

Śloka 5

श्री भगवानुवाच

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

śri bhagavānuvāca

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

श्री भगवान् उवाच	<i>śri bhagavān uvāca</i>	the Lord said
बहूनि	<i>bahūni</i>	many
मे	<i>me</i>	My
व्यतीतानि	<i>vyatītāni</i>	have passed away
जन्मानि	<i>janmāni</i>	births
तव	<i>tava</i>	your
च	<i>ca</i>	and
अर्जुन	<i>arjuna</i>	O Arjuna
तानि	<i>tāni</i>	them
अहम्	<i>aham</i>	I
वेद	<i>veda</i>	know
सर्वाणि	<i>sarvāṇi</i>	all
न	<i>na</i>	not
त्वम्	<i>tvam</i>	you
वेत्थ	<i>vettha</i>	know
परंतप	<i>paraṁtapa</i>	O Paraṁtapa (Arjuna)

VERSE 5

Kṛṣṇa, the Knower of His Past

5

**The Lord said,
Many births of Mine as well as yours have passed away, O Arjuna; I know them all, but you do not know them, O Parantapa (punisher of enemies).**

Anything that is manifest by nature goes through the cycle of birth, growth, decay, and death. What is death? Death is complete forgetfulness of past identities. One who remembers past births is not really dead, because the memory from one birth to the next creates a continuity of the same life. However, when people are reborn and do not remember who they were in a past life, or how many births have passed away, then each birth is a separate experience from previous births.

Many births of Mine as well as yours have passed away; I know them all, but you do not know them - Lord Kṛṣṇa indicates that in each of His incarnations He knew that He was the Self, eternal and omniscient. He was the same before the beginning of creation, and He is the same in this present human form. In contrast Arjuna has no memory of his past lives; he was born in ignorance and he died in ignorance. Because of his own ignorance, Arjuna could not see the divine incarnation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Śloka 6

अजोऽपि सन्नव्ययात्मा भूतानामीश्वरोऽपि सन् ।
 प्रकृतिं स्वामधिष्ठायं सम्भवाम्यात्ममायया ॥ ६ ॥

*ajo'pi sannavyayātmā bhūtānāmīśvaro'pi san
 prakṛtiṁ svāmadhiṣṭhāyaṁ sambhavāmyātmamāyayā*

अजः	<i>ajah</i>	unborn
अपि	<i>api</i>	also
सन्	<i>san</i>	being
अव्ययात्मा	<i>avyayātmā</i>	of imperishable nature
भूतानाम्	<i>bhūtānām</i>	of beings
ईश्वरः	<i>īśvaraḥ</i>	the Lord
अपि	<i>api</i>	also
सन्	<i>san</i>	being
प्रकृतिम्	<i>prakṛtim</i>	nature
स्वाम्	<i>svām</i>	My own
अधिष्ठाय	<i>adhiṣṭhāya</i>	ruling
संभवामि	<i>sambhavāmi</i>	come into being
आत्ममायया	<i>ātmamāyayā</i>	by My own māyā

VERSE 6

Kṛṣṇa Reveals the Secret of His Birth

6

Though I am unborn, and of imperishable nature, and the Lord of beings, yet ruling over My own nature I manifest Myself by My own māyā (divine potency).

In this verse Lord Kṛṣṇa explains five aspects of His divine nature: 1) God was never born, 2) God is imperishable, 3) God is the Lord of all beings, 4) God is the ruler of *prakṛti* or nature, and 5) God manifests Himself by His own *māyā* or divine potency.

1) God was never born. - Anything created by nature is due to *saṁskāras* (innate tendencies). Without any previous *saṁskāras*, nothing can be created. God is ever-existing reality; there is no past or future for God and there are no *saṁskāras* of any kind in God. Therefore, unlike all other things in the universe, God is **unborn**.

2) God is **imperishable**. - Anything that is created by the three *guṇas* and five elements is perishable because the elements are always changing. God is not created by the components of *prakṛti* (nature); therefore, God cannot perish. God is universal consciousness and ever-existing reality.

3) God is **the Lord of beings**. - Everything is a manifestation of *prakṛti* (nature). However, *prakṛti* by itself is unconscious. Without the energy of *puruṣa* (pure consciousness or God), *prakṛti* cannot manifest anything. Hence, God is the ultimate Lord of all beings.

4) God is the ruler of *prakṛti* or nature. - *Prakṛti* is the energy of the three *guṇas* (qualities of nature): *sattva* or purity, *rajas* or activity, and *tamas* or inertia. The prime cause of the universe is primordial nature (*mūla prakṛti*), but it manifests under the supervision of the Lord.

5) God manifests Himself by His own *māyā* or divine potency. - This is the energy of God by which God appears in various forms and spreads His power. However, this energy is hidden behind the veils of form that it takes. God appears in the world by His own free will. God's appearance is not decided by *karma* as in the case of other *jīvas* (individual souls). In the case of an ordinary *jīva*, the cycle of birth, growth, decay, and death is decided by their *karma*. The individual soul (*jīva*) has no control over these forces.

