 'settling down in life' is just an illusion. It was God and Spirituality which he was drawn to naturally. Now when he was stressed out in the Bangalore's fast paced life, he remembered the 'meditation guru' whose classes were held for a week when he was at school. He searched for the 'Kriya meditation centre', in Bangalore at his nearest location and visited the centre the following weekend.

As he entered the meditation centre, he saw a dark room, with a dimly lit sign of 'OM', and silence all around him. There were few people, mostly all in their late fifties and early sixties, retired or semi-retired staring at the light and sitting in pin drop silence. Intrigued by the meditation, Anvesh sat down in lotus posture (padmasana) following the others and started staring at the light as well. How much ever he tried, Anvesh couldn't possibly concentrate nor feel any joy in mind and finally after 15minutes of effort to concentrate, he gave up. Soon there was a lecture by a Swami Jyotirananda, who spoke of God as an impersonal white patch of light and when we still our mind and thoughts, and can concentrate upon light, we can realize the Brahman-impersonal Absolute Truth-GOD. Although he could not make much sense of the lecture, he was however admiring the serenity and peace of the meditation centre and the esoteric topics of 'Brahman' kept him hooked on. He started regularly visiting the 'Kriya meditation centre', and applied himself seriously to the process. But after a struggle to make his mind 'still' and try to concentrate on the 'impersonal white light Brahman', he was only ending up frustrated. But it was not just him! He could probably not see anyone who could confidently claim to have been in 'IT' (Brahman). Besides, some serious philosophical questions remained unanswered and plagued him.

After nine months of sincere efforts, Anvesh decided to move on. That was when he read this interesting piece of news in the paper, 'Kumbh mela- The Biggest gathering of Spiritualists'. Determined to find the satisfactory meaning to all his spiritual pursuits, Anvesh booked ticket to Allahabad and landed in Prayag for the Kumbh Mela. After sifting through many spiritualist centers, he finally approached one solitary unassuming personality, sitting in solitude and seemingly in meditation, barely dressed and with matted locks. After paying his obeisances, Anvesh humbly put forward his questions, "I want to see GOD, and I want to achieve ultimate success in life, Could you guide me on this path, Babaji?"

The yogi gazed intently at him and smiled, "Search not for Him outside of you, for He the Almighty is in YOU. YOU are HE and HE is YOU." Then he taught him a process of pranayama Kriya which involved concentrating the mind upon the breath and thereby bringing mind to concentrate 'within' (whatever that meant). The Yogi assured that by sincerely following this process Anvesh would eventually start seeing GOD within himself and then realize that He Himself is GOD!

Feeling contented by this new found revelation, Anvesh came back to Bangalore, and tried to follow the process diligently. Initially, Anvesh was beginning to feel a newfound joy, but he soon found that it was merely because the deep breathing made him healthy and fresh, but beyond that the spiritual realizations promised by the yogi of seeing 'HE is YOU' was a far cry. Anvesh was growing impatient after a year of this prompt practice, there was neither a 'light-impersonal realization', nor 'inner God realization'. Even some constant philosophical queries bugged him of late. If GOD Almighty is the Creator, who is behind all this creation, then how can such creator be but an impersonal light, and not a Person like Me!? But yet, I know certainly I AM NOT HIM! I can't even create a mosquito or a fly, how can I claim or ever realize that 'I am GOD within'.

His questions were soon to be answered! On a weekend holiday, his cousin visited him from his native and as he was new to Bangalore, Anvesh was forced to take him on a sight-seeing in Bangalore. After visiting other famous spots, on the Sunday evening they visited ISKCON Bangalore. After having darshan of Lord, they went down to the Lecture Hall, where they found an enclosure with a sadhu seated inside. The board in front of the enclosure was entitled, 'Perfect Questions Perfect Answers'. 'Your philosophical queries are answered here.'

Never to miss a chance to solve his question of life, Anvesh rushed in and was politely greeted by the devotee who introduced himself as Shukadev Das (SDD). After exchanging pleasantries as he took his seat, Anvesh quickly came to the point. Reproduced below is the conversation:

Anvesh: Hello Swamiji! I am Anvesh. I have a lot of questions regarding spiritual life. I have been seriously searching for answers to these questions and have visited many spiritual organizations and practiced various meditation methods, but nothing has given me complete satisfaction. Could you please give me a path for perfection?

