

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ INTERPRETATION SUMMARY

Chapter 8: Akṣara-Brahma-Yoga

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

By turning inward and recognizing the Ātman within, one comes to know who Paramātmā truly is—the same imperishable reality that sustains all life and yet remains untouched by it.

The 8th Adhyāya of the Bhāgavad Gītā is called 'Akṣara Brahmā Yoga' - the Yoga of the Eternal Bhagavān.

The first of the two-part interpretation session of the eighth adhyāya of Śrīmad Bhāgavad Gītā started with prayers to Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa followed by the lighting of the auspicious lamp so that we are guided towards the path of Dharma, with the blessings of the Paramātmā, our Guru and the light of knowledge.

**Gurur Brahma Gurur Vishnu, Gurur Devo Maheshwarah ॥
Guru Saakshaata Parabrahma, Tasmai Shri Guruve Namah ॥**

The guru is Brahmā, the guru is Viṣṇu, the guru is Maheśvara (Śiva), the guru is the self-revealing limitless Brahman. Salutations to that revered guru.

**oṁ kṛṣṇāya vāsudevāya haraye paramātmane ॥
praṇata: kleśanāśāya govindāya namo nama: ॥**

'Salutation to Krishna, Vaasudeva, Hari the Paramātmān, Govinda, we bow our heads to you for the destruction of all our grief.'

**Om Pārthaya prathi bodhithm bhagawataa naaraayanena swayam,
Vyasaena gratitaam Puraana muninaa madhye Mahabaratam ॥
Advaitamruta varshaneem bhagawteem ashta dashaa dhyayineem,
Ambaa twaam anusandadhaami Bhāgavad geete bhava dweshineem. ॥**

'O Bhāgavad -Gītā, you have been told to Arjuna, the son of Prtha by Bhagavān Narayana Himself and afterwards you were included within the Mahabharata by the ancient sage Vyasa. Your eighteen divine adhyāyas are like a shower of the immortal nectar of wisdom of the Absolute. O mother, destroyer of man's rebirth into the darkness of this mortal world, upon you I meditate.'

Oṃ Sri Gurave Namaha ||

Oṃ Kṛṣṇāya Namah ||

Hari Oṃ ||

In the midst of the battlefield of Kurukṣetra, Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna are engaged in a profound dialogue as Arjuna seeks clarity on a dilemma troubling his mind. Likewise, every human being's life itself is a Kurukṣetra. Each of us struggles with questions, doubts, and dilemmas, striving to understand our life's purpose. In this inner battlefield, we seek our own answers and arrive at our own conclusions, guided by wisdom and reflection, so that we can discover the right path—the path that leads us back to our true origin and fulfils the highest purpose of human life.

One may ask, how do we come closer to understanding and achieving the highest purpose of human life? From whatever we know and have read from books, we know that human beings are endowed with a unique faculty—the intellect (buddhi)—which distinguishes us from other species. This capacity enables us to question, reflect, discriminate, and consciously choose our path. However, the scriptures take this understanding much deeper. They reveal that it is not the intellect alone that guides us, but also a subtler and higher form of awareness—the '**Ātmabuddhi**' (knowledge of the Self).

There are other species as well—birds that instinctively know how to fly great distances and return unerringly to their nests, dolphins that communicate and navigate with remarkable precision, and chimpanzees that can be trained to perform complex tasks. These abilities demonstrate the presence of intellect and memory in these species. Therefore, one can safely conclude that it is definitely not the intellect which separates us from the other species. What separates us from the other species is the '**Ātmabuddhi**.'

What is '**Ātmabuddhi**?' - It is the capacity to think where we come from. The capacity to understand aspects such as 'Who am I?' The capacity to think 'Where am I and where do I have to go?' and 'What is the purpose of my birth?' This capacity is what separates humans from the other species.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa has enlightened us with such concepts and many important principles with deep significance in entire conversation that we see in the form of various adhyāyas. Śrīmad Bhāgavad Gītā was not chanted the way we are chanting today. It was a continuous uninterrupted conversation between Arjuna and Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The seven hundred Ślokas of Bhāgavad Gītā are distributed adhyāya wise by Maharṣi Veda Vyāsa ji for our easy understanding.

We are at the point in this divine conversation where Śrī Kṛṣṇa has enlightened Arjun about the deep mysteries of human life and deep mysteries about himself. The seventh adhyāya starts on a beautiful note where Śrī Kṛṣṇa says,

**jñānaṃ te 'haṃ sa vijñānam idaṃ vakṣyāmy aśeṣataḥ |
yaj jñātvā neha bhūyo 'nyaj jñātavyam avaśiṣyate ||7.2||**

"I shall now explain to you this knowledge together with realized wisdom in full, knowing which there remains nothing further here to be known."

In the seventh adhyāya, Śrī Kṛṣṇa describes the material and spiritual dimensions of HIS energies. He explains that all these energies have originated from Him and rest in Him. The entire creation begins and dissolves into Him. After revealing the deep secret, Bhagavān goes onto describing some of his **Vibhūti**s (Divine attributes) such as **omnipotence**, **omnipresence**, and **omniscience**. After revealing this Bhagavān says that those devotees who surrender to HIM and take HIS shelter receive the divine knowledge of the Supreme Bhagavān, the self, and the entire field of the karmic actions. Bhagavān says that,

**yeṣhām tvanta-gataṁ pāpaṁ janānām puṇya-karmaṇām
te dvandva-moha-nirmuktā bhajante mām dṛiḍha-vratāḥ||7.28||**

‘persons, whose sins have been destroyed by engaging in pious activities, become free from the illusion of dualities. Such persons worship Me with determination.’

Śrī Kṛṣṇa had given an assurance at the beginning of the seventh adhyāya, ‘**yaj jñātvā neha bhūyo
'nyaj jñātavyam-avaśhiṣhyate**,’- ‘The knowledge and wisdom knowing which nothing else remains to be known in this world.’ Through Śrī Kṛṣṇa ’s teachings, one attains the highest purpose of a human being. The purpose being - Attain the knowledge of **Parama Pitā Paramātmā**. After gaining such a knowledge, Such souls begin to worship Bhagavān with firm resolve—by chanting, following, and taking refuge in HIM, they fall in love. As they continue on this path, Śrī Kṛṣṇa reveals an important truth: those who seek freedom from the cycle of birth and death must take shelter in Him alone.

**jarā maraṇa mokṣāya mām āśritya yatanti ye |
te brahma tad viduḥ kṛtsnam adhyātmaṁ karma cākḥilam ||7.29||**

‘Those who take refuge in Me and strive for liberation from old age and death come to know Brahman completely, along with the Self (adhyātma) and the entirety of karma.’

