

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 8: Akśara-Brahma-Yoga

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/6Oundg0vaX4>

Becoming Yoga-Yuktaḥ: The Essentials For The Path of Mokṣa, the Akśara-Brahma

॥श्री॥

The Eighth chapter of Bhagavad-Gītā is the **Akśara-Brahma-Yoga: The Yoga of the indestructible Brahman.**

It is indeed HIS Divine blessings that we begin the new calendar year with HIS teachings on an extremely complex and esoteric topic of Akśara-Brahma-Yoga. This chapter allows a glimpse into several of the concepts and terms used in the Upanishads.

We begin this enlightening session on the auspicious occasion of Makarasaṅkrānti with the traditional lamp lighting ceremony. May this light illuminate our life with knowledge, just as the Sun illuminates the darkest night. We offer our prayers to Yogeśvara and our Gurus, whose blessings have ensured that we have come in contact of the epitome of our Scriptures and the source of all knowledge, the Bhagavadgītā. Learning this ancient wisdom is our biggest of fortune as it is the gateway towards mokṣa, that frees us from all bondage.

Before we begin with today's discourse, let us get a brief insight into the significance of the occasion of Makarasaṅkrānti.

Makarasaṅkrānti: The Pan Indian Festival.

We have several festivals in India; however, Makarasaṅkrānti is one of those that are celebrated across India. We call it by various names based on the different regions e.g., Makarasaṅkrānti in Maharashtra, saṅkrānti in Karnataka, Pongal in Tamil Nadu, Uttarayana in Gujrat, Magh Bihu in Assam, Lohri in Punjab, etc. Thus, it is special that one finds its presence throughout the country, across regions.

The Hindu Panchang (calendar) is lunar based, while the Gregorian calendar is solar based. Hence, one finds many of our festivals having different dates in different years as per the Gregorian calendar. Makarasaṅkrānti is a significant day as the Sun enters Makar Rashi (i.e. Capricorn zodiac). Sometimes it coincides with day the Sun begins its ascent northwards (Uttar Ayana). Since, this date is calculated as per the movement of the Sun, one finds that the date is fixed on the Gregorian calendar at least for 72 years.

We have in our lifetime, seen the date shift from 14th of January to 15th; this change is to accommodate the leap years. To give an example, Swami Vivekananda ji was born on 12th of January 1863. There was Makarasaṅkrānti that day. Every 72 years, there is an increase for one day in the Gregorian calendar. Also, all of our festivals do not give an exact time but they begin at a specific time at a specific place. Such is the complexity that, any festival begins and ends at a different time every 100 km. Therefore, each festival is marked differently every 100 km.

There are 2 activities that are given a very high importance for this occasion; **Donation and Kalpavaas.**

Donations in the form of food, wealth, etc., are given; The shastras give the details of what? When? How? and Whom of this Dānam..

Example: Students are given books, the Brāhmaṇa is given Panchang, the raw material for cooking like oil etc., or even food grains that could last for months are given. Hence, the festival is also called khichadi in some places.

There is also an importance given to bathe in the Ganga on the banks of Prayag, if one cannot go there then they can take a dip in their nearby rivers, sea or waterbodies. Prayag is also famous for another important activity during this time, *Kalpa Vaas*.

What is Kalpavaas?

To reside on the banks of Sangam. Starting from the eleventh day of Paush Maha (month) to the 12th day of Magh Maha (month). However, some Kalpvaasi's start their kalpvaas from the Makarasaṅkrānti. According to the Mahābhārata, performing kalpvaas for a month is equivalent to offering prayers for a 100 years without consuming grain. By observing kalpvaas an individual can attain mental, physical and spiritual growth. Furthermore, it is said that an individual can have his wishes granted and get freedom from life ahead i.e, Mokṣa!!

In the Puranas it is even advised to the Devatās to take birth as ordinary humans just to do Kalpvaas in Prayagraj. In the epic Mahābhārata, Muni Markandeya advises the righteous Yudhiṣṭhira that *Kalpvaas* at Prayag not only rids you of all “*paap*” but ensures higher planes for the Jīvātman.

According to the shastras, the minimum period of kalpvaas is: one night, three nights, three months, six months, six years, twelve years, or a lifetime. However, there are several dos and don'ts that one has to follow to get any benefits of this.

The traditions of Kalpvaas and its importance goes back eons; One can find its mention in the **Ramcharitmanas** as part of the conversation between Maharishi Yājñavalkya and Maharishi Bharadvāja in the **Baal Kaand**...

भरद्वाज मुनि बसहिं प्रयागा। तिन्हि राम पद अति अनुरागा ॥

तापस सम दम दया निधाना। परमारथ पथ परम सुजाना ॥

"The sage Bharadvāja lives in Prayag; he is extremely devoted to the feet of Sri Rām. A great ascetic and an embodiment of self-restraint, composure of mind and compassion, he is highly advanced in the quest for the Highest attainment towards the Divine."

माघ मकरगत रबि जब होई। तीरथपतिहिं आव सब कोई ॥

देव दनुज किंनर नर श्रेणीं। सादर मज्जहिं सकल त्रिबेनीं ॥2 ॥

In the month of Magha, when the sun enters the sign of Capricorn, everyone visits the chief of holy places, Prayag. Troops of Devatās and Danavas (lower beings), Kinnaras (higher beings) and men, all devoutly bathe in the triple stream of the Ganga, Yamuna and Sarasvati.

