

## ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

### Chapter 8: Akṣara-Brahma-Yoga

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YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/Rv1Pl943ByU>

## It is not impossible to reach the Supreme destiny, Param dhama

The 8th Chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā is called **Akṣara Brahmā Yoga - the Yoga of the Imperishable Brahman**.

The third session on chapter 8 began with the symbolic lighting of the lamp and by offering following prayer to Bhagavān Śrī Krishna, followed by offering salutations to the gurus, and extending warm welcome to all attendees of the session.

This is the final part of the Vivechan on *Akṣara Brahmā Yoga*. This is the only Chapter of the Gītā which describes how we should die whereas other Chapters such as Chapter 17 describe how we should live. Shlokas 16-19 of this Chapter discussed in the previous Vivechan session had mentioned that all manifestations that are born from Brahma's subtle body are annihilated again and again merging with the unmanifested form before becoming manifest again. Many worlds get created and destroyed during a single Brahma Day and Brahma Night. Even Brahma Dev Himself ceases to exist after 311 trillion and 40 billion years.

The entire world can be likened to a dream which vanishes in a moment. In a world where universes and galaxies are getting constantly destroyed and created, we are very, very insignificant in a relative sense. At the level of body, mind and intellect we are nothing. That is why one should disengage one's identity from the body, mind and intellect, as those are impure, transient and inert. The "real I" on the other hand is truth, bliss and sentient and does not get tainted by admixing with body, mind and intellect.

8.20

parastasmāttu bhāvo'nyo-'vyakto'vyaktātsanātanah,

## yaḥ(s) sa sarveṣu bhūteṣu, naśyatsu na vinaśyati. 8.20

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

Mixing of copper and bronze with gold does not reduce the property of the gold content in the product. In fact, a gold smith can remove the gold content in full. Same concept is conveyed by Bhagavan in this shloka.

- The "I" or the soul remains pure despite the admixing that happens with body, mind and intellect.
- The Supreme Para Brahma remains transcendental to the unmanifested and the manifested matter.

The Supreme Reality is eternal and cannot be destroyed. This Param Brahma is even beyond Brahma. He is the ultimate Truth, forever pristine and unchanging, beyond the manifest and the unmanifest. HE does not perish even when all the beings perish. In the Absolute's existence, there is not the least modifications or changes or vikaras vis-a-vis the entire universe which goes through modifications or changes.

### 8.21

## avyakto'kṣara ityuktaḥ(s), tamāhuḥ(ph) paramām(ñ) gatim, yaṁ(m) prāpya na nivartante, taddhāma paRāmaṁ(m) mama. 8.21

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.

The abode of Param Brahma is the Supreme Destination from where there is no return to the cycle of births and deaths. Once attained, one achieves the highest goal of Param Gati, and becomes indestructible/ untouched by death. This is a place which weapon cannot pierce, fire cannot burn, water cannot drown. This eternal Truth, Supreme Chaitanya is HIS real essence / HIS real identity. The same characteristics are attributed to "the Soul" in chapter 2.

**nainam chhindanti śhastrāṇi nainam dahati pāvakaḥ  
na chainam kledayantyāpo na śhoṣhayati mārutaḥ ||2.23||**

Does this mean Paramātmā is telling us that our Soul is HIS Param Dham (the place where HE resides)? We can meditate on this through practice of Yoga with perseverance, patience and equanimity of thoughts. With detachment of mind and perfection of the practice of Pranayama, we can enter into the world of meditation following prescribed rules and teachings over a sufficiently long period of time. We cannot hope to read Shakespeare without first learning the ABCD of English language, just as we cannot understand Differential or Integral Calculus without studying elementary maths. Similarly, those who are desirous of entering into the state of meditation need to start by perfecting the body, the mind, the senses and the Prāṇa before we can hope to reach God.

Paramātmā is omniscient. He is present within us too (**mamaivānśho jīva-loke**). Jeeva is HIS fragment, but is infected with disease of ignorance as it gets attached to the body and mind. Thus, it has to take necessary medicines for eradication of that ignorance. Yogasana, Satsang, observing silence, and moderation in all our activities as stated in chapter 6, are the medicines.

