

THE POETRY OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

M. Ram Murty

In the Bhagavad Gita, we find:

*kavim puranam anusasitaram anor aniyam samanumared yah
sarvasya dhataram acintyarupam aditya varnam tamasah parastat.(8.9)*

He is the ancient Poet, the ruler of the universe, subtler than the subtle, the supporter of all, whose form is beyond any mental conception, who is luminous like the sun and beyond all darkness.

Thus, God is described as the ancient Poet, subtler than the subtle. In this talk, I would like to focus on theme of poetry as it applies to God and investigate how some of the sages have tried to utilise the medium of poetry to convey that which the verse declares to us is “beyond any mental conception.” This opens up a new approach to the study of the spiritual texts such as the Upanishads. I will also touch upon the poetic theme in the Bible as well as the Kathamrita, The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. This added dimension enhances our understanding and enjoyment of the world’s spiritual literature.

Not all writing can be described as poetry. There is a humorous story in the Pan-chatantra about a lazy husband who is nagged by his wife. She scolds him and says, “Why can’t you be like our neighbour? He has written a poem and the king has rewarded him with a 100 gold coins.” Unable to withstand the nagging, the husband goes for a walk and ponders over his life. Just then, in the glade, he sees a crow dipping its beak into a puddle of water. As he gazes at the crow, the following thought occurs to him. “You dip it in water again and again. O Kalia, I can read your mind.” Now “Kalia” is the Sanskrit word for “crow”. Actually it is “Kalika”, but I suppose this is poetic licence. Our hero then asks himself, “What is this? Is this poetry? Maybe it is?” He goes back to his wife, and recites his poem. “You dip it in water again and again. O Kalia, I can read your mind.” Somewhat puzzled, the wife thinks, well, this may fetch us a few gold coins. So she prods her husband to go the royal court and recite it in front of the king. After being thus encouraged, the husband marches to the court in confidence and seeks an audience with the king. The king grants it and our hero comes forward and recites his masterpiece. “You dip it in water again and again. O Kalia, I can read your mind.” The king is of course baffled by it and asks his ministers for the meaning of it. Naturally, they can’t look stupid, so they tell him surely there is a deeper meaning in it and it is for the enjoyment of the king to ponder over it. Seeing the confident smile on our hero, the king thinks that perhaps the ministers are right and that he should ponder over it. If by tomorrow, he can’t unravel its meaning, he would summon our hero “poet” and ask him to explain it. The next morning, the king awakes and is still wondering about the meaning of the poem. At that time, the royal barber Kalia was preparing to give the king a shave. Unknown to the king, the barber had been bribed to assassinate him. As the barber is preparing the razor for the shave, the king was still pondering over the poem and he recited aloud: “You dip it in water again and again.” The barber then was approaching the king, and the king shouts, “O Kalia, I can read your mind.” Just then, the barber drops his razor and confesses to the king, “O King, I am sorry, I was hired by one of your ministers to

finish you off.” The king realizes that he had just foiled an assassination attempt and our hero poet saved his life. After arresting the culprit barber and minister, he summons our hero poet, offers him a 100 gold coins and makes him the official royal poet.

I don’t think we would consider “limericks” as poetry, though they do have poetic rhythm and may even convey a serious point in a humorous way. Here is an example:

A professor once had a dream,
That he was lecturing on some mathematical themes,
When the chalk pieces broke,
He suddenly awoke.
He WAS lecturing to a class, it seems.

The mathematician a poet would be
Composing as busy as a bee
He managed the rhyme
And also the time
And some were even fun-ee.

Perhaps the last line should be “And some were even corn-ee.”