There are two important aspects that Śrī Kṛṣṇa touches upon - ‘**jarā maraṇa mokṣāya**,’ - They will get liberated from this life and death cycle due to

1. ‘**yatanti ye**’ - their own efforts
2. ‘**mām āśritya**’ - Taking refuge in ‘Me’

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that through true devotion and own efforts and by taking refuge in ‘HIM,’ devotees will attain ‘HIM’ as they will ‘understand HIM in totality.’ It is key to realize what Śrī Kṛṣṇa means by saying devotees will ‘understand ME in totality.’ Bhagavān says, such souls will,

1. ‘**te brahma tadviduḥ kṛtsnam**,’ - Understand everything about the ‘Brahman’ (Supreme Self)
2. ‘**adhyātmaṁ**,’ - Understand the Individual Self
3. ‘karma’ - Understand Karma

The understanding is ‘**chākḥilam**’ - in entirety. Understanding is complete. Bhagavān does not stop here, he then goes onto say,

**sādhibhūtādhidaivaṁ mām sādhiyajñaṁ cha ye viduḥ
prayāṇa-kāle 'pi cha mām te vidur yukta-chetasah||7.30||**

‘Those who know Me as the governing principle of the adhibhūta (field of matter) and the adhidaiva (the celestial gods), and as adhiyajña (the Lord of all sacrificial performances), such enlightened souls are in full consciousness of Me even at the time of death.’

Śrī Kṛṣṇa mentions that those enlightened souls who know HIM are truly devoted to HIM, and even at the time of their death (**prayāṇa-kāle**), they are in full consciousness of HIM (**yukta-chetasah**). Such true devotees attain His divine abode.

Although Arjuna is a Kshatriya, he has studied some aspects part of 'Vedānta,' but the terminologies listed by Bhagavān are very confusing to him. His mind is full of questions,

- Who is **Brahman**?
- What is **adhyātma**?
- What is **Karma** that Bhagavān is talking about?
- What is **adhibhūta** , **adhidaiva**, **adhiyajña** ?

The last two Ślokas of the seventh adhyāya - the 29th and the 30th Ślokas become the foundation, the seeds for the eighth adhyāya - 'Akṣara Brahmā Yoga'.

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)?

8.2

**adhiyajñaḥ(kh) kathaṃ(ñ) ko'tra, dehe'sminmadhusūdana,
prayāṇakāle 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?

The eighth adhyāya begins with Arjuna addressing Bhagavān and asking him a series of Questions,

- What/Who is **Brahman**?
- What is this **adhyātma**?
- What is **Karma**?
- What is this **adhibhūta** ?
- What is this **adhidaiva**?
- '**adhiyajñaḥ(kh) kathaṃ(ñ) ko'tra,**' - Who is this **adhiyajña**? And '**dehe 'smin madhusūdana,**' - Where in this body is this **adhiyajña**?
- '**prayāṇa-kāle cha kathaṃ jñeyo 'si niyatātmabhiḥ,**' - How do steadfast people (**niyatātmabhiḥ**) know you and stay in your remembrance at the time of death (**prayāṇa-kāle**)?

In these two verses, Arjuna puts forth to Śrī Kṛṣṇa seven questions, out of which six are about these words outlined by Bhagavān in Seventh Adhyaya, and the seventh question is regarding remembering Bhagavān at the time of death. Since Śrī Kṛṣṇa had introduced these subjects, Arjun wants Him to elaborate. The questions from Arjuna introduce the fundamental concepts through which Vedānta explains reality. These basic terms—such as **Brahman**, **Ātman**, **karma**, **adhibhūta**, **adhidaiva**, and **adhiyajña**—form the core framework of the **Vedāntic Śāstras**, guiding the seeker toward an integrated understanding of the Supreme Truth and the purpose of human life.

Learning Computers - An Example

If someone wants to learn computers, there are certain basic lessons they must first understand. They begin by learning fundamental questions such as: What is hardware? What is software? What is a password? What is a domain? What is an email? Only when these basic concepts are clear can a person meaningfully understand how computers function and be able to use them effectively.

Student Doctors - An Example

When doctors begin their medical studies, they do not immediately start treating patients. They first learn the basic foundational subjects that help them understand the human body and disease. These include fundamental questions such as:

What is anatomy? - the study of the structure of the human body

What is physiology? - how the body functions normally

What is pathology? - the study of disease and what goes wrong in the body

Likewise, everyone needs to understand the basic terminology in any field of study. Once the concepts are clear, advanced topics and approach can be pitched in.

The entire '**Vedānta Śāstra**' is built upon the seven fundamental questions raised by Arjuna, which awaken his curiosity and spiritual inquiry. The Seventh and the last question from Arjuna is about the science of death. Everybody has to leave the mortal body at some point of time. However, Arjuna's question is about the further journey of ātmā after being released from mortal body. Śrī Kṛṣṇa explains the first six questions in brief in the upcoming two Ślokas. However, for the seventh question which is highly relevant to all of us, Bhagavān addresses it in greater detail.

8.3

śrībhagavān uvāca akṣaram(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).

The term 'Brahma' has been used at multiple places in different context. Śrī Kṛṣṇa calls Brahma (Supreme Self) as the creator of Vedas and conclusion of Vedic knowledge (**Vedānta**). In another instance, Bhagavān says,

'mama yonir mahad brahma tasmin garbhaṃ dadhāmy aham,' ||14.3||

'The total material substance, prakṛiti, is the womb. I impregnate it with the individual souls'

Through this verse Bhagavān terms '**Maya**' as '**Mahat Brahma**.'

In this verse, Bhagavān says, '**akṣaram(m) brahma paRāmaṃ(m)**.' Bhagavān has used two important adjectives for Brahma - '**Akṣaram**' and '**Parāmaṃ**.'

In both of the verses (Contexts) as given above, '**Brahma-Tattva**' is used in different contexts. In the context of Vedas, it is referred to as '**Brahma-Tattva**' cannot be called as '**Param Brahma**.'

The '**Yoga Maya**' is also referred to as '**Brahma-Tattva**' but she is called '**Mahat Brahma**' and not as '**Param Brahma**.' Śrī Kṛṣṇa intends to say that the '**Brahma-Tattva**' referred here is '**Parāmaṃ**'

and '**Akṣaram**.' It is the most 'Supreme.' '**Akṣaram**' refers to something that cannot be changed, it does not deteriorate and it remains forever.