पूजहिं माधव पद जलजाता। परसि अखय बटु हरषहिं गाता ॥

भरद्वाज आश्रम अति पावन। परम रम्य मुनिबर मन भावन ॥3 ॥

They worship the lotus feet of Bhagavān Veni Mādhava (the presiding deity of Prayaag); and the touch of the immortal banyan tree sends a thrill into their limbs. The hermitage of Bharadvāja is a most sacred spot, exceedingly charming and attractive even to great hermits and the haunt of sages and seers, who go bathing at that most sacred of places.

तहाँ होइ मुनि रिषय समाजा। जाहिं जे मज्जन तीरथराजा ॥

मज्जहिं प्रात समेत उछाहा। कहहिं परसपर हरि गुन गाहा ॥4 ॥

These Sages and Rishis who come to Prayag to take the dip in the Sangama (confluence of the 3 rivers) congregate in Bharadvāja's Ashram. At daybreak they all perform their ablutions with fervour and then converse together on the virtues of Sri Hari.

ब्रह्म निरूपन धरम बिधि बरनहिं तत्त्व बिभाग।

ककहिं भगति भगवंत कै संजुत ग्यान बिराग ॥44 ॥

They discuss the nature of Brahma (the Supreme Eternal), the precepts of Dharma and the classification of fundamental entities and explain and talk of the Devotion of Bhagavān which filled Jñāna, wisdom and Vairāgya (dispassion or renunciation).

एहि प्रकार भरि माघ नहाहीं। पुनि सब निज निज आश्रम जाहीं ॥

प्रति संबत अति होइ अनंदा। मकर मज्जि गवनहिं मुनिबृंदा ॥1 ॥

In this way they bathe for the whole month of Magha and then return each to his hermitage. There is a great rejoicing every year and having performed their ablutions while the sun stays in Capricorn the hosts of sages disperse.

Rishi Yājñavalkya had also once come at such a gathering, where Maharishi Bharadvāja had stopped him to gain some knowledge...

This description reflects an ancient age that has long past; yet, reminds us of the civilizational memories and the sanctity of tradition. May we all gain the opportunity to perform such an auspicious and beneficial practice in our lifetime.

Let us now move our attention to today's discourse, the **Akśara-Brahma-Yoga**. In the previous session, we understood that this Samsāra is a **Duḥkhālaya**, an abode of sorrow; the aim of the Jīvās is to be free from this cycle of birth and death. In order to achieve this, Bhagavān had declared that those Yogīs, who through constant contemplation of HIM throughout their life with practice (**abhyāsayoga**) and leave their mortal bodies with HIM in their mind; attain HIM.

Even those Jñāna-yogis, who experience HIM in the formless aspect, and concentrate on the primordial sound of Om; they too attain mokṣa. Bhagavān explained that to achieve this, one required his mind and intellect to be fixated on HIM without deviation; **Ananya-chetāḥ**, who wants nothing other than HIM, who has a steady devotion towards HIM; where the mind is not deviating towards any other thing (**nānyagāminā**), made steadfast by the method of habitual meditation (**yuktena**) through practice (**abhyāsayoga**), of mind and intellect (**cetasā**) and constantly contemplating (**anucintayan**) on the Supreme Puruṣa, the Resplendent (**divyaṃ**). This helps one attain the state of **Dhyāna**.

Yogeśvara also affirmed that those Yogīs who, at the time of death (**prayāṇa-kāle**), fully fix (**āveśya**) their life-energy (**prāṇam**) between their eyebrows, on the strength of yoga and concentrate upon HIM with undeviating attention and full devotion, certainly attain HIM...

One may call this state with different names; e.g., Kaivalya, Mokṣa, Param Gati, Gowloka, Vaikuntha, etc., but the nature of this state is that,

- A.** They remain in the state of Supreme Eternal blissfulness
- B.** They do not have to come back to this Saṃsāra i.e., take rebirth.

There are 14 different planes of existence (the earth is the Bhu-Loka, which is the 7th). Bhagavān explained that in the normal scenario, depending on one's Karma one either reaches the higher planes like the Svarga-loka or if they have bad Karmas, then they go to the lower planes.

However, all these lokas, Brahma-loka, or Satya-loka, down to the lowest plane, are temporary. All planes in this Saṃsāra, up to the plane of Brahmā ji are places of repeated birth and death. This means that though the planes above the three common one's (Bhūr, Bhuvaḥ and Svarga), that is the Mahar-loka, Jana, Tapa and Satya appear to be free from death and contain all the requirements for one's maintenance and are free from fear; they still are temporary. This is because even Brahmā ji, the creator of this Universe, has a limited life span of 100 years! Thus, once the present Brahmā ji completes his life span, his loka too undergoes dissolution, meaning the jīvas there have to again come back to this cycle.

But how is this possible? Brahmā ji has always existed. This confusion arises because we think of time in the human scale. Time is relative; hence, there is a difference between our time and their time. Just as an ant undergoes her entire lifetime in our 7 days, time moves differently for the higher beings. In this section of the chapter 8, Bhagavān elaborated more on the scale of time and sheds some light on the afterlife.

8.17

sahasrayugaparyantam, aharyadbrahmaṇo viduḥ, rātriṃ(m) yugasahasrāntāṃ(n), te'horātravido janāḥ. 8.17

Those Yogis, who know from realization Brahma's day as covering a thousand Mahayugas, and so his night as extending to another thousand Mahayugas, know the reality about Time.

To understand the gravitas and appreciate the vast scale of time mentioned in this verse, one has to first understand the timescale mentioned here.

Time, is one of most important of the dimensions that helps us understand the nature of our existence. Understand that the measure of time is always relative. We experience the passage of time

due to the changes around us. Currently, we use the metric system for our calculations. However, our ancestors had a different scale for measurements; in fact, the presence of terms to express the subtlest time difference, to the terms expressing large numbers at this scale, is not seen anywhere else (not even our current system).