Not all writing that passes for poetry can be deemed poetry either. In his *Reminiscences*, Rabindranath Tagore elaborates, “Does one write poetry to explain something? It is a feeling within the heart that tries to find outside shape in a poem. When after listening to a poem, someone says he has not understood it, I am nonplussed. If he were to smell a flower and say the same thing, the reply would be, ‘There is nothing to understand, it is only a scent.’ If he persisted, saying, ‘*That* I know, but what does it all *mean*?’ then one either has to change the subject, or make it more abstruse by telling him that the scent is the form taken by universal joy in this particular flower. That words have meanings is just the difficulty. That is why poets have to turn and twist them in metre and rhyme, so that the meaning may be held somewhat in check and feeling allowed to express itself. The utterance of feeling does not involve the statement of some fundamental truth or a scientific fact or a useful moral precept. Like a tear or a smile, a poem is only a picture of what is taking place within.” (My *Reminiscences*, p. 156-157.)

In my view, the Upanishads are an attempt to convey to us the spiritual experience of the ancient sages. What they felt deep within, they tried to convey to us in their poetry, often terse and condensed. In this sense, they are divinely inspired and they are to be savoured rather than read.

The method of analogy is the one that is often chosen by the Upanishads to convey experience of the Supreme Self. The mind understands through analogies. For example, the *Katha Upanishad* is one of the most poetic:

As fire which is one, entering this world becomes varied in shape according to the object it burns, so also the one Supreme Self within all beings becomes varied according to whatever (it enters) and also exists outside them all. As air which is one, entering this world becomes varied in shape according to the object it enters, so also the one Self within all beings becomes varied according to whatever (it enters) and also exists outside them

all. Just as the sun, the eye of the whole world, is not defiled by the external faults seen by the eye, even so, the One within all beings is not tainted by the sorrow of the world, as He is outside the world.

To the Upanishadic sages, the wonder of wonders is you. How is it that we can walk, we can talk, we can taste, we can feel or hear or see or smell? How do we perceive thoughts? What is feeling? In fact, how is it we experience anything? What is the energy that drives our being? For these ancient sages, that force is what they refer to as God, in our modern vocabulary. Indeed, the real mystery is ourselves. These fundamental questions defy direct answers. Consciousness is mingled with every particle of our experience, that we fail to notice the obvious. To these sages, God is right here. And once they saw the manifestation here, they saw it everywhere.

In the Bhagavad gita, we find

*ascaryavat pasyati kascid enam
ascaryavad vadati tathaiva canyah
ascaryavac cainam anyah srnoti
srutva pyenam veda na cai va kascit.*

One looks upon That as a wonder; another likewise speaks of That as a wonder. Another hears of That as a marvel. But even after hearing, no one has known Him fully.

In the Kena Upanishad, we find the opening question: By whom impelled and directed does the mind alight upon its objects? By whom impelled does the life force (prana) proceed to its function? By whom impelled do men utter speech? What luminous being (deva) directs the eyes and the ears?

*Kenesitam patati presitam manah
Kena pranah prathamah praiti yuktah
Kenesitam vacam imam vadanti
Caksuh srotram ka udevo yunakti.*

Our sensory apparatus is a continuous miracle. There are more nerve cells in a single brain than there are people on this planet. In addition to the vast circulatory network of vital fluids, there is an equally vast network of nerves, largely electrical in nature. How is information carried? If we pause and reflect, how is it that these sensations are even there? How is it that we can see? How is it we can hear, or taste, or touch? These disparate sensations are then experienced in some unified way. The arrangement of the sensations conveys meaning. It also conveys feeling. This spiritual mingling of both feeling and meaning that we experience every second of our life gets largely unnoticed. But for the Upanishadic sages, it is the experience of God. That which animates our being and illumines our mind is God.

In the Bhagavad Gita, we find (in Chapter 7, verses 8 and 9)

*Raso ham apsu kaunteya
Prabha'smi sasi suryayoh
Pranavah sarva vedesu*

Sabda khe paurusum nrsu.

I am the taste in the waters, I am the light of the moon and the sun. I am the syllable Om in all the Vedas. I am the sound in the ether and manhood in men.

Punyo gandhah prithivyam ca

Tejas ca'smi vibha vasau

Jivanam sarva bhutesu

Tapas ca'smi tapas visu

I am the pure fragrance in the earth, the brightness in the fire. I am the life in all existence and discipline in the yogi.