**yuktāhāra-vihārasya yukta-cheṣṭasya karmasu  
yukta-svapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkha-hā ||6.17||**

But those who are temperate in eating and recreation, balanced in work, and regulated in sleep, can mitigate all sorrows by practicing Yoga.

When we meditate, we eradicate our ignorance to recognise God within us, and ultimately merge with

the eternal Krishna, the Chaitanya Para Brahma.

## 8.22

**puruṣaḥ(s) sa paraḥ(ph) pārtha, bhaktyā labhyastvananyayā,  
yasyāntaḥsthāni bhūtāni, yena sarvamidam(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.

Śrī Krishna affirms that **it is not impossible to reach the Supreme Param Brahma**. HE can be attained through uninterrupted Bhakti, sincere Upasana (sitting by HIS side) with pure devotion and in a state of “no-mind”.

Can a mind which is perpetually engrossed in thoughts lead to HIM? The answer is NO. We have to make our mind as no mind. Paramātmā can be attained only through thoughtlessness. The mind in normal condition is the world. HIS Dharshan or Anubhuti is possible only in sheer silence of mind. That is why Sant Kabir said:

- Move from mind to no mind,
- Silence the mind,
- Kill this mind.

Silencing the mind through thoughtlessness is essential if one is to be with God. This also means that one should keep away from those who praise and those who slander. It is only when one is free of dualities that one can have devotion to God. We may have to go to a Guru for this. We should try to emulate his lifestyle like his daily routine, his waking up time, the things that he does every single minute of the day. There are many such unsung heroes in India / in this world who have dedicated their lives to others and to serve the society. The Gurus work without any selfishness and without any expectations, for making the place / world more compassionate and more beautiful. All of us need to recognize them in the society. When we look for them with an open heart and open mind, will find them right in front of us.

A true Guru never asks anything from his disciples / his students. In fact, they exist only to serve the humanity. They are not here to take but they are here to give. This can be illustrated by the example of Śrī Sujit Chattopadhyaya also known as Master Moshai in West Bengal.

### **Sujit Chattopadhyay - a Real-Life Hero:**

Seventy-eight-year-old Sujit Chattopadhyay is a retired West Bengal schoolteacher, who after obtaining his post-graduate degree did not look for a lucrative job in a city. On the contrary, he rushed to his native village to become a teacher with a modest salary of Rs.169. After teaching in his village for 39 years, he retired from school at the age of 60. He has dedicated his post-retirement life to empowering poor students. His one-of-a-kind school, the ‘Sadai Fakirer Pathshala’ (Eternal Fakir’s School), has been operating in his Ausgram house since 2004. The Pathshala functions in a very disciplinary way. It begins at 6:30 a.m. and ends at 6 p.m. Chattopadhyay curated the curriculum for the secondary students and degree courses. All the courses are in Bengali for the undergraduate students. About 80 percent of the students who visit the Pathshala belong to lower-middle-class backgrounds.

According to Chattopadhyay ji, after his retirement, he had a lot of free time and wanted to do service to the society. His dream came true, when three tribal girls showed up at his house one day. The girls walked barefoot for 20 kilometers to meet him and expressed their desire to study under him. Thus

began the Sadai Fakirer Pathshala's journey, which has grown to enroll more than 350 children. A man with a magnanimous heart, he only charges a Rs.2 fee from the kids. Some of his students became high achievers as college professors and IT professionals. A true Guru therefore is one who is heavily invested in the welfare of others and who never "takes" but always "gives" to people.

President Ram Nath Kovind awarded Chattopadhyay the Padma Shri award in November 2021, in recognition of his contributions. The Padma Shri awardee's career as a teacher spanned three decades, and he remained a student's favourite thanks to his impassioned pedagogy that goes beyond plain instructions. In addition, he is a major proponent of socio-environmental consciousness and has sought to instill in communities the notions of social equality and a sustainable, environmentally friendly lifestyle.

## 8.23

**yatra kāle tvanāvṛttim, āvṛttim(ñ) caiva yoginaḥ,  
prayātā yānti taṃ(ñ) kālaṃ(m), Vākṣyāmi bharatarṣabha. 8.23**

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.