The Hindu timescales are considered to be the oldest time measurement systems. Our scriptures give us a wealth of information about the different methods and techniques used in ancient India for time measurements. This measurement system is not only complete, but also very precise and accurate. It was excellent measurement system as it covered a range, from micro seconds to trillions of years including the cycles of the universe.

Let us take a look at these measurements,

- 1 **permanu** = 26.3 μ s
- 2 **permanu** = 1 anu = 52.67 μ s
- 3 **anu** = 1 trisrenu = 158 μ s
- 3 **trisrenu** = 1 truti = 474 μ s
- 100 **truti** = 1 vedh = 47.4 ms
- 3 **vedh** = 1 lava = 0.1s
- 3 **lava** = 1 nimish = 0.43s (one nimish is considered to be the time taken for the blinking of an eye)
- 3 **nimesh** = 1 kshan = 1.28 s
- 5 **kshan** = 1 kashta = 6.4s
- 15 **kashta** = 1 laghu = 1.6min.
- 15 **laghu** = 1 nadika (danda) = 1 ghadi = 60 Pal= 24 minute.
- 2 **nadika** = 1 mahurat=2 ghadi =30 kala = 48 min.
- 30 **mahurat** = 1 day and 1 night = 24hrs = 24 hora
- 7 **day and seven night** = 1 saptah
- 2 **saptah** = 1 paksh
- 2 **paksh**= 1 lunar month (krishna paksha and shukla paksha)
- 2 **month** = 1 ritu (we have 6 such *ritus*, seasons)
- 3 **ritu** = 1 ayan= 6 months
- 2 **ayan** = 1 human year = 12 month = 365 days = 1 varsh (1 Uttarayan and 1 Dakshinayan)
- 100 **varsh** = 1 shatabdi = 1 century
- 10 **shatabdi** = 1 sahasrabda
- 432 **sahasrabda**= 1 yug (kaliyug)

Next we see the time scale of the Yugas.

Mahayuga (Chaturyuga): The Yuga Cycles

There are 4 epochs or yugas, namely, Krita Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvapara Yuga, and Kali Yuga. All these four yugas together is called a chatur yuga, which means "four epochs" or also termed Maha Yuga that means "great epochs". Together a chatur yuga constitutes 4,320,000 human years and the lengths of each chatur yuga follow a ratio of **(4:3:2:1)**.

- 1 **kaliyuga** = 4, 32,000 human years
- 2 **kali yugas** = 1 dwapar yuga= 864000 human years
- 3 **kali yugas** = 1 treta yuga =1296000 human years
- 4 **kali yugas** = 1 satya yuga = 728000 human years
- 10 **kaliyugas** = 1 mahayuga= 4,320, 000, human years
- 1000 **MahaYuga** = 1 kalpa = 4,320, 000,000 human years = 1 day of Brahmā

Time scale of the Devas and the Pitris

Pitris:

The lifespan of the Pitris (forefathers) lasts for 100 of their years.

- **24 hours (1 day & night) of Pitris** = 1 solar month (masa; Moon's two 15-day fortnights: bright and dark)
- **30 days (1 month) of Pitris** = 30 solar months (2.5 solar years)
- **12 months (1 year) of Pitris** = 30 solar years (1 month of Devas)
- **100 years (lifespan) of Pitris** = 3,000 solar years

Devatās:

The lifespan of the Devas lasts for 100 of their years

- **1 day of the Devas:** 1 human year
- **1 month of the Devas:** 30 days of the Devas
- **1 year of the Devas (1 divine year):** 12 months of the Devas
- **The lifespan of the Devas is 100 years of the Devas** (= 36,000 human years).
- **24 hours (1 day & night) of Devas** = 1 solar year (Sun's two 180-day motions: northern (Uttarayana) and southern (Dakshinayana))
- **30 days (1 month) of Devas** = 30 solar years (1 year of Pitris)
- **12 months (1 year) of Devas** = 360 solar years
- **100 years (lifespan) of Devas** = 36,000 solar years

Kalpa — A Cosmic Day of Brahmā

In this cyclic process of time, 1000 chaturyuga or Mahayugas period is called a Kalpa, and this period of time is equal to a daytime for the Brahmā ji, the creator of the universe. A thousand and a thousand (i.e. two thousand) chaturyugas are said to be one day and night of Brahmā ji (the creator).

- **1 kalpa:** 1000 chatur yuga (mahayuga)
- **1 day and 1 night of Brahmā ji:** 2 kalpas

At the beginning of the Kalpa, the creation begins; This is the day of Brahmā ji. There is dissolution in the night of Brahmā ji.

Manvantara

The cosmic days (1 day of Brahmā ji) includes 14 Period or Manvantaras to 306 720 000 solar years. A Manu rules one such period. We live in the **7th Manvantara**. In the current era, first 6 of the Manvantaras have gone by while 7 are yet to come.

The lifespan of the Manus (progenitors of mankind) lasts for 100 of their years. Each Manu reigns over a period called a Manvantara, each lasting for 71 Chatur-Yugas (306.72 million years). A total of 14 Manus reign successively in one Kalpa (day of Brahma). Preceding the first and following each Manvantara has a Sandhyā (connection period), each lasting the duration of Satya-Yuga (1.728 million years). During each Manvantara Sandhyā (a.k.a. Manvantara-sandhi), Earth (Bhu-loka) is submerged in water; thus the world is partially destroyed and recreated.