Here, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is clearly identifying Brahman as the Supreme Imperishable Reality. He unequivocally establishes that Brahman is that which does not change, does not decay, and does not deteriorate. Therefore, this definition of Brahman is absolute and unchangeable, leaving no scope for reinterpretation as any perishable entity or created being.

Sky as a Metaphor

A simple example to understand **Brahma-Tattva** is the sky. During Diwali, when crackers are burst, the sky appears hazy and clouded. Similarly, during storms or heavy weather, the sky may look dark and disturbed. Yet the sky itself is never altered. The clouds, smoke, and disturbances come and go, but the sky remains the same. Though all existence is powered by **Brahma-Tattva**, it remains absolute—just as the sky is unaffected by clouds that appear within it. **Brahma-Tattva** is timeless, ever-present, and eternal; it always exists, unchanged and untouched by the movements of the world.

When Śrī Kṛṣṇa says '**Akṣaram**,' there are two more properties that come in in this context - '**Sarvatra**' (Everywhere) and it is '**Sarvadā**' (Forever). '**Sarvatra**' in context of space is everywhere and '**Sarvadā**' in context of the time is 'always' or 'forever there.' '**Akṣaram**' is therefore unaltered by space and time.

'**svabhāvo'dhyātmamucyate**,' - Bhagavān then moves to address the next question from Arjuna. '**Svabhāvaḥ**' is derived from 'Sva' (own) and 'Bhāva' (nature), meaning Inherent nature. The aspect that can be termed as 'I' or 'Me,' is '**Adhyātma**' or one's own self.

Bottle of Ganga water - A Metaphor

If one were to stand by the Ganga River, and fill a bottle with water from the River, one may say, "This bottle of Ganga water is mine; no one can take it from me." In that limited sense, the bottle belongs to self. However, one can never lay claim to the Ganga River itself as own. The River existed before oneself, will continue to exist afterwards, and flows independently of any perception of ownership. Likewise, this body is merely a vessel—like the bottle—that temporarily holds the **Ātma-Tattva** (the Self). **Ātma-Tattva** since it is held within the body, it may be termed as '**Adhyātma**.' The body may be called "mine." Since the '**Ātma-Tattva**' gets associated with this body, it gives an identification and hence '**Adhyātma**.' That is why Śrī Kṛṣṇa says '**svabhāvo'dhyātmam uchyate**.'

The subtle presence of divine all-pervasive power within us is known as '**Adhyātma**.' This is the closest address of Paramātmā that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is giving us, a portion of that vast extensive 'Brahma' within us is the '**Svabhāva**.' Śrī Kṛṣṇa has also referred to this in another Śloka,

**mamaivānśho jīva-loke jīva-bhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ
manaḥ-śaṣṭhānīndriyāṇi prakṛiti-sthāni karṣhati ||15.7||**

'The embodied souls in this material world are My eternal fragmental parts. But bound by material nature, they are struggling with the six senses including the mind.'

So, if someone were to ask, 'What is it that we need to know the most?' Then all that we can say is - 'We should be accumulating **Adhyātma jñāna**.' If we have to know the Paramātmā, the nearest place is 'Within,' the ātmā. By turning inward and recognizing the Ātman within, one comes to know who Paramātmā truly is—the same imperishable reality that sustains all life yet remains untouched by change.

The Nearest Beach - A Metaphor

If one were to desire to go to the nearest beach in Mumbai. The most obvious destination to reach would be Juhu or Chowpatty. It would be illogical to try and travel to a beach in Kanyakumari or a beach in Kolkata or Chennai. All of these are thousands of kilometers away from Mumbai. Likewise, if one were to seek Paramātmā, the fastest method to reach would be to do 'ātmanam viddhi' – meaning 'Know Thyself.' By turning inward and recognizing the Ātman within, one comes to know who Paramātmā truly is—the same imperishable reality that sustains all life yet remains untouched by change. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Bhagavān had given 'adhyātma-vidyā' as his **Vibhūti**. Therefore, the practices of **Dhyana, Bhakti** and **Jñāna yoga** are all means of understanding Paramātmā and puts the seeker on the path to fully comprehend 'Ātmā-Tattva,' the '**Brahma-Tattva**.'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa now begins to answer the third question – 'What is Karma?' Bhagavān says, 'Karma' is '**bhūta-bhāva-udbhava-karaḥ**.' The '**Prakriyā**,' (Process/Procedure) by which this entire universe (**Sṛṣṭi**) is created (**visargaḥ**) from the **Brahma-Tattva** and then is dissolved again in that same energy (**bhūta-bhāva-udbhava-karaḥ**) is termed as 'Karma' or '**Bhagavat Karma**' (Action of Bhagavān). It is not an individual's Karma. Here '**Bhūta**' refers to 'that which is born.'

Pot and Curd - A Metaphor for Creation

Metaphorically speaking, creation happened in two ways –

- A potter makes a clay pot through a process that transforms raw earth into a durable vessel and sets it aside and moves onto another task.
- The other type of creation is that of the curd. A small fraction (or a sample) of curd acts a seed is added to milk which then over time transforms milk into curd. The seed becomes a part of that entire creation.

The methods above are two distinct types of creation. How is the universe created by the Brahma-Tattva? The universe is created by the mix of both these methods. Brahma-Tattva has created this universe and at the same time, HE like the potter has not moved away from his creation but is very much present in the creation like the 'seed curd.' This entire process of creating the world is 'Karma.' It is 'Bhagavat Karma.' **Vedānta** teaches that Bhagavān is not only the creator of the universe but also its sustainer, witness, and inner Self (Paramātmā) within all beings.

8.4

adhibhūtaṃ(ñ) kṣaro bhāvaḥ(ph), puruṣaścādhidaivatam, adhiyajño'hamevātra, dehe dehabhṛtām 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 !

Śrī Kṛṣṇa now commences answering the next question – What is '**adhibhūta**?' So far in the previous Śloka we have seen the nature of **Brahma-Tattva**, which is - **Aksara** (imperishable), **Parama** (supreme), timeless, unchangeable, unaffected, and beyond birth and death. The opposite of **Brahma-Tattva** is called '**Kṣara Tattva**,' which refers to the perishable world. '**Kṣara**' is the '**adhibhūta**' from which the '**bhūta**' (the creatures or beings) are created. Bhagavān says '**adhibhūtaṃ kṣaro bhāvaḥ**.' '**Kṣara**' is something that can decline, is perishable, and is ephemeral.