Who is it that digests our food while we are asleep and circulates the blood through our veins and arteries? Who is it that energizes every minute cell of our physical being? Since our birth, (and even before our birth), the heart has been working constantly, non-stop, pumping energy to every part of our body and mind. Where does this energy come from? The Upanishadic sages tell us that it is divine. It is God. The same energy of God works in every being, in every plant, in every planet, in every star.

In Chapter 3, verse 24, of the Bhagavad Gita, we find:

Utsideyur ime loka

Na kuryam karma ced aham

Samkarasya ca karta syam

Upahanyam imah prajah.

If I should cease to work, these worlds would fall in ruin and I should be the creator of disordered life and destroy these people.

Thus, God is ever awake and does not sleep when we sleep. The infinite power and energy of God courses through our physical being and rejuvenates them for the morrow. The Divine Mother is literally cleaning up after us, ridding our system of any impurities and energizing us for the next day.

So the first idea of God we get from the poetry of the Upanishads is that the energy that animates our being is God. Every particle of our being is energized by God. Not only that, all our perceptions, all our thoughts, all of our emotions and much more are illumined by the light of God. This understanding leads to the immediate corollary that God is everywhere. Look at an ant. How minute it is, and yet, it is a complete entity, marvelous to the finest detail and we marvel at this handiwork. Take a flower, how beautifully symmetric and colourful it is, complete to the minutest detail. And yet, if we try to understand it, we find that we are unable to do so. Even such small things as an ant, or a flower, have become infinite. And this not only applies to whatever we see, but it also applies to us. Finite though we seem, we find that we are infinite. The mind tries to understand itself and comes back back baffled: *avanga manasa gocharam.*

Swami Vivekananda expresses this beautifully in his essay "The Open Secret." Referring to this mingling of the finite and the infinite every moment of our waking life, he writes: "Whichever way we turn in trying to understand things, if we analyse far enough,

we find that at last we come to a peculiar state of things ... We take up something - we know it is finite, but as soon as we begin to analyse it, it leads us beyond our reason, and we never find an end to all its qualities, its possibilities, its powers, its relations. It has become infinite. Take even a common flower, that is finite enough; but who is there that can say he knows all about the flower? There is no possibility of anyone's getting to the end of knowledge about that one flower. The flower has become infinite - the flower which was finite to begin with. Take a grain of sand. Analyse it. We start with the assumption that it is finite, and at last, we find that it is not, it is infinite. ... So with all our thoughts and experiences, physical and mental. We begin, we may think, on a small scale, and grasp them as little things; but very soon they elude our knowledge and plunge us into the abyss of the infinite. And the greatest and the first thing perceived is ourselves." (2.397)

These thoughts bring to our minds the famous lines of William Blake, the 18th century mystic, who wrote in his "Auguries of Innocence":

To see a world in a grain of sand and Heaven in a wild
flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand, and Eternity in an hour.

Thus everywhere is the infinite, even in the minutest of things. Take a tiny spider, in the corner of the ceiling. What course in geometry has it taken to weave its wonderful web, perfect in symmetry and design. Have you not noticed how strong it is, that even the wind cannot shake it?

In the Mundaka Upanishad this image is used to describe God. As a spider sends forth and draws in (its thread), as herbs grow on the earth, as the hair grows on the head and the body of a living person, so from the Imperishable, arises this universe. ... *tapasa ciyate brahma*, by contemplation this knowledge expands.

The poetic mind seeks to connect itself to the infinite knowing that the infinite is everywhere. All of us have these moments of inspiration, but then we forget and get back to our mundane routine, into our grids of habit and lose perspective. To me, this is refrain of the Upanishads, that we must maintain this cosmic perspective.