As stated before, a Manvantara lasts for 306.72 million years, where the current (ruled by **Vaivasvata** Manu) is the **7th of 14** and their life span is 100 years.

- **24 hours (1 day & night) of Manu** = 8,520 solar years
- **30 days (1 month) of Manu** = 255,600 solar years

- **12 months (1 year) of Manu** = 3,067,200 solar years
- **100 years (lifespan) of Manu** = 306,720,000 solar years (71 chatur-yugas)

A Manvantara is one of the 14 sub-units of a cosmic creation and lasts for 710 days or 306 720 000 solar years. A Manvantara is divided into a total of 71 Mahayugas ("big Yugas"). Currently, we live the 28th Mahayuga; Mahayuga of the 7th Manvantara. The Mahayugas are close to each other and change seamlessly, without having a period of twilight to be separated.

Maha Kalpa — Brahmā' ji's Lifespan

Brahmā ji (the creator) lives for 100 years of 360 of his days and at the end, he is said to dissolve, along with his entire Creation, into the Paramātmā. The scriptures put Brahmā ji's age at 100 years in his unique time scale.

- **12 hours (1 day proper: Kalpa) of Brahma ji** = 4.32 billion solar years (1,000 chatur-yugas; 14 Manvantaras + 15 Manvantara-Sandhyā).
- **24 hours (1 day & night: kalpa + pralaya) of Brahma ji** = 8.64 billion solar years.
- **30 days (1 month) of Brahma ji** = 259.2 billion solar years.
- **12 months (1 year) of Brahma ji** = 3.1104 trillion solar years.
- **50 years (parārdha) of Brahma ji** = 155.52 trillion solar years.
- **100 years (lifespan: 2 parārdha) of Brahma ji** = 311.04 trillion solar years

It is said that 1 day of Brahmā ji is equivalent to 1 nimish of Bhagavān Shiva and Bhagavān Viṣṇu (In there current manifest aspect).

The lifespan of Brahmā ji (creator) lasts for 100 of his years. His 12-hour day or kalpa (a.k.a. day of Brahmā ji) is followed by a 12-hour night or pralaya (a.k.a. night of Brahmā ji) of equal length, each lasting for 4.32 billion years.

A Kalpa lasts for 1,000 chatur-yugas and has 14 Manvantaras and 15 Manvantara-Sandhyā occurring in it. At the start of Brahmā ji's days, he is re-born and creates the planets and the first living entities. At the end of his days, he and his creations are unmanifest (partial dissolution).

His 100-year life (311.04 trillion years) is called a Mahā-Kalpa, which is followed by a mahā-pralaya (full dissolution) of equal length, where the bases of the universe, prakriti, is manifest at the start and unmanifest at the end of a Mahā-Kalpa. His 100-year life is divided into two 50-year periods, each called a parārdha. In 100 such 360-day years (Mahā-Kalpa), there are a total of 36,000 full days: 36,000 Kalpa (days proper) and 36,000 Pralaya (nights).

Brahmā ji's life span is equal to 311,040,000,000,000 human years. This period is named as Maha Kalpa. A universe lasts only for one Mahā-Kalpa period. At the end of it the universe is completely destroyed together with the creator Brahmā ji and a new universe would be created with a new Brahmā ji. This cycle goes on endlessly. The Vedic universe passes through repetitive cycles of creation and destruction. During the annihilation of the universe, energy is conserved, to manifest again in the next creation.

Pralaya

The fourteen planes of existence and their planetary systems undergo repeated cycles of **sṛiṣṭi**, **sthiti**, and **pralaya** (creation, preservation, and dissolution).

This destruction is of four types:

- Nitya Pralaya
- Naimittika Pralaya
- Maha Pralaya/ Prākṛta Pralaya
- Ātyantika-Pralaya

Nitya Pralaya is the sleep of Brahmā ji or by an extension thereof, Death. Just as our world ceases to exist for the time we sleep; similarly, for Brahmā ji, when he sleeps his created world (where we exist) too ceases to exist for that time.

Naimittika Pralaya is the end of a single day of Brahmā ji, when the three worlds (Bhuh:, Bhuvaha: and Svarga) disintegrate. All planetary systems, up to the Mahar Lok, are destroyed at the end of a Kalpa; that is Brahmā ji's day. This partial dissolution is called naimittika pralaya.

Maha Pralaya/ Prākṛta is the great deluge at the end of the age of one Brahmā ji which consists of 100 Brahmā Years (365 Times 2,000 Chatur-yugas).

Ātyantika refers to “liberation of the Jīvātman”: Ātyantika-Pralaya is the result of the knowledge of the Puruṣottama, that is to say when Yogīs lose themselves in the Paramātmā, then occurs the Ātyantika-Pralaya.

The next 4 verses explain this Ātyantika state in a greater detail.

8.18, 8.19, 8.20, 8.21

**avyaktādvyaḥ(s) sarvāḥ(ph), prabhavantyahaṅgame,
rātryāgame praliyante, tatraivāvyaktasañjñake. 8.18
bhūtagrāmaḥ(s) sa evāyaṁ(m), bhūtvā bhūtvā praliyate,
rātryāgame'vaśaḥ(ph) pārtha, prabhavatyahaṅgame. 8.19
parastasmāttu bhāvo'nyo-'vyakto'vyaktātsanātanāḥ,
yaḥ(s) sa sarveṣu bhūteṣu, naśyatsu na vinaśyati. 8.20
avyakto'kṣara ityuktaḥ(s), tamāhuḥ(ph) paramāṁ(ñ) gatim,
yaṁ(m) prāpya na nivartante, taddhāma paRāmaṁ(m) mama. 8.21**

All embodied beings emanate from the Unmanifest (i.e., Brahma's subtle body) at the coming of the cosmic day; at the cosmic nightfall they merge into the same subtle body of Brahma, known as the Unmanifest.