'**puruṣaś chādhidaivatam**,' – the '**Puruṣa-Tattva**.' What is '**Puruṣa-Tattva**?' The '**Puruṣa-Tattva**' is '**Adhidaiva**.' After the creation of the universe, an administrative head '**Brahmā**' is entrusted with organizing and populating the universe according to the laws established by

Bhagavān. Within this perishable realm, the functioning of the universe and the senses is governed by **Adhidaiva**—the presiding divine principles.

All our senses function due to the presence and blessings of the **Adhidaiva** (presiding deities). For example, when we speak—the ability of speech operates through the presiding deity '**Agni**.' Similarly, sight (**Surya Dev**), hearing (**Digdevatā**), smell (**The Aśvini Kumāras**), taste (**Varuna**), and touch (**Vayu**) are each governed by their respective '**Adhidaiva**.' While the senses appear to act independently, they are empowered and regulated by '**Adhidaiva**', who functions within '**Kṣara - Tattva**.' '**Adhidaiva**' are the gods who derive their power from the **Brahma-Tattva** and ensure that there is this balance in this entire universe.

We sometimes come across cases where everything seems medically correct with respect to a sense organ, for example the eye, and yet there is no sight. Such cases are attributed to '**doṣha**' (Fault/deficiency) with respect to associated '**Adhidaiva**,' and in this case '**Sūrya Dev**.' In such cases scriptures may recommend a '**Prāyaścitta**' process like a '**Suryopasana**' or any other worship to help such a patient.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Bhagavān then goes on to answer Arjuna's next question - Who is this **Adhiyajña**? And '**dehe 'smin madhusūdana,**' - Where in this body is this **Adhiyajña**?

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, '**adhiyajño'hamevātra**' - '**Aham eva atra**' meaning that 'I have given the entire profile.' Shri Krishna says that the 'Self' or 'I' that is present in all the beings, which is '**adhiyajña**.' What does Bhagavān want? In the form of love, a living person should just remember HIM. We have to be able to see '**Adhiyajña**' in everyone. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, 'I, who dwell in the heart of every living being, am called **Adhiyajña**, or the Lord of all sacrifices.'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa has now answered all the six questions asked by Arjun. Bhagavān had said in previous adhyāya,

**sādhībūtādhidaivam mām sādhiyajñam cha ye viduḥ
prayāṇa-kāle 'pi cha mām te vidur yukta-chetasah||7.30||**

'Those who know Me as the governing principle of the adhibhūta (field of matter) and the adhidaiva (the celestial gods), and as adhiyajña (the Lord of all sacrificial performances), such enlightened souls are in full consciousness of Me even at the time of death.'

The supreme learned people (**viduḥ**), those intelligent ones, the ones who know Bhagavān and are in full consciousness of HIM (**yukta-chetasah**), concentrate their minds upon HIM and HIS entire glory, and as a result of this, they attain HIM. Arjuna had asked Bhagavān, 'How does one focus on YOU while leaving this body?' In response to this seventh question, Shri Krishna starts explaining from the fifth Śloka.

8.5

**antakāle ca māmeva, smaranmuktvā 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.

Why has Arjuna given so much importance to this last-minute remembrance of Bhagavān? Why should one remember Bhagavān at the last dying moments (**antakāle**)? The answer - The two Ślokas,

the fifth and the sixth Śloka, hold a big secret on the subject of death. What is the key? The key here is - Whatever you imagine at the end of your life. That will be your final destination.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa clearly states here that, 'Those who remember at the end (**antakāle**) - at the final moment (time of death), **'mām eva smaraṇ'** - remembering Me alone.' Śrī Kṛṣṇa is specific and clear - Remembering HIM alone, not family, not friends. Remember only HIM. Such devotees will attain HIM. If one were to remember anything or anyone else, that is what one will attain.

Bhagavān says,

- **'smaranmuktṛvā kalevaram'** - at the time of relinquishing the mortal body,
- **'yaḥ prayāti sa mad-bhāvaṃ'** - They will attain me,
- **'yāti nāstyatra sanśhayaḥ'** - There is no doubt in this,

Without any doubt, they are going to reach where? - Such ātmā will attain the Supreme Abode. That is the importance of the seventh question for Arjuna and for us seekers too.

The Selfie Metaphor

Let us consider a simple example from everyday life. We are about get a photograph taken for an important occasion and a lot of preparation has been done for this. We dress well, apply makeup, and adjust everything to look perfect. At the appointed photo shoot, something unexpected happens (could be anything)—the electricity goes off, we start sweating, or we sneeze at the wrong moment. If the photographer clicks the picture at that exact instant, all the preparation becomes meaningless, and the photo captures a moment that we never intended to happen. In the same manner, end of life can arrive equally unexpectedly. Despite all our best laid plans and preparations, the final moment may not unfold the way we imagine.

What truly matters then is the state of our consciousness at that moment. Just as a photograph captures the state, we are in at the instant it is taken, death captures the dominant consciousness we have cultivated over a lifetime. We have worked so hard through our life to get connected with Paramatma, but at the last minute the remembrance was on something else and that picture snapshot has been captured by Bhagavān. This results in a different kind of birth. That is exactly what Shri Krishna explains in the next Śloka.

8.6

yaṃ(m) yaṃ(m) vāpi smaranbhāvaṃ(n), tyajatyante kalevaram, taṃ(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 states: At the conclusion of one's life, the prevailing thought or state of mind during the departure of the ātmā from the body determines what will be attained in the subsequent birth. The nature of the final contemplation directly influences the outcome in the next existence.

- **'yaṃ yaṃ vāpi smaran bhāvaṃ,'** - Whatever (**yaṃ yaṃ**) one remembers (**smaran**) or feels (**bhāvaṃ**),
- **'tyajatyante kalevaram'** - While giving up (**tyajatyante**) the body (**kalevaram**),

'While leaving this body' - This is such an important aspect to understand. The journey after the death is also a long journey and Śrī Kṛṣṇa Bhagavān implies that our actions should be towards preparation for the Journey. That is the reason these Ślokas are important.

The Pilgrimage Metaphor

Consider the preparation we make when we plan for a yātrā (pilgrimage) to Haridwar or Rishikesh. Before we set out, we carefully prepare according to where we are going. If the trip to the destination is during cold season, we pack warm clothes; if it is hot at the destination, we make different arrangements. We check the duration, the conditions, and what is required for the journey. Often, this preparation takes weeks or months—yet the actual trip itself may last only a few days.

In the same way, the journey after death is far more significant and far longer than any physical journey. It may lead to upliftment (Towards Heaven) or to a downward movement (Towards the Nether worlds) depending on the state of our consciousness. Unlike a yātrā, we do not know when this journey will begin. Death can come suddenly, without warning. We should always be prepared and these set of slokas from the sixth to the eighth, help us prepare for that journey.