In the same Mundaka Upanishad, we find: "As from a blazing fire, sparks of many forms issue forth by the thousands, so also, out of the Immutable, many beings have issued forth and they return there too. ... From that Supreme Being are born life, mind, the sense organs, space, air, light, water and earth. He is the supporter of all. Fire is His head, his eyes are the sun and the moon, the regions of space are his ears, his speech is the knowledge of Brahman, air is His life, His heart is the world. Out of His feet, the world is born, and indeed, He is the self of all beings. " (2.4) The Upanishad goes on trying to give us the universal image of the Supreme Being.

Again, we find in the Gita, (13.13), :

sarvatah pani padam tat sarvatoksi siromukham sarvatah srutimalloke sarvam avrtya tisthati

With his hands and feet everywhere, with eyes, heads and faces on all sides, with ears on all sides, He dwells in the world, enveloping all. The second poetic theme of the

Upanishads is that we are all tributaries of the mighty stream of Pure Consciousness that is God.

What can express this feeling of infinity that we see everywhere we look? From the minutest atom to the infinite cosmos, it is God everywhere. In the Bhagavad Gita, (11.12), we find the beautiful verse:

*divi surya sahasrasya bhaved yuga pad utthita
yadi bhah sadrsi sa syad bhasas tasya mahatmanah*

If the light of a thousand suns were to simultaneously to rise in the sky, that might resemble the splendour of that Supreme Being.

The poetic mind tries to capture these feelings that cannot be trapped by the network of thought or the network of reason. The mesh is too wide and we fail to convey through the medium of words, these spiritual feelings. The ancient sages realised this all too well. They quickly realised that poetry is a better medium in which to capture partially this feeling, and convey it to posterity. Where would we be today if it is not for poetry of the Upanishads?

The poetic frame of mind does not classify ideas or thoughts as is often done by the scientific mind. Rather, it holds itself steadily in front of a thought or an idea. As the mind is absorbed in the thought, the flavour and fragrance of the idea disperse in the mind and this is the essence of the spiritual mood.

In his youth, Tagore writes that he would watch the rain from his window as it poured and experience a feeling that could not be put into words, but could be stored as memory. In his *Reminiscences*, he writes: “What recurs to me constantly is this. ‘The rain patters, the leaf quivers.’ ... Whenever the delight of that day comes back to me, even now, I realise why rhyme is so vital in poetry. Because of rhyme, words come to an end, and yet, end not. The utterance finishes, but not its ring; and the ear and mind go on with their game of tossing the rhyme back and forth. Thus did the rain patter and the leaves quiver in my consciousness again and again. (Reminiscences, p. 19)

That is, poetry offers us a new way of knowing, a new way of experiencing the subtle. This is the method of the Upanishads in order to give us the experience of God. God is everywhere they tell us, and learning to see It is the poetry of spiritual life.

In the Svetasvatara Upanishad, we find:

He indeed is the God who pervades all regions. He is the first born and he is within the womb. .. He has his face in all directions ... The God who is in the fire, ... who has entered the whole world, who is in plants, in the trees and all beings, ... to that God, I offer my adoration. (2.16-17)

In his famous poem, *The Prelude*, the 18th century romantic poet, William Wordsworth, writes of similar feelings:

The unfettered clouds and regions of the Heavens,
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light,

Were all like workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree, ...
The types and symbols of Eternity.

Therefore, to the contemplative mind, God is the most obvious fact of all. In fact, we are experiencing God all the time and if we can be aware of this every moment, that is the essence of spiritual life. The poetry of spiritual life is to enjoy life from this perspective.

In mathematics, fundamental questions are the driving force that expand our understanding. What is a number? It is indeed a concept, a notion, formulated by the mind to capture a few particles of understanding. Of all the numbers, zero seems to be the most profound. How is it that these do give us some glimpse of the Infinite? This is the poetry of mathematics. Plato expressed this feeling by declaring that God is a geometer since the poetry of geometry pervades this universe.

Einstein used to say that even in a subject like physics, it seems impossible to understand the most basic of things. What is A? We do not know. What is B? We do not know. But that A and B are related somehow, we can know. “This too is incomprehensible to me,” Einstein would say.