SDD: Hare Krishna Anvesh! It is certainly Lord's mercy upon you as stated in Bhagavad Gita by Lord Krishna; He directs the living entity who is wandering in this world with sincere inquiries for perfection in life, to the perfect source. It is by His directions alone that you have come here asking these questions. I will be glad to answer all your questions from 'Bhagavad Gita As It Is' to the best of my knowledge.

Anvesh: At the first spiritual centre I visited, 'Kriya meditation centre', they said that GOD is an impersonal patch of light and by concentrating upon this one can achieve God realization. I tried this process very sincerely for nine months. Try as I did, I could not just find any happiness in this process. I was rather very doubtful of how GOD who is creator of this entire creation just be a patch of light? I could not really grasp this concept of Brahman realization, and then I decided to move on. I went on my next spiritual trip to Kumbh Mela in my midterm vacation. There I met a Yogi who said, "Search not for Him outside of you, for He the Almighty is in YOU. YOU are HE and HE is YOU." He taught me pranayama and dhyana, a process in which I had to concentrate on my breath and control mind, and thereby realize GOD within. In other words that I am GOD. However after a year of following this, I have become very skeptical of this process too. How can I, a mere mortal be that GOD, The SUPREME CREATOR of entire creation? Besides, I could see no point in trying to imagine that I am GOD! It just seems absurd to me. Could you now please solve my spiritual crisis by giving me proper understanding of GOD, myself and my relationship with Him?

SDD: I appreciate your sincere untiring efforts in seeking the Supreme Absolute Truth. You have finally come to the moot point of all self realization, Bhagavad Gita, spoken by The Supreme Lord Krishna Himself. Each of the spiritual centers you visited have not given you any wrong information or guidance, but it was rather incomplete, a partial truth only. GOD or The Supreme Absolute Truth is existing in three different levels and at all levels is truth. The Srimad Bhagavatam explains, '*brahmeti paramatmeti bhagavan iti shabdyate*' 'The Supreme Absolute Truth is realized in three different aspects namely, Brahman-impersonal realization, Paramatma- localized Supersoul, and Bhagavan- The Supreme Personality of Godhead.' Out of all the three, The Bhagavan or The Supreme Personality is the complete understanding of The Absolute Truth.

Let me give you an example to make you better understand this point.

If you happen to be on road at night driving a car, on the opposite side you sometimes see a light steadily approaching towards your car. Only a foolish man would think that it is just a light that is approaching, but an intelligent person knows that it is in fact another vehicle driving up on the opposite direction with headlights on. As the vehicle approaches closer, you can understand that it's a car, and in fact see all different parts and maybe even able to recognize the model of the vehicle. On driving further closer up, we can even see that there is a driver inside the vehicle who is actually driving the car. Therefore in fact, what was approaching you from the other direction was neither just a light, nor a vehicle but it is the light which is a part of the vehicle and the vehicle itself is driven by a person who is driving it towards you. In effect, we could therefore say that it is actually the person who was approaching you and neither the light nor the vehicle. This understanding is alone complete. Similarly, the understanding or conception of GOD or Supreme Absolute Truth as impersonal Brahman is like just seeing the headlight; and realization of GOD within our heart as Paramatma or Supersoul is like seeing the vehicle itself as it comes closer, but the ultimate realization as Bhagavan or The Supreme Personality of Godhead is complete, just as seeing the driver within the vehicle who is driving the vehicle and approaching towards you.

Srila Prabhupada further elaborates on this point as follows:

"The object of the soul's worship is realized in three aspects: Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavān. Impersonal Brahman is like the radiant effulgence of the sun; the Supersoul, or Paramātmā, is like the sun globe; and the Personality of Godhead, Bhagavān, is like the presiding deity within the sun, complemented by his elaborate entourage and

paraphernalia. Or, to cite another analogy, travelers approaching a city from a distance cannot at first distinguish its features but rather see something vaguely shining ahead of them. As they come closer, they may discern a few of the taller buildings. Then, when they are sufficiently close, they will see the city as it is—a bustling metropolis with many citizens, residences, public buildings, highways and parks. In the same way, persons inclined to impersonal meditation may at best gain some realization of the Supreme Lord's effulgence (Brahman), those who approach closer can learn to see Him as the Lord in the heart (Paramātmā), and those who come very close can know Him in His full personality (Bhagavān).”