Death is a complex topic and we hesitate to think about all this, but if life is the reality and truth, death is a bigger reality of our existence. When we say death, it is not just 'death of the mortal body,' It is the process of 'leaving' this body, which is a bigger reality of our very existence because 'we are not this body.' Then who are we? We are that subtle element of the Adhyātma-Tattva, we are the Brahma-Tattva and that is our real existence. We are temporarily present in the mortal body. Therefore, we have to be prepared for that longer journey and that that is what these slokas are preparing us for. In the absence of preparation or even awareness as such, we cannot call our life as a planned life.

When we look at these two slokas together. What is essence? It is planning. If one aspires to attain the abode of Paramātmā and that being the life goal, then every aspect of our life should be primed towards remembrance of **Parama Pitā Paramātmā**. If in our entire life, we are only focussed on day-to-day material aspects like work, salary, career, or wealth then what is it that will be remembered at that very last moment? The solution to this is given by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the next Śloka.

8.7

tasmātsarveṣu kāleṣu, māmanusmara yudhya ca, mayyarpitamanobuddhiḥ(r), māmevaiśyasyasaṃśayaḥ. 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.

When Śrī Kṛṣṇa starts with this word '**tasmāt**,' it is to be construed that it is a directive, one that needs to be followed by seekers.

Bhagavān here says, '**sarveṣu kāleṣu**' – meaning 'at all times' (entire lifetime), and he further says '**māmanusmara yudhya ca**' – 'remember Me and also do your duty of fighting the war.' In this case Bhagavān has used the term '**yudhya**' since the conversation is taking place in **Dharmakṣetra Kurukṣetra**. It is therefore relevant for Arjuna, but for us seekers it means 'fulfilling responsibilities' in constant remembrance of Bhagavān (**māmanusmara**). One should not withdraw from life; should live fully, but with constant awareness of Bhagavān. Not a single moment is to be wasted because you never know when the final moment will arrive.

It is to be noted that Śrī Kṛṣṇa has not used the term '**smara**' (remember), he very specifically said '**Anusmara**.' Why? '**Anusmara**' translates to "reminiscence" or the action of memory, sometimes representing a state of 'active mindfulness'.

Bhāgavad Gītā Classes - An Analogy

In the classes, the teacher reads out a verse, which is then repeated multiple times by the sādhas. This is repeated until the group is comfortable with the pronunciation and flow. This is '**Anupathan**' which means - to read, recite, or chant after the teacher. Bhagavān says that we are not the first to remember HIM, it is HE who is constantly remembering us. We are all his children and we are all in HIS thoughts always. Just as a teacher asks for '**Anupathan**,' we have to follow Bhagavān and remember him, be in that state of '**Anusmara**.'

When we come across pain in our life, we tend to jump to conclusions that Bhagavān is punishing us by giving pain. We worry if we have committed some sin and offended Bhagavān. Such a thought process is incorrect. Bhagavān is impartial and is kind. We are always in his thoughts; however, how much we are in constant remembrance of HIM is important. The more we are in the state of '**Anusmara**,' the more we derive his Grace upon us.

Bhagavān says, '**māmanusmara yudhya ca**,' - 'Do your duties and be in constant remembrance of ME.' Now, one may be tempted to ask - Is this possible? Can we be in such a state while engrossed in our Karma? The answer is 'Yes. We can.' One has to just look to Gopis of Vṛndāvan to understand this.

Gopis of Vṛndāvan - An Anecdote

There is a beautiful story about a simple Gopi in Vṛndāvana who would go from house to house to sell makhan (butter). As she walked along the lanes, she would begin calling aloud 'Makhan le lo (Buy butter), it is very sweet.' As the Gopi walked from street to street she would repeat the call - 'Makhan le lo (Buy butter), it is very sweet.' But as she walked, her mind would drift to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. She would remember HIS smile, HIS flute, HIS playful stealing of butter, and all HIS **līlā** (divine play) in the homes of the other Gopis. Soon, without realizing it, her call would change to 'Nandlal le lo (Take Son of Nanda), HE is very sweet.' But, only for a brief moment and then she would suddenly stop, smile to herself, and laugh, realizing 'Oh! I came to sell butter and not Sri Kṛṣṇa.' Yet again, as she resumed walking, the same thing would happen. Her tongue called out business, but her heart overflowed with Kṛṣṇa. Her remembrance was so deep that even her worldly duties could not separate her from HIM.

Great saints such as **Eknāth Mahārāj** and **Tukārām Mahārāj** were immersed in Bhakti and yet they never forgot their duties. They all continued doing their day-today activities and continued fulfilling their responsibilities. But where was the mind affixed? On Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Likewise, the mind of the Gopis was always fixed on Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Constant Remembrance and Attachment - Anecdote of Jaḍabharata

Jaḍabharata, a revered sage (Vishnu Purana/Bhagavatam), was the reincarnation of King Bharata. He performed Severe Tapasyā. He stayed near the banks of a sacred river, performed yajña, and lived with deep detachment from worldly life. One day Jaḍabharata saw a pregnant deer crossing the river. Frightened by a lion's roar, the deer miscarried and died, leaving behind a helpless fawn. Out of compassion, Bharata rescued the baby deer and took it into his āśrama. At first, Jaḍabharata simply cared for the deer by feeding it, protecting it, and showing kindness. But slowly his attention moved from Bhagavān to the fawn. He became worried about its safety, and this weakened his meditation as his thoughts were filled with the fawn. Although he never stopped spiritual practice outwardly, his inner attachment had shifted. At his last moments, Jaḍabharata was still remembering the deer. His last thought was not Bhagavān, but the deer. In his next life, he was reborn as a deer. Because of Jaḍabharata's immense Tapasyā and devotion, he retained the memory of his past life. Trapped in the body of a deer, with the awareness of a yogi, he lived quietly near sage filled forests, never again attaching himself to anything. Jaḍabharata's life teaches that even a great devotee must guard the mind, for the final remembrance alone determines the soul's journey—exactly as Śrī Kṛṣṇa proclaims.

We have discussed that Great Sages and the Gopis have been in constant remembrance of HIM. One may be tempted to ask 'How?' Śrī Kṛṣṇa answers by saying '**mayyarpita-mano-buddhir**' – 'Surrender your mind and intellect to ME,' and by doing so, '**mām evaiṣhyasyasanśhayam,**' – 'you will definitely attain ME and there is no doubt.'