The Lord is unborn and imperishable, never goes through any changes, is the master of *prakṛti* (nature), and appears in the world by His own divine potency (*yoga māyā*) and through His own

free will. The incarnation of God is not subject to time, space, or causality. God chooses to incarnate in the world with a form for the good of creation, by controlling nature to create favorable circumstances. God does not take birth as do others who are forced to take birth, to live, and to die according to their *karma*.

Śloka 7

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥ ७ ॥

*yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānirbhavati bhārata
abhyutthānamadharmasya tadātmānaṁ sṛjāmyaham*

यदा यदा	<i>yadā yadā</i>	whenever
हि	<i>hi</i>	surely
धर्मस्य	<i>dharmasya</i>	of righteousness
ग्लानिः	<i>glāniḥ</i>	decline
भवति	<i>bhavati</i>	is
भारत	<i>bhārata</i>	O Bhārata (Arjuna)
अभ्युत्थानम्	<i>abhyutthānam</i>	rise
अधर्मस्य	<i>adharmasya</i>	of unrighteousness
तदा	<i>tadā</i>	then
आत्मानम्	<i>ātmānam</i>	Myself
सृजामि	<i>sṛjāmi</i>	manifest
अहम्	<i>aham</i>	I

VERSES 7-8

Reason and Purpose for God to Incarnate in a Form

7

Whenever there is decline of righteousness and rise of unrighteousness, O Bhārata (Arjuna), then I manifest Myself.

The term *dharma* means “laws of existence”; it includes such things as righteousness, good conduct, and duty in the world. Whenever these laws of existence are overpowered by the evil actions of the majority of human beings, the Lord is compelled to **manifest** in order to rescue the creation from total disaster. By using the term **whenever**, Śrī Kṛṣṇa makes it clear that there is no specific time or place for God’s manifestation. The Lord will manifest in a form anytime or anywhere that the majority of the human race goes against the laws of nature.

Materialism and spirituality are opposite to each other. Egocentric desires, attachment, greed, possessiveness, anger, and fear arise when materialism takes hold of the human mind. Love, compassion, non-attachment, peace, and freedom from fear and anger arise when spirituality takes hold of the human mind.

When the mind is possessed by worldly pleasures and desire for selfish gain, a person forgets the law of being (*dharma*). This gives rise to violence and humanity descends to the animal level. Whenever materialistic people come into the majority, the spiritually minded people are persecuted and pushed out of the society; this is the **decline of righteousness and rise of unrighteousness**. In all such dark periods of history some reformer, or God incarnate, appears and revives spirituality from total devastation.

Śloka 8

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे ॥ ८ ॥

*paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām
dharmasamsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge*

परित्राणाय	<i>paritrāṇāya</i>	for the protection
साधूनाम्	<i>sādḥūnām</i>	for the good, virtuous
विनाशाय	<i>vināśāya</i>	for the destruction
च	<i>ca</i>	and
दुष्कृताम्	<i>duṣkṛtām</i>	of the wicked, evil doers
धर्म	<i>dharma</i>	righteousness
संस्थापनार्थाय	<i>samsthāpanārthāya</i>	for the firm establishment
संभवामि	<i>sambhavāmi</i>	(I) am born
युगे युगे	<i>yuge yuge</i>	in every age

8

For the protection of the virtuous, for the destruction of the evildoers, and for the establishment of righteousness, I am born in every age.

In the previous verse Śrī Kṛṣṇa explained the worldly conditions under which God incarnates in a form. In this verse Lord Kṛṣṇa explains the three purposes that God fulfills by taking a human form.

For the protection of the virtuous - Virtuous people are those who are compassionate and peaceful. They are free from egocentric desires, greed, fear, and anger, and they are devoted to God. They are the teachers of virtuous life. If they are not protected, then there will be no one to spread God's message of righteousness.

for the destruction of the evildoers - Evildoers are those wicked people who go against the laws of nature and society, who are selfish, greedy, cruel, dishonest, and vain, and who harm others by violent actions, words, and thoughts. The removal of such people is necessary to reform a society.

The term "destruction" does not necessarily mean to chastise or to kill them. It can mean to destroy their evil tendencies by reforming them. In this way the wickedness within them is removed. Such people will not be able to adjust to life in a virtuous society unless their evil tendencies are removed.

for the establishment of righteousness - The Lord establishes righteousness by teaching the rules of virtue, by explaining the harm that comes to others through wicked deeds, and by modeling a life of virtue. In any age when appropriate conditions arise, God's manifestation happens.

I am born in every age - God's manifestation is not limited by time and space. Any time that righteousness declines, God reincarnates in a physical form to reform the society.