There is an amusing story about Michael Faraday when he discovered electricity. He was invited to present his findings to the King of England. The King asked him, “What is electricity?” Faraday thought, and replied, “Sir, I do not know what electricity is. But I know that someday, you will tax it!” He was right!

If mathematics takes up fundamental questions about numbers as its field of study, and if physics investigates the nature of fundamental particles, Vedanta takes up the most basic of all questions. What is life? What is thought? What is sight? What is sound? What is taste? These are basic questions and the Upanishads tell us that through this inquiry, we find the substance of life, we discover God.

For example, in the opening verses of the Kena Upanishad, we find: It is the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, the speech of speech, the breath of breath and the eye of the eye. ... That which is not expressed by speech but by which speech is expressed, that is *Brahman*. That which is not thought by the mind, but by which the mind is thought, that is *Brahman*. ... That which is not breathed by life but by which life breathes, that is *Brahman*.

Again and again, the Upanishads declare that it is mingled in every microsecond of experience. Many sages have even gone further to say that whatever we are experiencing is God, from this standpoint. There is nothing else, and thus they declare, *Sarvam khalvidam Brahman*., that everything is Brahman.

In his famous lecture entitled, “God in Everything”, Swami Vivekananda says, “I never read of any more beautiful conception of God than the following: ‘He is the Great Poet, the Ancient Poet; the whole universe is His poem, coming in verses and rhymes and rhythms, written in infinite bliss.’ When we have given up desires, then alone shall we be able to read and enjoy this universe of God. Then everything will become deified.

Nooks and corners, by-ways and shady places, which we thought dark and unholy, will be all deified. They will reveal their true nature, and we shall smile at ourselves and think that all this weeping and crying has been but child's play, and we were only standing by, watching. ”

Thus, when we open our eyes, we are seeing God's poem. When we hear, it is the sound of God. When we smell, it is the fragrance of God and the life force within, is God. “Tat tvam asi, That thou art.” The Ancient Poet has written his poem not in words but with the very substance of life. It is life itself.

Let us stand back, and reflect upon the miracle of life. We are all conscious, sentient beings. That itself is a miracle. That every microsecond of our life, we are aware of many things and these diverse sensations have a unified meaning is a miracle. How we are conscious of our thoughts, that too is a mystery. As the sun illumines the objects on the planet and we are able to see because of the sun, similarly, pure awareness shines its light, or if you like, it is the light of God, that shines upon our thoughts and emotions and we are able to perceive them. The miracle of life is you. This is the miracle and mystery right under our very nose. We can then appreciate to some extent the poetic feeling of the sage who wrote the Katha Upanishad when he described the whole process as filled with wonder.

In his beautiful lectures on Karma Yoga, Swami Vivekananda discusses the power of the word, and he writes, “Apart from the higher philosophic and religious value of the Word, we may see that sound symbols play a prominent part in the drama of human life. I am talking to you. I am not touching you; the pulsations of the air caused by my speaking go into your ear, they touch your nerves and produce effects in your minds. You cannot resist this. What can be more wonderful than this? One man calls another a fool, and at this the other stands up and clenches his fist and lands a blow on his nose. Look at the power of the word! There is a woman weeping and miserable; another woman comes along and speaks to her a few gentle words, the doubled up frame of the weeping woman becomes straightened at once, her sorrow is gone and she already begins to smile. Think of the power of words! They are a great force in higher philosophy as well as in common life. Day and night we manipulate this force without thought and without inquiry. To know the nature of this force and to use it well is also a part of karma yoga.”

Thus we see miracles all around us. The fact that we live and breathe and think itself is a miracle. It is God's gift to us. It is the experience of God, but we keep forgetting it. The idea is to keep oneself reminded of this miracle, this wondrous dimension. Poetry is a method by which we can keep this recollectedness.