Arjuna, this multitude of beings, being born again and again, is dissolved under compulsion of its nature at the coming of the cosmic night and rises again at the commencement of cosmic day.

Far beyond even this unmanifest, there is yet another unmanifest Existence, that Supreme Divine Person, who does not perish even though all beings perish.

The same unmanifest which has been spoken of as the Indestructible, is also called the supreme goal; that again is My supreme Abode, attaining which they return not to this mortal world.

We shall look at these 4 verses together to get a better understanding of how the creation and dissolution of the Samsāra takes place.

In the 18th verse it is mentioned that with the coming of day of Brahma ji (**ahaḥ-āgame**) at the time when he wakes; all manifested things, all things that get manifested, all creatures characterized as moving and non-moving (**sarvāḥ vyaktayaḥ**) emerge, become manifested (**prabhavanti**), from the Unmanifested state (**avyaktaḥ**), which is the state of sleep of Brahmā ji.

Similarly, at the advent of night time (**rātri-āgame**), at the time when Brahma ji sleeps, the manifest dissolves or merge (**praliyante**) in that very time (**tatra eva**) into that state which is known as the Unmanifest of the Unmanifested state. (**avyakta-samjñake**).

Bhagavadgītā illustrates a very unique perspective on the process of creation and Reality. Let us look at this in a little more detail...

There are 3 states of reality,

- **Vyaktayaḥ** (The Manifest state)
- **Avyaktaḥ** (The Unmanifest state)
- **Avyakta-samjñake** (The Unmanifest of the Unmanifested)

And there is then the fourth state, the **Sanatan Avyaktaḥ**...

The Vyaktayaḥ (The Manifest state)

The Manifest state is what we understand as the Saṃsāra; it is what we perceive as reality. Whatever, we can imagine, wherever our senses reach; Even something as subtle as the mind and intellect, all of that is part of this Prakṛti, Maya is the Manifest state and called Vyaktayaḥ.

Tulsidas ji, in the **Ramcharitmanas** in the **Aranyakand** explained it as,

गो गोचर जहँ लगी मन जाई। सो सब माया जानेहु भाई॥

“Whatever and wherever the mind can reach with their senses or sense-objects, all that is Maya”

Even dreams form a part of this state, as we sometimes do have physical symptoms of what we see in our dreams. That is, our dreams do have an impact on our reality, thus they are a part of the Prakṛti.

Avyaktaḥ (The Unmanifest state)

The state of the Unmanifest is explained as the state, when the Creator Brahmā ji is asleep at the end of his day. This is similar to how one experiences our reality. When we are awake, the reality around us exists for us but it disappears the moment we fall asleep. It only comes back to existence for us when we are awake again.

Our existence is sustained by Brahmā ji, it is his reality; hence, when he goes to sleep, his creation too gets dissolved. However, this does not mean that those beings at the end of this Naimittika Pralaya attain mokṣa. Those left over, the host of beings (**bhūta-grāma**) again regain birth in the next day of Brahma ji, when the creation happens.

Thus, all beings and his creation exist in the unmanifest state during the time of Brahmā ji's sleep. One can get confused as to how such big creation disappears! This is because we imagine this universe to be a separate entity. But, we can compare this to the data stored on a USB, where you could store immense data. In this case, we can take the examples of movies; The movie may show us an exciting world, yet, once our computer or screen is switched off; this world becomes unmanifest. There is no change physically on the USB cable; yet, it contained a completely different world in it, in its unmanifest state.

Thinking of a vast change or space required for any creation, is similar to how a child perceives the Television to actually have small people in it. Thus, what we perceive as reality is simply a creation of the current Brahmā ji.

But, we have seen before that the Brahmā ji too has a limited life span! What happens when he dies? This is what makes the Gītā special, as it talks of a phase that is beyond one lifetime of a Brahmā ji. Bhagavān now introduced the term **Avyakta-saṁjñake** (The Unmanifest of the Unmanifested), the state after the death of Brahmā ji.

Avyakta-saṁjñake (The Unmanifest of the Unmanifested)

When the current Brahmā ji completes his life span after his lifecycle of 100 years; His creation too dissolves with him. This is because, the existence of his creation depends on his existence. Just as our reality is dependent on our existence; His creation too, goes away with him. At this stage, the reality becomes unmanifest completely. Nothing of the manifest remains, this includes all the 14 lokas along with its creator Brahma ji.

Then what happens to creation and the manifest state?

They wait for a new Brahmā ji to arrive, upon which the cycle again begins.

Now, at this point one has to go beyond our normal thought process. Remember, that "whatever has become manifest, has to become unmanifest." Whatever has come into being has to become extinct. This is the eternal law.

The Brahmā ji that we have discussed until this point shouldn't be confused with the 4 headed image that we have come to worship. It is beyond that, for, the imagery is a form of much greater reality. This, **Brahmā ji** can even be compared to the **Bramhan** that one comes across routinely, or the **Hiraṇyagarbha**. There are layers and layers of reality. Even the formed aspect of Bhagavān Shiva and Bhagavān Viṣṇu, and also that which is known as the **Puruṣa**, dissolves one day. Again these formed aspects only demonstrate a particular aspect of the Supreme State. They all are depicting parts of the same essence. Yet, since they have come into existence; they too undergo dissolution...

However, there is a state beyond this which remains even after everything has been dissolved. It has always remained..

