

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 8: Akṣara-Brahma-Yoga

1/2 (Ślōka 1-8), Sunday, 12 April 2026

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

The Beginning of Eternal Inquiry: Arjuna's Questions on Life, Death, and the Divine

The session began with the customary lighting of the lamp and welcoming everyone to the class. Participants were then requested to fold their hands, following which the below prayer was offered to Śrī Bhagavān.

**vāsudeva-sutaṁ devaṁ kaṁsa-cāṇūra-mardanam |
devakī-paramānandaṁ kṛṣṇaṁ vande jagad-gurum ||**

Meaning:

I bow to Śrī Krishna Bhagavān, the divine son of Vasudeva, the slayer of Kaṁsa and Cāṇūra, the source of supreme joy to Devakī, and the Guru of the entire universe.

The discussion begins with a greeting of Jai Shri Krishna. From today, we begin our journey into Bhagavad gītā- Chapter 8. This chapter is both fascinating and deeply relevant to our everyday lives. While its level of difficulty is slightly higher, we will make a sincere effort to understand it step by step, as clearly as possible. What makes this chapter especially important is not just its philosophy, but how it guides us in applying these principles in our daily lives. That is what we will explore together as we move forward. Let us first understand how and when the discussion of Chapter 8 begins in the Bhagavad gītā. In Level 3, we would have studied Chapter 7, where Bhagavān explains deeper aspects of knowledge and realization. In the last shloka of Chapter 7 (7.30) given below,

**ye tu mām vidur yajñādhyam bhūtādhidaivam ca ye viduḥ
prayāṇa-kāle 'pi ca mām te vidur yukta-cetasah ||7.30||**

Bhagavān mentions that those who understand HIM along with *Adhibhuta*, *Adhidaiva*, and *Adhiyajna*—even at the time of death—are able to know HIM completely. The terminology—*Adhibhuta*, *Adhidaiva*, and *Adhiyajna*—used by Bhagavān was new and naturally sparked curiosity in the mind of Arjuna. So, at the beginning of Chapter 8 of the Bhagavad gītā, Arjuna seeks clarity by asking a series of fundamental questions:

- What is *Brahman*?
- What is *Adhyatma*?
- What is *Karma*?
- What are *Adhibhuta*, *Adhidaiva*, and *Adhiyajna*?
- And how can one remember the Divine at the time of death?

Thus, Chapter 8 unfolds as a natural continuation of Chapter 7—driven by Arjuna’s sincere inquiry and his desire to deeply understand these profound concepts. At that point, Arjuna was also reflecting deeply on *kartavya karma*, his duty—and felt that Bhagavān was, both directly and indirectly, guiding him to take up his responsibility of fighting the war. This raises an important question for all of us: is running away from our duties ever a solution? If we introspect, avoiding our responsibilities—whether it is studying, supporting our parents, loving our siblings or fulfilling our roles in daily life—does not truly help us grow. Arjuna, as a Kṣatriya, was meant to fight not out of personal desire, but to protect dharma. Similarly, even soldiers, while performing their duty to protect their country, may have to take difficult actions; yet these are not driven by personal motives but by responsibility. If they step back, fearing sin, the nation itself would suffer. In the same way, a student refusing to study or an individual neglecting their responsibilities moves away from their path of growth. While we often see that even a mother, despite illness, continues to care for her family without stepping back from her duties, and a father does not simply say he will stop working — he goes to work in all situations, even during heavy rains or curfews. These reflections remind us that true progress lies not in escaping responsibilities but in understanding and fulfilling them with the right intention.

The same fundamental principle of *kartavya karma* is what Bhagavān is trying to awaken in Arjuna through the Bhagavad gītā —to help him rise above his state of confusion and despair and take up the duty he was on the verge of relinquishing.

Chapter 8 begins with questions from Arjuna. Having heard new terminology in Bhagavān’s discussion in Chapter 7, he raises each of these concepts one by one in the first two shlokas, seeking clear understanding. Let’s first go through the 7 questions Arjuna asks followed by detailed answers which Bhagavān provides in subsequent shlokas.