Poetry is not something to be read; reading may only be a part of it. The essential thing is to feel the meaning. In the life of Sri Ramakrishna, we see the poetic experience on every page of the Kathamrita. His first experience of ecstasy was when as a lad he was walking in the open fields and he looked up at the sky and saw a beautiful, dark thundercloud. As it spread, rapidly enveloping the whole sky, a flight of snow-white cranes passed in front of it. The beauty of the contrast overwhelmed him. Later he said, that in that state, he had experienced indescribable joy.

A similar experience can be found in the life of Swami Vivekananda. He related this later in his life. One day, while travelling with his father in a bullock cart through the central region of India, Swamiji says, “What I saw and felt when going through the forest has for ever remained firmly imprinted in my memory, particularly a certain event of one day. We had to travel by the foot of the Vindhya mountains and the peaks of the ranges on both sides of the road rose very high in the sky; various kinds of trees and creepers bending under the weight of fruits and flowers produced wonderful beauty on the mountainsides. Birds of various colours, flying from tree to tree, filled the quarters with sweet notes. I saw all these and felt an extraordinary peace in my mind. The slow moving bullock cart arrived at a place where two mountain peaks, coming forward as though in love, locked themselves in an embrace over the narrow forest path. Observing carefully below the meeting points I saw that there was a very big cleft from the crest to the foot of the mountain on one side of the path; and filling that cleft, there was hanging in it an enormous honeycomb, the result of the bees labour for ages. Filled with wonder, as I was pondering over the beginning and the end of that kingdom of bees, my mind became so much absorbed in the thought of the infinite power of God ... that I completely lost my consciousness of the external world for some time. I do not remember how long I was lying in the bullock cart in that condition. When I regained normal consciousness, I found that we had crossed that place and come far away. As I was alone in the cart, no one could know anything about it.” (Life, p. 40).

Is poetry a fact or a fragrance? It seems to be more of a fragrance; an attempt by the mind to capture a feeling, an emotion. Many of our ancient sages felt and experienced God and they tried to convey this feeling through their poetic utterances in the Upanishads. In the words of the Holy Mother, “As one gets the fragrance of a flower by handling it, or as one gets the smell of sandalwood by rubbing it against a stone, in the same way one gets spiritual awakening by constantly thinking of God.”

This is the secret. This is the meaning of the poetry of spiritual life. If we can constantly be aware of God, we get spiritual awakening. But the Upanishads tell us that everywhere around us is God. Our breath is God. Our vital energies, our love, our compassion, our knowledge, all of these are God. As I have said earlier, we can never do anything, think anything, perceive anything without the agency of God. Suppose we keep ourselves constantly aware of this truth, then we get spiritual awakening. The poetry of spiritual life thus refers to enjoyment of the poetry of the universe. This poem is not written in words but in feeling, by the very substance of life itself. It has been weaved into the fabric of every experience.

In his essay entitled “The Cosmos”, Swami Vivekananda elaborates: “All the various forms of cosmic energy, such as matter, thought, force, intelligence, and so forth, are simply the manifestations of that cosmic intelligence, ... Everything that you see, feel or hear, the whole universe is His creation, or to be a little more accurate, is His projection, or to be still more accurate, is the Lord Himself. It is He who is shining as the sun and stars, He is the mother earth. He is the ocean Himself. He comes as gentle showers, He is the gentle air that we breathe in, and He it is who is working as force in the body. He is the speech that is uttered, He is the man who is talking. He is the audience that is here. He is the platform on which I stand. He is the light that enables me to see your faces. It is all

He, He Himself is both the material and the efficient cause of this universe, and He it is that gets involved in the minute cell and evolves at the other end and becomes God again. He it is that comes down and becomes the lowest atom, and slowly unfolding His nature, rejoins Himself. This is the mystery of the universe. Thou art the man. Thou art the woman. Thou art the strong man walking in the pride of youth. Thou art the old man tottering on crutches. Thou art everything. ... This is the only solution of the Cosmos that satisfies the human intellect. In one word, we are born of Him, we live in Him and unto Him we return.” (Vol. 2, Complete Works, p.211)