That eternal unmanifest nature is known as the imperishable Truth (**akṣara**) and it is the Supreme destination (**paramām gatim**). This unmanifest reality is also called **akṣara-brahma**; this alone is the supreme destination of the Jīvās. This is the eternal unmanifest state, which transcends the 3 states of reality, the **fourth state**, the **Sanatan Avyaktaḥ**. This is the abode of the **Puruṣottama** where after having attained that destination, which is HIS eternal abode and HIS eternal nature, the living beings never return to this world of birth and death.

This is the supreme abode and as stated in the 15th Chapter,

न तद्भासयते सूर्यो न शशाङ्को न पावकः ।
यद्गत्वा न निवर्तन्ते तद्भाम परमं मम ॥ 6॥

Where Bhagavān described HIS eternal abode as "Neither the sun nor the moon, nor fire can illumine that Supreme Abode of Mine. Having gone There, one does not return to this material world again."

puruṣaḥ(s) sa paraḥ(ph) pārtha, bhaktyā labhyastvananyayā, yasyāntaḥsthāni bhūtāni, yena sarvamiḍaṃ(n) tatam. 8.22

Arjuna, that eternal unmanifest supreme Puruṣa in whom all beings reside and by whom all this is pervaded, is attainable only through exclusive Devotion.

Bhagavān states that, this Puruṣottama, that Supreme Person is solely attainable through unalloyed, not another (**ananyayā**) devotion; All living beings are situated within HIM (**antaḥ-sthāni**), and by HIM, this entire universe is pervaded. Thus, HE is the all pervasive, the Supreme, Puruṣottama.

Yogeśvara here, affirmed that the only way one could attain HIM is through **ananyayā** Bhakti, as in with a devotion where nothing exists apart from HIM.

At the beginning, we associate this feeling with that of Meera bai's bhajan literally, as we understand Bhakti at a very superficial level, and connect it to the expression where she stated,

“मेरे तो गिरधर गोपाल दूसरो न कोई”

Where she declared that, I only have my Giridhar Gopal (Bhagavān Krishna in his form of the cow herder, who had lifted the Giri mountain with his little finger) and no one else.

A lot of people confuse this with exclusivity of devotion of a particular Deity or a way of devotion. However, the thought of ananyayā is much more subtle. If one moves away from the traditional thought process of a practitioner of Bhakti and looks into the path of Jñāna one can get a different perspective into this thought of **“ananyayā”**. Where, they concentrate on the Unmanifest form of HIM. Where there is no other. **“Eko Brahma Dvityo Na asti”**: There is only One Brahman, and no second..

But this shloka is unique, because Bhagavān combined the Unmanifest that is spoken of in the Jñāna-yoga and put in another facet; that of devotion, Bhakti.

Where HE stated that one could only attain that Supreme state through **Ananyayā** Bhakti. Both the Path of knowledge and Devotion acknowledge this quality of ananyayā to attain HIM.

Where, in the Jñāna Yoga this is demonstrated in the statement of **“Tattva masi”**: I am That; That being the Brahman.

And the Bhakti Yogi stated,
**जब मैं था तब हरि नहीं अब हरि है मैं नहीं ।
प्रेम गली अति सांकरी जामें दो न समाहीं ॥**

“When I exist, Hari doesn't, and when Hari exists I don't; This path of devotion and adoration is snug, where two cannot exist at the same time”

Where, **Kabirdas ji** stated that Parameśvara cannot exist in the presence of **“Aham”** where the identity of Self exists.

In the **Sri Krishnashtakam** by **Sri Adi Shankaracharya**, he stated,

**वसुदेव सुतं देवं कंस चाणूर मर्दनम् ।
देवकी परमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥१॥**

I offer my obeisance to Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa, the beloved son of Vasudeva, who killed the great Asuras

Kaṁsa and Cāṇūra, who is the source of great joy to Mother Devakī; and who is indeed a Guru of the universe.

Here, the obeisance is to the formed aspect of Bhagavān Shri Kṛṣṇa, who appeared as the son of Devakī and Vasudeva. Yet, in the Shrimad Bhāgavata, Shukdev ji praises HIS infinite aspect when he stated,

**सच्चिदानंद रूपाय विश्वोत्पत्यादिहेतवे!
तापत्रय विनाशाय श्री कृष्णाय वयं नुमः॥**

We prostrate before the aspect of Existence, Consciousness and Blissfulness (Sat Chitt Amanda) which is the state of Eternal Blissfulness aspect of Bhagavān Shri Kṛṣṇa, the Puruṣottama; WHO is the causation of the creation, sustenance and destruction of this world, as also the vanquisher of the 3 types of afflictions or sufferings, be it the worldly, spiritual or those of Divinity.

The terms used here are fascinating, where Shukdev ji mentions Bhagavān Krishna in his formless aspect, of the Puruṣottama, the eternal bliss (Sat Chitt Amanda); yet, when he says that he is prostrating before that aspect, he uses the term "**Vayam Numah**" (where Vayam denotes We, or all) instead of "**Aham**" "I" or "**Āvām**" (us two or both of us). This is because Shukdev ji had diminished the boundaries of the Divine from the Devotee. Both the Bhagavān and the Bhakta are the same; thus, there is no separate person that is paying obeisance to HIM, but the affirmation that HE is both the Bhagavān and Bhakta. Shukdev ji is referring to the fact that it is "I" who is worshipping and "I" who is worshipped. Since, he was explaining it to Parikshit he still used the term "**Vayam**".

Astavakra ji went a step further in the Ashtavakra Gītā, where he stated,

“मेरा मुझको नमस्कार!”
My Salutations to MYSELF..