If one were told to offer a physical object like a book, it can be done. We can offer money in the temple or offer flowers even. However, one cannot remove the mind and intellect and offer it. So, the question is 'How does one offer these to Bhagavān?' To offer our mind and to offer our intellect means that one must never forget Bhagavān, irrespective of the action is being performed.

A mother and her baby - A Metaphor

A mother has many household chores to complete in addition to taking care of her baby. It is a daunting task and yet she does not abandon her responsibilities. She quickly bathes the baby, feeds the baby, gently puts the baby to sleep, and then proceeds with her daily work—cleaning, cooking, and attending to other duties. On the outside, she appears fully engaged in her chores. Inwardly, however, her attention never leaves the baby. Even while working, her ears remain alert to the smallest sound, her mind remains centered on her baby, and her decisions are shaped around the baby's needs. If the baby cries, everything else immediately stops. The mother's unwavering attention for her child in the midst of all her responsibilities is an apt example of '**mayyarpita-mano-buddhir.**'

Very similarly a 'Mother' bird will care for her chicks with unwavering attention. Mother birds will fly away from their nest in search for food for their baby chicks, and they will circle back to the nest to feed the babies. Even when they are far from the nest, their mind is always affixed on their nest and the welfare of the babies. Likewise, no matter what we are doing, our mind should be centrally affixed on **Parama Pitā Paramātmā.**

It may seem difficult at first. There are times when we sit down to work but find that the mind is distracted and the intellect is scattered. In such moments, instead of forcing concentration, one simple and powerful practice is to offer a short prayer before beginning the work. Once the work is completed, offering another short prayer—expressing gratitude and offering the results. This is similar to all the Gītā classes that Geeta Pariwar holds. We start our classes with '**vasudeva-sutaṁ devaṁ**' and then we end it with '**Yogeśam Sachcidānandam.**' With these prayer offerings, whatever transpires between these two prayers automatically gets offered to Parama Pitā Paramātmā.

Seekers may have an apprehension that many tasks are performed through the day and how do we keep up with the routine. In such cases, one must inculcate the habit of offering salutations to Śrī Kṛṣṇa at the beginning of the day by reciting '**kṛṣṇāya vāsudevāya**' and saying that 'O Bhagavān, whatever I do today, please accept as an offering' and at the end of the day pray saying that 'O Bhagavān, whatever I have achieved today, I dedicate to your lotus feet.' By practicing this '**tasmāt sarveṣhu kāleṣu**' (at all times), everything reaches HIM. When such a practice becomes a habit, we would have achieved what Bhagavān says – '**mayyarpita-mano-buddhir.**'

In the upcoming Śloka Śrī Kṛṣṇa explains the process of leaving the body and how the intellectual ones through **Dhyāna-yoga** have completely attained mastery in focusing on Paramātmā.

8.8

abhyāsayogayuktena, cetasā nānyagāminā,

paRāmaṃ(m) puruṣaṃ(n) divyaṃ, 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).

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Bhagavān says, '**yuktena chetasā nānya-gāminā,**' - One should constantly be engaged in remembrance (**yuktena**) by focusing their minds (**chetasā**) without any deviations (**na anya-gāminā**). Our minds are very fleeting and tends to wander. We should make all efforts to rein in our mind and keep focus on Bhagavān. This can be achieved as Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, through '**abhyāsa-yoga,**' - practice of yoga.

The Expanding 'Learn Geeta' family - An example

At Learn Geeta, the last month there was a trip to Kurukshetra and we came across many Gītā Vratis. It was inconceivable a few years ago for people in the age group of sixties and seventies to learn the complete Bhāgavad Gītā. When we look back, we are not sure if people back then in Geeta Pariwar were confident of spreading the essence of Bhāgavad Gītā. However, by the grace of Bhagavān, and by relentless focussed efforts (**abhyāsa-yogena**) it became a possibility.

'**abhyāsa-yoga-yuktena chetasā nānya-gāminā,**' - Through unwavering focus, Bhagavān is asking us to do '**Anucintayan.**'

'**Anucintayan**' means constant contemplation or repeated, sustained remembrance. It reminds us of an important truth: we are not the first seekers on this path. Long before us, the great Ācāryas and realized beings walked this very journey of contemplation and realization. That is why Śrī Kṛṣṇa uses the word '**Anucintayan**'. It is not a one-time thought, but a living tradition of continuous remembrance, practiced generation after generation. Bhagavān Veda Vyāsa, Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, and many other sages and saints engaged in this same Chintan—deep reflection on Brahman, Paramātmā, and the truth of the Self. Through steady contemplation, discipline, and surrender, they realized the Supreme and then shared the path for those who came after them. '**Anucintayan**' is continuous contemplation along a proven path—one walked by Bhagavān, the sages, and the Ācāryas—showing us that steady remembrance leads unfailingly to realization.

Following the process as detailed through 'abhyāśa' - doing it over and over again and again, and following the path of dedicated and uninterrupted devotion towards Bhagavān will take us to 'paramaṃ puruṣaṃ divyaṃ.' Who is the 'paramaṃ puruṣaṃ divyaṃ'? He is the 'akṣaraṃ brahma paramaṃ.' Śrī Kṛṣṇa has explained about 'paramaṃ puruṣaṃ' in the previous Śloka.

Summarizing Śrī Kṛṣṇa 's teachings in this Śloka, Bhagavān says,

1. 'Chintan' will lead devotees to '**akṣaraṃ brahma paramaṃ.**'
2. When one does not know how to do Chintan, then one has to perform '**Anucintayan**' by following the great seers before us,
3. One must follow Gurudev's instructions

And then, devotees will begin to '**Understand Me.**' What is exactly meant by 'Understanding Bhagavān' and what are the qualities of '**paramaṃ puruṣaṃ divyaṃ,**' is detailed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the upcoming Ślokas.