In **Shloka 8.16**, Bhagavān explained that all beings, even in **Brahma Loka**, are subject to rebirth, but those who attain HIM are liberated. However, the **time and path** of return or liberation were not detailed there. In this shloka, HE reveals that after death, souls follow **two paths**:

1. **The Path of No Return (Liberation - Moksha)**
2. **The Path of Rebirth (Samsara)**

Birth and death are beyond our control. Nakshatras (lunar constellations) influence one's intelligence, attitude, and destiny. Some are sattvic (pure), rajasic (active), or tamasic (ignorant), and even a slight shift alters their effect. Ultimately, past karmas decide one's path. Just like nails are drawn by a magnet, our lives are dictated by karmic forces—lifting us up or pulling us down.

**Finding a Guru is also a result of past karma**, but when negative karma ripens, even the Guru's wisdom may seem unappealing. Many unknowingly commit sins, harm others, or live without spiritual direction. Those fortunate to have a Guru or satsang (such as Geeta Pariwar) must guard this blessing like a lottery winner protects their ticket. This is a rare chance for growth and salvation.

### **The Power of Prayer:**

A devotee should **pray daily** for:

- **Wisdom to learn wholeheartedly**
- **Strength to practice with firm resolve**
- **Divine grace to maintain their spiritual path**

Prayer should become **a habit**, ensuring that our connection with Geeta Pariwar, our Guru, and Paramātmā remains forever.

## 8.24

## **agnirjyotirahaḥ(ś) śuklaḥ(ś), ṣaṇmāsā uttarāyaṇam, tatra prayātā gacchanti, brahma brahmavido janāḥ. 8.24**

(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.

Bhagavan describes the path of Yogis who depart never to return.

- The movement **from darkness to light** represents **spiritual ascension**.
- The shloka states that those who follow this path **attain the Supreme and do not return**.
- The **fire, daylight, Shukla Paksha, and Uttarayana** serve as metaphors for **gradual spiritual progression** toward complete liberation (*Moksha*).

### **About the Prakasha Marg (Path of Light)**

1. **Fire (Agni)** – Represents purification and transformation. It signifies the start of the soul's ascent.
2. **Daylight (Jyoti)** – Symbolizes clarity and knowledge, guiding the soul beyond darkness.
3. **Bright Fortnight (Shukla Paksha)** – Denotes an auspicious phase of spiritual energy that aids the soul's journey.
4. **Uttarayana (Northern Course of the Sun)** – Represents a divine movement toward higher realms, occurring between December 22nd and June 22nd.
5. **Brahma Loka (Abode of Brahma)** – A celestial stop where highly evolved souls reside.
6. **Final Liberation (Union with Paramātmā)** – The ultimate state where the soul merges with the Supreme Being.

The term "**Brahmavido**" in the Bhagavad Gītā refers to those who know *Para Brahma* (the Supreme God), but it does not necessarily mean they have fully realized Him. Those who attain **Brahma Loka** remain there until the final dissolution (*Maha Pralaya*), after which they are liberated. Pure-hearted souls (*Satvika Bhaktas*) eventually merge with Paramātmā, attaining complete liberation (*Moksha*).

**Stages in Salvation and Brahmaloaka:** In spiritual traditions, liberation (*moksha*) is often viewed as a journey through various realms. *Brahmaloka*, or *Satyaloaka*, is considered the highest planetary system, presided over by Brahmā ji. While some souls may reach this exalted realm, it is sometimes seen as a station on the path to ultimate liberation. Those who still harbor desires might reside here temporarily, whereas souls free from all cravings move beyond, not lingering in any intermediate state.

**Subtle Realms and the Role of Yogis:** Beyond the physical world, subtler planes of existence are acknowledged, where enlightened beings, such as yogis and *jnanis* (wise ones), exist in their subtle bodies (*sukshma sharira*). These beings, having transcended the gross physical form, retain their subtle bodies to assist and guide struggling devotees on their spiritual paths. Their continued existence in these realms serves the purpose of aiding others in their journey toward liberation.

**An instance narrated by a pilgrim:** While traveling to Ambernath, a weary traveler rested under a tree. A passing sage touched his forehead between the eyebrows, filling him with energy. Upon waking, he found the place deserted. A shepherd informed him that the pilgrimage site was closed for winter, making him realize he had slept for six months. After this mysterious encounter, his spiritual practices intensified, leading to profound transformation.