Here, there is an acknowledgement that the Ātma-tattva is the Paramātmā. This is the essence of reality.

There is a beautiful Bhajan by Swami Ramteerth ji that illustrated this beautifully,

“लिया जो करवट तो होश आया कि राम मुझमें, में राम में हैं ॥”

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KR82ILNDKXRtUjwRddHuTyaM7uSco994/view?usp=drivesdk>

Where, Ramteerth ji in his ecstatic devotion explored the nature of Reality; He stated that until he was involved in this Saṁsāra, he couldn't understand fully HIS nature, but when he became detached, his life took a turn where he understood that Bhagavān Ram, who was his *ishta* existed within him, while he too existed in HIM. HE is formless, and if one feels this Saṁsāra is reality is absurd; where if his body is a boat then HE is the river. Thus, it is fantastical if one feels like traversing through it. Where, if one asks HIS destination, they would be confused to ask if its HIS or ours to ask; For, HE exists within me, I exist within HIM...

It is beautiful creation in the Persian language and requires a detailed study.. But, the Bhāva of Swami ji was essentially the same as Ashtavakra; that **HE is I, I am HIM...**

Until one experiences this Oneness, they only experience duality; but reality is beyond this..

One may then ask if the path of Knowledge was better than Bhakti?

Tulsidas ji in the **Uttarakaand of Ramcharitmanas** explained,

भगतिहि ग्यानहि नहिं कछु भेदा। उभय हरहिं भव संभव खेदा॥

There is no difference between Knowledge and Devotion (Jñāna and Bhakti) as they both dissolve the conflicts that arise due to this Saṃsāra.

Thus, whatever may be the path, the ultimate goal and destination remain the same; to reach there, from where one doesn't turn back. Where one transcends this cycle of Birth and Death. This is the state of eternal Blissfulness called by various names like Mokṣa, Kaivalya, Supreme Abode, Vaikuntha, etc. The nature of all them is the same, be free of this Saṃsāra.

8.23, 8.24, 8.25, 8.26

**yatra kāle tvanāvṛttim, āvṛttim(ñ) caiva yoginaḥ,
prayātā yānti taṃ(ñ) kālaṃ(m), Vākṣyāmi bharatarṣabha. 8.23
agnirjyotirahaḥ(ś) śuklaḥ(ṣ), ṣaṇmāsā uttarāyaṇam,
tatra prayātā gacchanti, brahma brahmavido janāḥ. 8.24
dhūmo rātristatā kṛṣṇaḥ(ṣ), ṣaṇmāsā dakṣiṇāyanam,
tatra cāndRāmasaṃ(ñ) jyotir, yogī prāpya nivartate. 8.25
śuklakṛṣṇe gatī hyete, jagataḥ(ś) śāśvate mate,
ekayā yātyanāvṛttim, anyayāvartate punaḥ. 8.26**

Arjuna, I shall now tell you the time (path) departing when Yogis do not return, and also the time (path) departing when they do return.

(Of the two paths) the one is that in which, are stationed the all-effulgent fire-god and the deities presiding over daylight, the bright fortnight, and the six months of the northward course of the sun respectively; proceeding along it after death, Yogīs who have known Brahma, being successively by the above gods, finally reach Brahma.

The other path is that wherein are stationed the gods presiding over smoke, night, the dark fortnight, and the six months of the southward course of the sun; the Yogi (devoted to action with an interested motive) taking to this path after death is led by the above gods, one after another, and attaining the lustre of the moon (and enjoying the fruit of his meritorious deeds in heaven) returns to this mortal world.

For these two paths of the world, the bright and the dark, are considered to be eternal. Proceeding by one of them, one reaches the supreme state from which there is no return; and proceeding by the other, one returns to the mortal world, i.e., becomes subject to birth and death once more.

Next, is a slightly complicated concept, for it described what happens after death. Bhagavān now explained the different paths (protected by the presiding deities of time) by which yogīs who pass from this world either return or never return.

One may even question the validity of the description mentioned in the these verses; where HE stated that those who know the Supreme Absolute Reality and who depart from this world during the influence of the presiding deities of fire, light, auspicious days, the fortnight of the waxing moon and the six months of the sun's northern course, attain the realm of the Supreme Absolute.

Where, the words **agniḥ** and **jyotiḥ** indicate the presiding Deity of **arci** (light). The word **ahaḥ** refers to the presiding Devatā of the daytime; **śuklaḥ** is the moon's bright fortnight and the word **uttarāyaṇam** refers to the presiding deity of the six months of the northern course of the sun..

Next, HE stated the Yogī who departs by the path of those Devatās who preside over the times of smoke, the night, the dark half of the month and the six months of the sun's southern course, attains the heavenly planets, such as the moon. After enjoying celestial pleasures there, he again returns to this material world.

Where, **dhūmaḥ** is the Devatā of smoke; **rātriḥ** is the presiding deity of night **kṛṣṇaḥ** denotes the dark fortnight of the moon and its presiding deity; **ṣaṭ-māsāḥ** is six months and **dakṣiṇāyanam** is the sun's southern course and its presiding deity; **tatra** is at this time or by this path; **cāndramasam** to the moon like heavenly planets.

If one takes these shlokas literally then one can misunderstand, that those who leave this world (die) at the time of **Uttarāyaṇa** attain mokṣa, while those who shed their mortal body at the time of **Dakṣiṇāyana** have to take rebirth.