8.9

**kaviṃ(m) purāṇamanuśāsītāraṃ,
aṇoraṇīyaṃ(m) śamanusmaredyaḥ,
sarvasya dhātāRāmacintyarūpaṃ(m)
ādiyavarṇaṃ(n) tamaśaḥ(ph) parastāt. 8.9**

He who contemplates on the all-knowing, ageless Being, the Ruler of all, subtler than the subtle, the universal sustainer, possessing a form beyond human conception, effulgent like the sun and far beyond the darkness of ignorance.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa now specifies the exact qualities of the '**paramaṃ puruṣhaṃ divyaṃ**' that we must hold in '**Anucintayan**' (constant contemplation). These are revealed truths, contemplated and passed on by the **Ācārya paramparā**. The Qualities to Contemplate (**Chintan**) are,

- **Kaviṃ** — The Omniscient One: Kavi means the all- knowing seer. HE knows the past, present, and future, and nothing is hidden from Him. He is not learning knowledge—HE is knowledge
- **Purāṇam** — HE is the Most Ancient and HE is eternal. If one were to think about the most ancient thing known to humans, HE is more ancient than that. **Purāṇam** means the oldest and HE existed before creation
- **Anuśāsītāram** — The Supreme Governor, the master of the universe. This means HE is the silent ruler of the entire **Sṛṣṭi** (Chara and Achara), ruler of the dynamic and mutable universe that we see around him. HE is the one who administers everything.
- **Aṇor Aṇiyāṃsam** — Subtler Than the Subtlest. HE Dwells as Paramātmā in every heart and is smaller than the smallest, closer than breath and yet greater than the greatest. '**Aṇu**' means 'atom.'
- **Sarvasya Dhātāram** — The Sustainer of all, the entire universe is within HIM. Everything exists because HE supports it. Life, energy, order, and Consciousness, planets, galaxies, and solar systems is all held together by HIM. Multiple universes are held together by the '**Aṇor Aṇiyāṃsam**,' this subtle divine element. And that is why it is difficult to imagine and conceive all of this in our mind.
- **Acintya Rūpam** — Of Inconceivable Nature. HIS true form cannot be grasped in entirety by logic or imagination and is beyond intellectual capacity.
- **Ādiya Varṇam** — Radiant Like the Sun. The illuminance and brilliance are being equated to the SUN only due to the limitation of imagination and intellectual capacity.
- **Tamaśaḥ Parastāt** — Beyond All Darkness. HE is beyond ignorance, Māyā, Delusion, Fear and Death

When we describe the qualities of '**paramaṃ puruṣhaṃ divyaṃ**' using sun, the sky, and the solar system, we need to understand that these are just small 'thinking aids.' These help us imagine and visualize the enormity. However, the Sun is illuminated by Bhagavān himself. The extent of the power and vastness of Bhagavān is truly '**Acintya**.'

8.10

**prayānakāle manasācalena,
bhaktyā yukto yogabalena caiva,
bhruvormadhye prāṇamāveśya samyak,
sa taṃ(m) paraṃ(m) puruṣamupaiti divyam. 8.10**

Having by the power of Yoga firmly held the life-breath in the space between the two eyebrows even at the time of death, and then contemplating on God with a steadfast mind, full of devotion, he

reaches verily that supreme divine Puruṣa (God).

The intellectuals (**viduḥ**), whose mind and intellect are dedicated to the Paramātmā, come to comprehend the nature of the '**paramaṁ puruṣhaṁ divyaṁ**' through diligent study and continuous contemplation (**Anucintayan**). These individuals, at the moment of death—the final juncture when the physical body's journey ends and the soul prepare to move forward (**Prayāṇa kale**)—do so with particular qualities or process that have been cultivated throughout their lives.

- Unwavering Mind (**Manasā acalena**): Their minds remain steady and do not wander. There is no attachment to the body or the world. Such firmness is not a result of last-minute attempts but comes from a lifetime of contemplation and practice.
- United in Remembrance (**Bhaktyā yuktaḥ**): Their mind and intellect are united in remembrance with devotion. This natural remembrance, as seen in the Gopis, is achieved through sincere and continuous devotion.
- Strength of Yoga (**Yoga balena**): They possess inner strength developed through the practice of yoga. Through this yoga they control the '**Prāṇa**' and with this strength they fix the '**Prāṇa**' between the eyebrows —not through physical force, but through spiritual maturity gained over time. This is an exceedingly difficult practice and the control of 'prāṇa' is called '**Prāṇāyāma**' (practice of controlling the breath to expand and regulate the life force)
- Life Energy Fixed at the Centre of Awareness (**Bhruvor madhye prāṇam āveśya**): At the time of departure, the **Prāṇa** (life force) is concentrated between the eyebrows. This signifies a withdrawal of the senses, a gathering of life energy, and an inner focus at the subtle centre of awareness. At the centre of eyebrows is the '**Ājñā Cakra**' or also called as the third eye. When the '**Prāṇa**' is held between the eyebrows, the entire energy is concentrated there at the '**Ājñā Cakra**.'

Such intellectuals at '**Prayāṇa kale**,' steadily remember the Divine Supreme with great devotion and attain HIM —'**Sa taṁ paramaṁ puruṣam upaiti divyam**.'

8.11

**yadakṣaraṁ(m) vedavido vadanti
viśanti yadyatayo vītarāgāḥ,
yadicchanto brahmacaryaṁ(ñ) caranti
tatte padaṁ(m) saṁgrahaṇa praVākṣye. 8.11**

I shall tell you briefly about that Supreme goal (viz., God, who is an embodiment of Truth, Knowledge and Bliss), which the knowers of the Veda term as the Indestructible, which striving recluses, free from passion, merge into, and desiring which the celibates practise Brahmacharya.

'**yad akṣharaṁ veda-vido vadanti**,' - It is Bhagavān who is called as '**akṣhara**,' one who is the knower of all Vedas and the form of the imperishable. The Tattva is '**Veda vido vadanti**,' — described (revealed) by the knowers of the Vedas. All the process that was described by Śrī Kṛṣṇa is possible or applicable for one who understands the '**Akṣhara-Tattva**.'

'**Viśanti yad yatayaḥ vīta rāgāḥ**' — One who is free from all attachments is termed as '**vīta-rāgāḥ**.' Such a person has given up all the desires and is only focused upon **Parama Pitā Paramātmā**. Such people, who are trying to achieve that particular goal of attaining the Supreme, having given up all these desires and focussed on attaining control over 'Self' are termed as '**Yati**' and since the plural form is used here, it becomes '**yatayaḥ**.' They are free from attachment and the worldly subjects and they have outgrown all their desires. Such people enter (**viśhanti**) the imperishable Supreme.

'Yad icchantah brahmacaryaṃ caranti' — Those desirous (**icchantah**) of entering into the Supreme practise (**caranti**) celibacy (**brahmacaryaṃ**). **'Brahmacaryaṃ'** is to be understood in deeper context. It is the opinion of many that by just following the rules of physical restrictions **'Brahmacaryaṃ'** is accomplished. It is far from the truth. A **'Brahmacārin'** is one who is connected to Brahman by his **'Ācaraṇa'** (behaviour). He is also someone who is **'charya'** (following) all the rules of self-restraint, learning, and spiritual discipline and is connected with the **'Brahma-Tattva.'** In the spiritual context, he is one who has disciplined the mind, senses, and body for the sake of spiritual growth or attaining liberation (**moksha**).