**Sudden Spiritual Expressions in Ordinary Individuals:** There are instances where individuals, without prior training or knowledge, spontaneously recite scriptures like the Bhagavad Gītā. Such occurrences are often attributed to the influence or grace of enlightened beings or past life impressions (*samskaras*). These spontaneous expressions can serve as reminders of the soul's inherent connection to divine wisdom and the subtle workings of higher realms in guiding souls.

## 8.25

**dhūmo rātristatā kṛṣṇaḥ(ṣ), ṣaṇmāsā dakṣiṇāyanam,  
tatra cāndRāmasaṃ(ñ) jyotir, yogī prāpya nivartate. 8.25**

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.

Bhagavān describes the Dark Path (*Krishna Gati / Pitriyana*).

### **Journey of the Departing Soul:**

- The soul follows a gradual transition: Smoke → Night → Dark Fortnight → Dakshinayana (21st June - 22nd Jan).
- It then reaches the lunar world (Chandraloka) and later enters divine realms like heaven.
- After enjoying the fruits of past merits, it must return to the mortal world.

### **Rebirth Process:**

- The soul descends through sky → clouds → rain → grains → human conception (semen & ovum), leading to rebirth.
- Sinners take birth in lower wombs
- Great sinners go to hell.

### **Astrological Influence of the Moon:**

- The moon governs the mind; its unfavorable placement can cause mental distress, agitation, or even suicidal tendencies.
- Chanting "Om Namah śivaya" helps counteract these effects, as the moon is under Bhagavān śiva's protection.

### **Significance of Dakshinayana:**

- Those who die during Dakshinayana attain temporary peace in the lunar world before rebirth.
- The moon symbolizes coolness, keeping their minds calm and composed.
- This path is superior to the ordinary mortal cycle but still leads back to rebirth.

Only by transcending both the lunar and solar paths can one attain ultimate liberation (*Moksha*).

## 8.26

**śuklākṛṣṇe gatī hyete, jagataḥ(ś) śāśvate mate,  
ekayā yātyanāvṛttim, anyayāvartate punaḥ. 8.26**

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.

Bhagavan concludes the discussion on two **eternal paths**:

1. **Uttarayana (Path of Light / Devayana)** – Those who follow this path do not return to the cycle of birth and death.
2. **Dakshinayana (Path of Darkness / Pitriyana)** – Those on this path must return to the material world after enjoying the results of their karma.

**Human life is a rare gift**, and one's actions determine their spiritual progress—whether they ascend, remain in the middle, or descend.

In shloka 14.8 Bhagavān has conveyed the same essence:

***ūrdhvaṁ gachchhanti sattva-sthā madhye tiṣṭhanti rājasāḥja  
ghanya-guṇa-vṛitti-sthā adho gachchhanti tāmasāḥ ||14.18||***

- Sattva (Goodness) → Elevates beings to higher realms.
- Rajas (Passion) → Keeps them in the middle realms.
- Tamas (Ignorance) → Leads to lower realms and suffering.

To conclude, **a true seeker must remain vigilant and detached from perishable things**. Hatred should be avoided, as all beings are fragments of Paramātmā (the Supreme Soul). Understanding these paths helps one navigate spiritual progress.

## 8.27

**naite sṛtī pārtha jānan, yogī muhyati kaścana,  
tasmātsarveṣu 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).

Bhagavān gives Guidance on the Two discussed Paths and Yogī's Awareness. Once a Yogī understands these two paths, he is no longer deluded about his fate after death. Bhagavān urges Arjuna **to remain steadfast in Yoga**, implying that true wisdom leads to **living wisely with full awareness** of one's spiritual journey beyond death.

The Worldly-Minded People dismiss these teachings, living by the philosophy: **"Eat, drink, enjoy—life is meant for pleasure."** They only recognize the material world and fail to see beyond it. While they have the freedom to live as they please, they must also accept responsibility for the suffering they create through their actions.

### Examples:

Bhīṣma pitāmaha, who had the boon to leave his body at will, endured immense suffering after being injured in battle. Despite his pain, he chose to wait for Uttarayana (the auspicious time) before departing, demonstrating his spiritual wisdom. His decision reaffirms the importance of understanding these eternal paths, as even great warriors and sages align their departure with divine cycles.