But this is not true, one can understand this through an example,

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gflIGDQbi1RIEkz09IAHAFqjsyRZTet8/view?usp=drivesdk>

Here, one can take the example of a post office. We all know that the post office box though is open to deposit letters at all times, the timing of the post master who comes to collect the letters is fixed. No matter when one deposits the letters, the post master collects them at the same time. Similarly, the presiding deities or the Mrityu doot collect all the Jīvātman at the their determined time. They are further categorized by other Devatās and reach a point where 2 paths are present. Just as we board a train to reach a specific destination, the presiding deities of these paths take the Jīvās to their specific destinations depending on their Karmas.

The path where the presiding deities of **śuklaḥ** and the **Uttarāyaṇa** and other mentioned Devatās, guide the Jīvās, are considered to be auspicious, as this path takes their travelers to higher realms and also the Bramha lokas. Then this is also the path where those who have transcended the 3 Guṇas and have attained the state of a Bramha Yogi, transcend the lokas and reach the Supreme abode, attaining which, they do not have to take rebirth.

On the other hand, the path which is presided by the deities of the **kṛṣṇaḥ** and **Dakṣiṇāyana** though have certain higher realms in reach, do not reach the Supreme Abode of Puruṣottama; hence, considered Inauspicious.

Thus, when departing from this world, only two paths, the bright (**śukla**) and the dark (**kṛṣṇa**), are considered to be eternal. Passing through the bright path (**śukla-pakṣa**), one attains liberation, and passing through the dark path (**kṛṣṇa-pakṣa**), one returns to this world...

**naite sṛtī pārtha jānan, yogī muhyati kaścana,
tasmāsarveṣu kāleṣu, yogayukto bhavārjuna. 8.27**

Knowing thus the secret of these two paths, O son of Kunti, no Yogī gets deluded. Therefore, Arjuna, at all times be steadfast in Yoga in the form of equanimity (i.e., strive constantly for My realization).

Yogeśvara explained to Arjuna that the Yogīs who have knowledge of these two paths are never bewildered. This is because they understand the knowledge of these paths in its essence. They have discernment to not be lured by the goal of attaining some higher realms. For, their ultimate goal is to be free from the cycle of birth and death.

When one is focused on gaining merits for their actions to attain benefits, there are 3 types of benefits one can gain,

- In return for charity, one may get the benefits of wealth.
- In return for wealth, one may get the benefits regarding their work.
- In return for labour, one may get the benefit of fame.

Thus, those with the habit of declaring their virtuous deeds to attain fame, may actually end up in losing a lot of their merits or *punya*. Thus, we have a system of secretive donations in place. Those desirous of Svarga-loka should try to minimise the utilisation of their merits in their current life. Only then it might help them.

However, instead of aiming for the higher realms, Bhagavān asked Arjuna to become **Yoga Yuktah** (in union with HIM) with equanimity; attaining which, one goes beyond this Saṃsāra; as they attain HIM, similar to the Yogīs who are at all times (**sarveṣu kāleṣu**) absorbed in HIM.

They are the Yogīs who are on the path of light, realising that the nature of this material world is temporary and thus, strive to attain HIM; by constantly contemplating on HIM, meditating on HIM. And then there are those ignoramus who are bound to this Saṃsāra, believing it to be real. They only seek to attain the higher realms. Yogeśvara urged Arjuna to recognize the difference between these two paths and choose the path of light, and become a Yogī.

8.28

**vedeṣu yajñeṣu tapaḥsu caiva,
dāneṣu yatpuṇyaphalaṃ(m) pradiṣṭam,
atyeti tatsarvamidaṃ(m) veditvā,
yogī paraṃ(m) sthānamupaiti cādyam. 8.28**

The Yogi, realizing this profound truth, doubtless transcends all the rewards enumerated for the study of the Vedas as well as for performance of sacrifices, austerities and charities and attains the supreme and primal state.

In this concluding verse Bhagavān declared that: those Yogīs who follow the path of light reap the fruits of their endeavours beyond that of any other processes can bestow. Yet, they have no attachment to the fruits obtained by their actions even though one may undertake Vedic sacrifices, perform austerities, charity, etc. For, they have transcended these and understand that only the underlying essence the Paramātmā, who is the Akśara-Brahma is indestructible, Real and eternal, the rest is all temporary..

We conclude this chapter with the Mantra of Om- Tat- Sat seeking forgiveness for any errors in our recital, with the mental offering of flowers to HIM.

This concludes the esoteric chapter of the **Akśara-Brahma-Yoga**. We conclude this session with Hari Naam Sankirtan..

Let us now take a look at some of the queries of the Q and A session.

Devraaj ji

Question: Who calculated these large time scales?

Answer: These timescales are relative to the time of the Devatās, hence, quite possible that they were involved.

Shivani ji

Question: Why did Bhīṣma wait until Uttarayana to leave his mortal body?

Answer: It is said that he waited to shed enough droplets of blood to get rid of debt he had towards Duryodhana, as he had earned his living from his kingdom. Another reason was to contemplate and impart whatever knowledge he had to others and gain the company of Bhagavān Shri Kṛṣṇa, so that his thoughts could always be concentrated on HIM and shedding all of his impressions so that he could attain the Supreme abode.

Om tatsaditi śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyāṃ(m) yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṃvāde akṣarabrahmayogo nāma aṣṭamo'dhyāyaḥ

Thus, in the Upaniṣad sung by the Lord, the Science of Brahma, the scripture of Yoga, the dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, ends the eighth chapter entitled "The Yoga of the Indestructible Brahma."



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You have enjoyed this vivechan writeup! In spite of intense editing and proofreading, errors of grammar, as also of omission and commission may have crept in. We appreciate your forbearance.

Jai Shri Krishna!

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