8.1

arjuna uvāca

kiṃ(n) tadbrahma kimadhyātmaṃ(ñ), kiṃ(ñ) karma puruṣottama, adhibhūtaṃ(ñ) ca kiṃ(m) proktam, adhidaivaṃ(ñ) kimucyate. 8.1

Arjuna said:

Kṛṣṇā, what is that Brahma (Absolute), what is Adhyātma (Spirit), and what is Karma (Action)? What is called Adhibhūta (Matter) and what is termed as Adhidaiva (Divine Intelligence)?

arjuna uvāca: Arjuna raises following questions with *Puruṣottama* (O Supreme Person addressing Bhagavān):

1. **kiṃ(n) tadbrahma**: What is *Brahman*? – What is the Absolute Reality or the Supreme Truth?
2. **kimadhyātmaṃ(ñ)**: What is *Adhyatma*? – What is the individual self or inner nature of a being?
3. **kiṃ(ñ) karma**: What is *Karma*? – What is action, and what is its role in life?
4. **adhibhūtaṃ(ñ) ca**: What is *Adhibhuta*? – What is the material or perishable aspect of existence?

5. **kiṃ(m) proktam, adhidaivaṃ(ñ) kimucyate:** What is *Adhidaiva*? – What is the divine or cosmic governing principle?

8.2

adhiyajñaḥ(kh) kathaṃ(ñ) ko'tra, dehe'sminmadhusūdana, prayānakāle ca kathaṃ(ñ), jñeyo'si niyatātmabhiḥ. 8.2

Kṛṣṇa, who is Adhiyajña here and how does he dwell in the body? And how are you to be realized at the time of death by those of steadfast mind?

Besides the above, in addition Arjuna raises following questions:

6. **adhiyajñaḥ(kh) kathaṃ(ñ) ko'tra, dehe'sminmadhusūdana:** What is *Adhiyajna*, and how does He exist in this body, O Krishna (Madhusūdana)?

7. **prayānakāle ca kathaṃ(ñ), jñeyo'si niyatātmabhiḥ:** How are You to be known or realized at the time of death by those who have a controlled and disciplined mind?

8.3

śrībhagavānuvāca akṣaraṃ(m) brahma paRāmaṃ(m), svabhāvo'dhyātmamucyate, bhūtabhāvodbhaVākaro, visargaḥ(kh) karmasaṃjñitaḥ. 8.3

Śrī Bhagavan said:

The supreme Indestructible is Brahma, one's own Self (the individual soul) is called AdhyAtmā; and the Primal resolve of God (Visarga), which brings forth the existence of beings, is called Karma (Action).

While answering all the questions asked by Arjuna, Bhagavan Krishna explains in detail:

What is Brahman?

Brahman is the Supreme Reality—akshara (imperishable), that which never decays or gets destroyed. In nature, there are two types of entities:

- Kshara (perishable): that which is subject to destruction
- Akshara (imperishable): that which never perishes

Brahman is akshara—eternal, constant, and unchanging.

Just as gold, even when shaped into different ornaments, remains essentially gold, and when melted returns to its original form; similarly, though forms may change, the essence remains the same. Likewise, different mobile covers may vary in color and design, but their basic substance remains plastic.

In the same way, this ever-changing universe has Brahman as its fundamental essence. It is the ultimate reality that manifests itself in various forms while remaining unchanged.

What is Adhyatma (spirituality)?

Adhyatma is the effort to know one's true self—realizing that we are not this perishable body, but the divine essence (Atman), a part of the Supreme.

We listen to discourses and study scriptures to understand this truth—that the body we are attached to is temporary, while the soul is eternal and indestructible.

Therefore, through continuous study of the Bhagavad gītā, Vedic scriptures, and regular satsang, we gradually move from body-consciousness (“I am the body”) to soul-consciousness (“I am the eternal self”). Accepting the soul as the ultimate truth and progressing steadily toward this realization is true spirituality.

What is Karma?

Actions performed through the physical body, especially those driven by desires, are called karma (or sakama karma).

The birth of a living being, as created by Brahma, is determined by its past actions (karma).

8.4

adhibhūtaṃ(ñ) kṣaro bhāvaḥ(ph), puruṣaścādhidaivatam, adhiyajño'hamevātra, dehe dehabhṛtāṃ vara. 8.4

All perishable objects are Adhibhūta, the shining Puruṣa (Brahma) is Adhidaiva and in this body I Myself, dwelling as the inner witness, am Adhiyajña, O Arjuna !