There was a saint who had attained such mastery over his spiritual practice that he was able to choose the moment of his departure. He announced the date of his Samādhi in advance, distributed his belongings, and completed all his worldly responsibilities. As he began the process of leaving his body, one of his disciples, unaware of what was happening, approached him with some queries. The saint, despite being in

the final stages of his journey, patiently answered the disciple's questions and even asked if anyone else had any doubts. Once he ensured that all queries were resolved, he resumed the process and peacefully left his body. Every arrangement for his departure had already been taken care of by him, and everything concluded just as he had planned. Such saints still exist, and India has been the birthplace of many such realized yogis who have demonstrated complete mastery over life and death.

The learnings would be that we should use **Spiritual knowledge to transform our lives**—once we are aware of the two paths, we must align our actions accordingly. Dismissing these truths leads to suffering, while living with awareness ensures a meaningful and spiritually fulfilling journey.

**8.28**

**vedeṣu yajñeṣu tapaḥsu caiva,  
dāneṣu yatpuṇyaphalaṃ(m) pradiṣṭam,  
atyeti tatsarvamideṣa(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.

A Yogi goes beyond all fruits of meritorious actions attained from study of the Vedas, performing yajnas, observing austerity and giving charity to attain the highest goal. He leaves the fruits of his good actions for the benefit of his devotees and bad actions to his detractors. He thus achieves a zero balance of deeds at the time of death. It is rightly advised to be in the company of yogis and not to slander them. We should get rid of our ego and pray to God to keep us on the path of spirituality avoiding acts of demerit. We should perform a Yajna of life dedicating everything to God. Acts of giving should be performed with joy.

#### **Cow dung and gold nugget:**

This is a story of a man who was in a foul mood when a sage approached him for alms. He flung cow dung in his begging bowl instead of food. The sage still blessed him saying that may the fruits of his actions be eternal. Soon he found he was left with no money to purchase food to feed his family. After searching high and low for hidden savings in the house, he opened a flour box and found a gold nugget there! His mother told him since the cow is holy and is worshipped, the sage must have blessed him for giving him cow dung instead of food.

Performing sewa without greed, charity without expectations, sacrifice without ego are meritorious actions that can bring us closer to God and help us attain *param gati*. The Bhagavad Gītā thus offers invaluable tips on how to live life and how to die.

The session ended by paying obeisance at the lotus feet of Guruji.

Questions & Answers

#### **Murali Das ji**

**Q:** Should one worship Vishnu ji or Sri Krishna?

**A:** Both are the same. One can worship whichever Avatar one wishes to. Vishnu is Nirgun and eternal. Vishnu was not born but Krishna as an avatar was born and died. There are many Indras, Vishwakarmas, and demi Gods and they perish. Even Brahmā Deva perishes. However, Vishnu is One and Only eternal. There is a marathi saying that goes as follows:

**Akashat patitam toyam sagaram prati gacchati,**



**sarva deva namaskaram Keshavam prati gacchati.**

*All the water fallen from the sky goes to the sea, salutations to all the gods reaches to the one Lord Hari*

**Lalitha ji**

**Q:** Does reading all the Adhyayas of the Gītā and particularly the 1st Adhyaya lead to quarrels in the family?

**A:** No. On the contrary, param shanti can be obtained in the mind and among the family by reading the Gītā.

**Santosh Zope ji**

**Q:** It is difficult to conceive of bringing Prana to the Ajna Chakra. How does this work? Is this meant only for yogis or can anyone do it? Should one practice this all the time?

**A:** It should be a lifetime practice to do this. Anyone can do this but it is important to learn the practice from a Yogi/ Guru and not by listening to some pravachana. The practice requires skill and needs careful supervision and monitoring. Near the time of death, it may not be possible to do this practice physically by sitting in Siddha or Padmasan. At such a time the practice can be done mentally through manan chintan. It will have the same effect. God has given an easier way of reaching Him by remembering Him constantly while performing one's duties. What is the best way to follow or the most suitable path for us to reach God can be decided with manan chintan. Surrendering the Mind and Intellect to Sri Krishna/God is an equally potent as a practice.

**Om tatsaditi śrīmadbhagavadgītāsu upaniṣatsu  
brahmavidyāyām(m) yogaśāstre śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṁvāde  
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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**Thank you-For reading the summary**

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!**

Compiled by: Geeta Pariwar – Creative Writing Department

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