

CHAPTER 11

THE UNIVERSAL FORM

Arjuna's request and Krsna's description of His universal form (11. 1-9)

Lord Krsna ended the previous chapter by describing how, as the Supersoul, He creates, maintains and destroys the cosmic manifestation. He concluded by saying, "what need is there for all this detailed knowledge? With a single fragment of Myself I pervade and support this entire universe."

In the Eleventh Chapter, Arjuna asks to *see* how that fragment pervades the universe.

Main theme:

One can understand the nature of the Lord's form through the Lord's mercy.

Sub Points:

- A. Arjuna does not ask to see the Universal Form for himself, but for others; to establish unequivocally the reality of Krsna's divinity.
- B. Although Arjuna has a strong desire to see the Lord, he cannot do so without the Lord enabling him. The Lord therefore bestows divine eyes (*divya-cakṣuṣa*) upon Arjuna to see the Universal Form.
- C. Krsna sets a criterion for being God. Those who claim themselves God must substantiate that claim by also showing the Universal Form (11.3).
- D. A pure devotee situated in a transcendental loving relationship with Krsna is not attracted to the Universal Form. Rather, he is attracted to the Lord's loving features (11.8).

Sanjaya's description of the Universal Form (11.9-31)

Main Theme:

The vision of the Universal Form

Sub Points:

- A. During the revelation of the Universal Form, Arjuna's intimate relationship of friendship with Krsna is overshadowed by one of wonder (11.14).
- B. An important division takes place between verse 19 and 20.
 1. In verses 10-19, Arjuna witnesses Krsna's universal form of opulence. This form is a vision of what was described in Chapter 10: how Krsna pervades the entire material manifestation.
 2. Starting with text 20, Arjuna describes his vision of the Lord's *kala-rupa* form of time. A vision of how the Lord, as time, pushes all material entities toward destruction.

"Nimitta-matram" - Become my instrument (11.32-34)

Main Theme:

As the Supersoul, Lord Krsna controls of all cosmic events according to His will. As Time, He is pushing all things towards destruction.

Sub Points:

- A. The time factor is the force that Paramatma uses to run the material world. It transforms matter according to His cosmic plan.
- B. Through the time factor Krsna has already arranged the death of all the Kurus. Arjuna need not worry about choosing to kill them or not to kill them. They will be killed by the Lord's plan regardless. Arjuna should become the instrument to execute the Lord's plan (11.32).
- C. The devotee *willfully* chooses to be controlled by Krsna; he becomes Krsna's direct instrument. The non-devotee desires independence from God, and is *indirectly* controlled by Krsna through His material energy.
- D. The ultimate plan of the Lord is to purify the consciousness of the conditioned souls within the world (11.33).
- E. Krsna is merciful to the devotees who carry out His will in the world. He gives them the credit, although He is the actual doer of the action (11.34).

Arjuna's prayers (11.35-46)

Arjuna has just witnessed the Lord in His powerful and opulent visva-rupa. In awe, he offers prayers in glorification. He appreciates how the Lord is above all other beings and is the refuge of the world. After this, Arjuna, still awestruck, remembers his previous relationship of friendship with Krsna, and begs forgiveness for his familiarity in those dealings.

Main Theme:

Lord Krsna is the Supreme Lord of all; He is simultaneously involved in an intimate relationship of love with His pure devotees.

Sub Points:

- A. The relationship between the Lord and the devotee is eternal; it cannot be forgotten (11.41-42).
 - 1. Although experiencing the wondrous, powerful Universal Form, Arjuna remembers his friendly relationship with Krsna.
- B. Although the Lord has a body and senses, His are not like those of an ordinary man. His body, mind, senses, and soul are one. They are non-different from His self (11.43).
- C. Although there are innumerable forms of the Personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna is the Original (11.45-46).
 - 1. Lord Krsna can withdraw the universal form, and manifest His four-armed feature as Narayana because He is the source of both the Universal Form and Narayana.

Only pure devotees can see Krsna's two-armed supreme form (11.47-55)

After witnessing the Universal Form, Arjuna asks Krsna to return to His original, confidential form.

Main theme:

The most intimate feature of the absolute truth is the two-armed form of Sri Krsna. This form is only known through devotional service.

Sub Points:

- A. Only devotees of the Lord can obtain vision of the Universal Form (11.47-48).
- B. One must have demigod vision (*divya-caksusa*) to see the Universal Form, but even the demigods ever seek an opportunity to see His two-armed form (11.52).
- C. The Lord's intimate feature is extremely rare (*su-durdarsam*) because He can only be seen when He reveals Himself. Material qualifications are not useful. Therefore *bhakti-yoga* is the only means to understand Krsna, because it attracts His mercy.
- D. Because of this, even the most learned philosophers cannot know Krsna if they are devoid of *bhakti*. Lord Krsna emphasizes the point by stating that He cannot be seen by penance, charity, Vedic study, or worship alone (11.53).