Bhagavān further explains: *dehe dehabhṛtāṃ vara: O best among embodied beings, Arjuna...*

adhibhūtaṃ(ñ) kṣaro bhāvaḥ(ph): *Adhibhūta* means that which is *perishable* or *transient* in nature. For example, our physical body is part of *Adhibhūta* because it is temporary—it is born, changes, and eventually decays. Everything in the material world that is subject to destruction falls under this category. It could be our mobile phone, laptop. The entire materialistic world is actually *Adhibhūta*. Everything that exists in the physical, changing realm comes under *Adhibhūta*, as it is temporary in nature and ultimately subject to dissolution. Compared to that Īśvara (the Supreme) cannot be called *Adhibhūta*, because HE is not subject to birth or death. HE is eternal, beyond creation and destruction. In contrast, we human beings are perishable and belong to the realm of *Adhibhūta*, as we are born, we change, and we eventually die.

puruṣaścādhidaivatam: is the cosmic Divine Being (the presiding principle of the universe). *Adhidaiva* refers to higher governing forces or deities that operate the universe, which are subtler and not physical like the body or objects. Because of this, they are not described as “kṣara” (perishable) in the way *Adhibhūta* is.

adhiyajño'hamevātra: The Paramātmā / Supreme Power residing within all embodied beings is referred to as *Adhiyajna*.

The next shloka is very important, as it addresses the final question raised by Arjuna—how one attains the Divine at the time of death (*antya-kāla*). This question receives a direct response in the following verse, and the explanation continues further through the subsequent shlokas of this chapter.

8.5

antakāle ca māmeva, smaranmuktivā kalevaram, yaḥ(ph) prayāti sa madbhāvaṃ(m), yāti nāstyatra saṃśayaḥ. 8.5

He who departs from the body, thinking of Me alone even at the time of death, attains My state; there is no doubt about it.

Here, Bhagavān explains that whoever remembers HIM at the time of death (*antya-kāla*) and leaves the body while taking HIS name attains HIM alone—*yāti nāstyatra saṁśayaḥ*—there is no doubt about this.

This revelation is extremely important for all of us, as it shows that our final thoughts at the last moment determine our next state of being. If, at the time of leaving the body, our mind is absorbed in the Divine, we attain HIM—either by merging with HIM or by coming closer to HIM as HIM favorite devotee.

And to become dear to Bhagavān is not something ordinary; it is the highest goal of human life. Next shloka elaborates on this idea in greater detail.

What has been said so far may sound simple to hear. We might think that we can continue a life of enjoyment and, at the final stage, simply remember the Divine and achieve what has been promised. According to our way of thinking, this may appear easily achievable. However, in the next shloka, Bhagavān clarifies that while it may sound simple, in reality it is not so easy to accomplish.

8.6

yaṁ(m) yaṁ(m) vāpi smaranbhāvaṁ(n), tyajatyante kalevaram, taṁ(n) tamevaiti kaunteya, sadā tadbhāvabhāvitaḥ. 8.6

Arjuna, thinking of whatever entity one leaves the body at the time of death, that and that alone one attains, being ever absorbed in its thought.

Bhagavān confirms that if, at the final moment of life, we remember HIM, we will surely attain HIM. At the same time, HE clarifies an important truth—that in our last moment, what naturally comes to mind is what we have consistently practiced and lived with throughout our life.

For example, if throughout our life we remain absorbed in entertainment—parties, dancing, singing—then at the final moment, those are the very impressions that may arise in our mind. If we spend our entire life building a business, our thoughts at the end may revolve around it. Similarly, if we are deeply attached to wealth and property, we may find ourselves worrying about who will manage everything in our absence. Even if one gives excessive importance to appearance—clothes and accessories—those very thoughts may occupy the mind while leaving the body.

We can understand this not only at the level of life, but even in our daily routine. Whatever we engage in throughout the day is what naturally comes to our mind when we go to sleep at night.

In the same way, we must be mindful of what we want to remember at the final moment. Accordingly, we need to shape our thoughts, habits, and actions throughout our life so that our mind becomes aligned in that direction.