As students of Vedanta, it is natural to ask how we can maintain this poetic mood in our daily life. In my own experience, I have found that a careful study of ideas is a valuable technique. As the Holy Mother describes it beautifully, it is like the handling of flowers; some of that fragrance rubs off on you. So for this purpose, it is convenient to keep a notebook and record these inspiring ideas when we meet them. If I come across an interesting verse that captures my imagination, I record it there. Like a bouquet of flowers, they are always there to brighten the chambers of my mind. Suppose we come across in our daily life, something inspiring. We must pause and reflect not only on its meaning, but the sentiment and emotion which comes through it. Often, I have mused on the sages of the past; they are ever ready to inspire us, if we open our minds to the light of their knowledge.

This means we must slow down. We must learn to reflect. As Swami Sarvagatananda has so forcefully expressed this, by teaching us that we must learn the four R's. In addition to reading, writing and arithmetic, we must learn to reflect. What we see in the world today is a frenzied mad rush of people. Our work should not occupy all our waking life that we have no time to reflect, no time to meditate, and no time to enjoy the bliss of silence.

I am reminded of the business executive who was advised by his doctor to take a course on meditation so as to relieve some of the stress in his life. The doctor told him, “You have become too competitive. Your work has entered your stomach and it is creating havoc there. You must learn to relax and reflect. You must learn to meditate.” So the executive goes to the guru, and bangs on the table with his fists and demands of the guru, “You must teach me everything you know about meditation, because I want to be on the cutting edge of relaxation.”

No, meditation requires us to slow down and to enjoy life. Let us be free from stress and worry because by being stressful and worrisome, we do not solve the problem. We add to it. It is the calm and balanced attitude that we must cultivate. This universe is neither yours nor mine. Fortunately there is a God. The Supreme Being has been taking care of this universe from time immemorial and that same Being will continue to take care of it for eternity. We must remember that we are all God's children and “learn to eat the mangoes.” In the Bible, we find Jesus teaching the same thing: “Behold the lilies of the field, they neither toil nor spin. Even King Solomon in all his regal splendour is not arrayed like one of these. If God so clothes the grass of the field, will he not so much more clothe you?” How beautifully put.

As a spiritual exercise, I record into my notebooks these poetic passages that I have come across in my journey of life. We can even practice the writing of poetry. This can be done, as long as we don't expect others to appreciate our poetry. Perhaps the only one to appreciate it is the Divine Mother within.

Should one write poetry to be a poet? Let us look at the life of Sri Ramakrishna. Who else but a poet can come with the image of an ant going to a sugar hill and thinking that after taking one grain of sugar, it would take home the whole hill tomorrow? (What a powerful punch on the arrogance of science?) Or take the image of the salt doll going to measure the depth of the ocean? So also, we will all merge into the infinite. It reminds us of the passage from the Bible, "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world." (Matthew 13) If we consider the pages of the Kathamrita, we see how true this passage is. Sri Ramakrishna has simplified the whole thing so that we can all understand it.

In his book, "God is Everything," Swami Sarvagatananda expounds on the Isa Upanishad and writes: "The word *kavi* is taken to mean "all-seeing". It can also be understood as poet. A poet is one who is able to perceive the truth beneath the surface and give it creative expression. In this sense, scientists and artists are poets ... We also see this poetic touch throughout the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. Who else but a poet could conceive of a salt doll going to measure the depth of the ocean, or the ambitious plans of an ant while carrying a grain of sugar. As the powers of observation and understanding become refined, one's awareness of one's place in existence grows. The universe and its creator begin to be revealed through poetry. " (p.50)

In the Kathamrita, every page is soaked in the sweet syrup of poetry, through song and music. It is indeed spiritually uplifting to read the Kathamrita with this poetic feeling and savour the images, the music and the holy company of Sri Ramakrishna.

May we all pause and reflect. May we all gain that poetic insight and enjoy the beauty of God's poem, coming to us in waves of bliss from every side. May we all thus grow spiritually. This is my prayer.