In explaining to you of GOD as Brahman or impersonal light, the people at ‘Kriya Meditation centre’ were partially right as they were explaining to you of only the preliminary realization of God. This understanding alone however will not satisfy a seeker, and hence you went further inquiring, when you found the yogi who has directed you further to the Lord within your heart as Paramatma and urged you to meditate upon him. However even that understanding is not complete. In fact there was even a flaw in the understanding presented; realizing God within us does not mean that we are God. It is as absurd as saying that ‘Sun has entered this room’ which is a figurative truth but in fact only sunshine can enter this room. If the Sun itself were to enter this room we would be burnt without a trace. Similarly, when we say God is within our heart, it means He is localized in form and is witnessing us from within. However to assume that we have become GOD because he is in our heart is patently absurd!

Hence the complete understanding of GOD or The Supreme Absolute Truth is presented in Srimad Bhagavatam and Bhagavad Gita by Srila Vyasadeva. The Bhagavan realization or Supreme Personality Of Godhead, Krishna is the complete understanding of GOD. This is explained in Srimad Bhagavatam. In fact this is the subject matter of this book called the ‘ripened fruit of the tree of Vedic wisdom.’

I urge you to please read this small booklet ‘Beyond Birth and Death’ in which there is detailed understanding of all that I have explained.

Anvesh: Thank you very much Swamiji, the time I spent with you has solved my long standing doubts. However I still have one more doubt. Could you please answer that too?

SDD: Yes Please ask, I will try my best to present the understanding from scriptures.

Anvesh: You referred to the Supreme Absolute Truth or GOD as Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and that this understanding as complete. But does this not mean God as Krishna is a Man? How and why God should be only a male? I mean, I have heard of some people argue that God is Supreme Mother or that Mother is God! My question is, “Is God a male or female?”

SDD: Before we can understand whether God is male or female, we need to clearly understand that we ourselves are neither male nor female. We are at core spiritual beings, souls, whereas our gender refers only to our shell, our physical bodies. Our spiritual identity is eternal, our gender is transient. According to the law of last thought (karma) described in Bhagavad Gita (8.5), we attain our next life as a body as per the thought that predominates our consciousness in the last moment of this life. So a male in this life may become a female in the next life, if the person dearest to him happens to be a female and vice versa. Hence both male chauvinism and feminism are two sides of the counterfeit coin of physical misidentification. Only when we distance ourselves from our temporary physical gender will be freed from the ideological preconceptions that we inevitably dragged into discussion on the gender of GOD. So in the conventional sense of the words ‘male’ and ‘female’ where these refer to bodily gender, God is neither.

Yet God is both too - as seen in the worship of Divine Couple in the Vedic tradition. The highly inclusivistic Vedic definition of God as the source of everything, the cause of all causes, leads naturally to an egalitarian understanding of God - as both male & female. Let’s consider the divine couple Radha-krishna. Here Radha personifies the primordial cosmological feminine principle and Krishna the primordial cosmological masculine principle. Sometimes personification is taken as a misconception overlooks the Omni-dimensional all-encompassing nature of the divinity. So Radha and Krishna are not symbols denoting metaphysical principles. As divine embodiments, they are fully concrete, particularly individuals, yet they are, so to say, universal individuals, being wholly identical with the ontological principles they personify.

Krishna is compared to the sun and Radha is compared to the sunshine. Though the sunshine comes from the sun, to say that the sun is superior to or exists prior to the sunshine is incorrect - as soon as there is a sun, there is sunshine. More important, the sun has no meaning without sunshine, without heat and light. And heat and light could not exist without the sun. So the sun and sunshine co-exist, each equally important for the existence of the other. It may be said that they are simultaneously inconceivably same and different. Likewise the singular Absolute Truth manifests as the plural Radha-Krishna for the sake of loving reciprocation. One person, two personalities; inconceivable identity in diversity. "Just as there is no sun without sunshine, there is no Krishna without Radha".

The Gita explains that God is the source, the essence, and the best of everything. So, of worshipers of God, God alone is the best. Therefore, as Radha, God is the supreme worshiper, and as Krishna God is the supreme worshiped, both par excellence. Krishna excels as the supreme controller and so the traditional reference to God as masculine. Radha excels by controlling Krishna by her selfless spiritual love. Krishna is celebrated as Madan-Mohan, the mesmerizer of Cupid, who mesmerizes everyone, but Radha is glorified as Madan-Mohan-Mohini, the mesmerizer of the mesmerizer of Cupid.

Thus God as The Supreme Enjoyer/Worshiped is the Supreme Male Krishna and as the Supreme Enjoyed/Worshiper is the Supreme Female Radharani.