Story 1

There was once a *sethani* who was in her final moments. Even at that stage, her face reflected worry rather than peace. Noticing this, her husband gently asked what was troubling her. With great concern, she replied that she owned nearly 10,000 sarees, and she was worried about what would happen to them after her passing. She wished for them to go to her daughter-in-law, but since she was living abroad, she feared that all her sarees might instead go to her sister-in-law. This thought continued to trouble her deeply in her last moments.

Insight: Even at the time of leaving the body, her mind was absorbed not in the Divine, but in material attachments.

Story 2

Similarly, there was a shopkeeper who was in the final stages of his life. He had four sons. One by one, he called out their names—Ram Lal, Shyam Lal, Hari Lal, and Jetha Lal. Each of them responded, “Ji Pitaji,” and gathered around him. On realizing that all four of them were by his side, he became anxious and exclaimed, “Arey befkūfo! If all of you are here, then who is taking care of the shop?”

Insight: Even at the last moment, his mind was absorbed not in the Divine, but in his business.

Story 3

Once there was an elderly gentleman who was in the final stages of his life. His condition had deteriorated so much that his body had almost become motionless—he could not move or speak. As he lay on the bed, he kept pointing with his eyes toward a particular direction.

Seeing this, his sons assumed that he might be indicating some hidden treasure. Thinking that something valuable must be buried there, they called a *vaidya* (physician) and requested him to give some medicine so that their father could speak for a few moments. The *vaidya* said the medicine would cost ₹5000. Although the family was not well-off, driven by greed, they agreed. The medicine was given, and for a brief moment, the old man was able to speak. To everyone’s surprise, he was pointing toward a cow that was eating a broom hanging nearby. Even in his final moments, his concern was about the broom being spoiled.

Insight: This shows how deeply the mind can remain attached to worldly objects. Even at the time of death, instead of thinking about the Divine or one’s ultimate destination, the person was worried about a small household item.

So, it is not correct to assume that at the final moment (*antim samay*) we will automatically remember the Divine. That will happen only if, throughout our life, we have practiced some form of *sādhana* or engaged in sincere *bhakti* of Bhagavān. By joining Gita classes, we have already taken the first step in the right direction. This sincere beginning can gradually make it easier for us to remember Bhagavān at the final moment. However, this may not be the case for everyone—especially for those who are not engaged in studying the Bhagavad gītā, nor practicing any form of *bhakti*, *smaran*, or meditation. For them, even the idea of remembering Bhagavān may feel unfamiliar, as they may not know how to connect with HIM.

That is why it becomes important to remain connected with the Divine throughout one’s life. In the next shloka, Bhagavān explains how one can stay connected with HIM at all times. In Gita Parivar, we are encouraged to memorize the Gita. This has a deep purpose—because if, at any stage in life, we face physical limitations such as not being able to see, speak, or move, then if the Gita is within us (*kaṅṭastha*), we can still remember and contemplate upon Bhagavān at any time. This is why Swamiji says, “*Gita padhe, padāye, jeevan mein lāye.*” And we have already begun making that effort. Now, let us understand how to remember the Divine in such a way that, at the final moment, it arises naturally and effortlessly.

8.7

**tasmātsarveṣu kāleṣu, māmanusmara yudhya ca,
mayyarpitamanobuddhiḥ(r), māmevaiśyasyasaṁśayaḥ. 8.7**

Therefore, Arjuna, think of Me at all times and fight. With mind and reason thus set on Me, you will doubtless come to Me.

In this shloka, Bhagavān advises Arjuna that, for all these reasons, it is important to remember HIM continuously—even while performing one’s duties. Arjuna is asked to keep fighting the war, but at the same time, to remain connected with the Divine. This means we should continue fulfilling our

responsibilities while keeping our mind anchored in HIM.

How to remember HIM in this way will be explained further, but the assurance given is clear—there is no doubt that by living like this, one will attain HIM. This is also reflected in our daily practices: whenever we begin something new, we remember Bhagavān, and whatever actions we perform, we dedicate them to HIM. In the morning when we get we recite the following:

***karāgre vasate lakṣmīḥ karamadhye sarasvatī
karamūle tu govindaḥ prabhāte karadarśanam***

Meaning:

At the tips of the hands resides *Lakshmi* (wealth),
in the middle of the hands resides *Saraswati* (knowledge),
and at the base of the hands resides *Govinda* (the Divine).
Therefore, upon waking in the morning, one should look at their hands.

That is why, in our tradition, we are guided to remember Bhagavān at every stage of the day—when we wake up, before going to sleep, and before stepping out of the house, we remember Him and offer our salutations. Similarly, before partaking food, we recite a mantra. In fact, many of our daily activities are accompanied by chanting or remembrance, so that our mind remains connected with the Divine throughout the day.

For example, before eating, we recite:

***brahmārpaṇaṁ brahma havir brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam
brahmaiva tena gantavyaṁ brahma-karma-samādhinā***

Meaning:

The act of offering is Brahman, the oblation is Brahman, it is offered by Brahman into the fire of Brahman. One who sees Brahman in every action surely attains Brahman.

So, the essence of the teaching is to remember Bhagavān at all times while continuing to perform our duties. We can remember Him by reciting His shlokas, doing japa, singing His glories, or by dedicating all our actions to Him. This is why, at the end of every chapter of the Bhagavad gītā, we say “*Om Shri Krishnārpaṇamastu*”— offering everything to Bhagavān Shri Krishn.

In the next shloka, Bhagavān explains further how one can remain in constant remembrance of HIM.

8.8

**abhyāsayogayuktena, cetasā nānyagāminā,
paRāmaṁ(m) puruṣaṁ(n) divyaṁ, yāti pārthānucintayan. 8.8**

Arjuna, he who with his mind disciplined through Yoga in the form of practice of meditation and thinking of nothing else, is constantly engaged in contemplation of God attains the supremely effulgent Divine Puruṣa (God).

Three things Bhagavān said here:

1. **abhyāsayogayuktena**: HE is emphasizing to constantly remember HIM through regular and consistent practice (*abhyāsa*). Only through such sustained effort does remembrance become natural and steady. For example, when we find a subject or topic difficult, we improve it through repeated

practice until we become comfortable with it. In the same way, we should also practice remembering Bhagavān again and again. If any subject feels weak, we strengthen it through continuous revision and effort; similarly, remembrance of the Divine also becomes strong through regular practice. We can begin by remembering HIM before every activity, starting from now. Gradually, this practice becomes natural and gets integrated into our actions. What initially feels difficult becomes easier over time through consistency and repetition.

2. **cetasā nānyagāminā**: Then additionally HE emphasizes that remembrance of the Divine requires a focused and steady mind, not a mind scattered in many directions.

3. **paRāmaṃ(m) puruṣaṃ(n) divyaṃ, yāti pārthānucintayan**: Lastly, HE says observance of above two i.e. constant remembrance along with a focused mind leads one to attain the Supreme Divine.

At this stage, the discussion was paused till next session begins. In that the consequences of what we remember at the time of death and how it influences our next birth will get covered. It is truly Bhagavān's grace that we have been able to connect with the teachings of the Bhagavad gītā at this early stage. We are very fortunate to have the opportunity to hear, understand, and reflect upon the Gita. May we continue to remain engaged with it sincerely and make full use of this invaluable opportunity.

Quiz

Q1. Arjun in total asked Bhagavan how many questions?

- A. 4
- B. 5
- C. 6
- D. 7

Correct Answer: is D

Q2. "*mā manusmar yudhya cha*" what does this mean?

- A. Forget Bhagavan and fight
- B. Only fight the war
- C. While performing duties, remember Bhagavan
- D. Give up fighting / give up your duties

Correct Answer:

C. While performing duties, remember Bhagavan

Questions & Answers

Shivansh Ji

Question: My son's mother tongue is Marathi. Is it possible to provide subtitles in Marathi so that he can fully understand and grasp the discussion?

Answer: A summary of the discussion is prepared in multiple languages, including English and Marathi. You may check if this helps Shivansh in better understanding the subject. The same can be accessed and downloaded from the following website:



We are sure you enjoyed reading the Vivechan write- up. Please invest three minutes of your time to provide us your feedback. Use the link below:

<https://vivechan.learngeeta.com/feedback/>

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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