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that the great ascetics (**yatayaḥ**) having practised **'brahmacaryaṃ,'** they enter into the Supreme. Bhagavān further says,

'Tat te padaṃ saṃgrahaṇa pravakṣye,' — 'I will explain (**pravakṣye**) that goal (**padaṃ**) briefly (**saṃgrahaṇa**).' Śrī Kṛṣṇa mentions in this verse the word **'saṃgrahaṇa'** which means **'in brief.'** HE says that this path is exceedingly difficult to follow and not suitable for everyone. Therefore, HE will not elaborate much and briefly describe this path of **'yog-miśhrā bhakti.'**

8.12

**sarvadvārāṇi saṃyamya, mano hṛdi nirudhya ca,
mūrdhnyādhāyātmanaḥ(ph) prāṇam, āsthito yogadhāraṇām. 8.12**

Having controlled all the senses, and firmly holding the mind in the heart, and then drawing the life-breath to the head, and thus remaining steadfast in Yogic concentration on God

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in this Śloka, **'Sarva dvārāṇi saṃyamya'** — Which means controlling all the gates of the body. In the fifth adhyāya we have learnt that our body is a **'Nagari'** of **'Navadvāra'** (**Navadvāre pure dehī**). **Navadvāra** is a term meaning **'nine gates'** or **'nine apertures'** of the human body, serving as a metaphor for the outlets of human experience and sensory interaction with the world. It represents the nine primary inlets/outlets: two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, the mouth, the anus, and the urethra. At death, these withdraw naturally when the mind is no longer clinging to the world.

Bhagavān further says, **'mano hṛdi nirudhya cha'** - which means fixing (**nirudhya**) the mind (**mano**) in the heart region. Here, "heart" means the inner centre of awareness, not the physical organ.

The ascetics, Having controlled the gates of the body and centered the mind in the heart, Bhagavān says, **'mūrdhnyādhāyātmanaḥ prāṇam āsthito,'** - they establish (**ādhāya**) the **'Prāṇa'** at the centre of the head (**mūrdhni**). We have seen in the previous Śloka that the **'Prāṇa'** was situated in the **'Ājñā Cakra'** (between the eyebrows). By the strength of yoga, this **'Prāṇa'** is now situated in the centre of the head (**mūrdhni**) and the body is held in a state of **'yoga-dhāraṇām'** (steadfast yogic concentration) and in such a state, by the power of yoga they utter the powerful syllable **'Om.'**

8.13

**omityekākṣaram(m) brahma, vyāharanmāmanusmaran,
yaḥ(ph) prayāti tyajandeham(m), sa yāti paramām(ñ) gatim. 8.13**

he who leaves body and departs uttering the one Indestructible Brahma, OM, and dwelling on Me in My absolute aspect, reaches the supreme goal.

A person who has lived his life as a Brahmachārya —regulating the senses, offering mind and intellect to Bhagavān, and continuously contemplating the Supreme— at the time of death (Prayāṇa kale) holds the 'Prāṇa' in the 'Ājñā Cakra' (between the eyebrows) and then by the strength of yoga, situates the 'Prāṇa' in the centre of the head (mūrdhni). The body is held in the state of yogic concentration (yoga-dhāraṇām) and then the powerful syllable 'Om' is uttered.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, '**Om iti ekākṣaram brahma**' — '**Brahma-Tattva**' is that 'Supreme Energy' and if it has to be condensed in one word, that word is '**Om**.' '**Om**' is not just sound and is much beyond that. '**Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad**' identifies the sacred syllable '**Om**' (AUM) as the essence of the universe, Brahman, and the Self (Atman). Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that it is that one syllable '**Om**' that will help dissolve a seeker into the '**Brahma-Tattva**.'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is very precise in his directive, uttering '**Om**' alone is not enough. Remembrance of Bhagavān is essential. '**Om**' must be joined with loving remembrance. Bhagavān says, '**vyāharan mām anusmaran**' – 'Chanting (**vyāharan**) and remembering (**anusmaran**)ME.'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa then details how the ātmā departs from the body. He says, '**yaḥ prayāti tyajan dehaṁ sa yāti paramām gatim**,' – The soul departs (**prayāti**) after discarding (**tyajan**) the mortal body and attains (**yāti**) the Supreme goal (**paramām gatim**).

The Temple Bell Analogy

Jñāneśvara Mahārāj beautifully portrays the moment of departure using the simple analogy of a temple bell. When one enters a temple and rings the temple bell dangling at the entrance of the sanctum sanctorum (**Garbhagriha**), we hear the bell ringing loudly at first. The sound fills the space and gradually the sound becomes softer and softer, until finally it dissolves into space.

In the same way, for a person who has lived a life of remembrance and **Brahmachārya**, the process of leaving the body happens naturally and calmly. At the time of departure, the awareness becomes absorbed in **Param Pita Paramātmā**. Just as the bell's sound merges into silence, by the sound of '**Om**' the seeker's consciousness merges into Paramātmā (**sa yāti paramām gatim**). For such devotees, Bhagavān says that HE will descend to embrace them within.

What it means for Seekers

Each day sādhaḥ should spend some time contemplating upon Bhagavān. Devotees need to be pious (**sukṛitino**) and perform virtuous deeds (**puṇya-karmaṇām**). In the seventh adhyāya Śrī Kṛṣṇa has revealed,

yeṣhām tvanta-gataṁ pāpaṁ janānām puṇya-karmaṇām||7.28||

'Persons, whose sins have been destroyed by engaging in pious activities, become free from the illusion of dualities'

Even the slightest good deed will not go waste and brings meaning to life. We have seen that Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself has termed the process as difficult and he outlined it very briefly. It is difficult for most of us to perform 'dhyana' with unwavering focus and devotion. We get distracted easily. Most of us can chant and sing bhajans, but the level of dedication and focus as outlined in the Ślokas by Śrī Kṛṣṇa is exceedingly difficult. So, what will happen to us simple seekers who also desire to become one with Paramātmā? This is a relevant question which Śrī Kṛṣṇa explains eloquently from the next set of Ślokas. Those will be covered in the next session.

Question and Answers

Aadarsh ji

Q: There are a lot of atheists around at the moment. If such a person were to read the Bhāgavad Gītā, will they get something out of it?

A: There is a lot that we can get out of Gītā because it is not only about devotion. It is also about karma and jñāna. When people start doing their karma, the knowledge and wisdom start setting in, and then eventually they are going to seek Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

There is a lot about life management in the Bhāgavad Gita, about the food we eat, how we should speak, think, and our attitude towards work. The Bhāgavad Gita is not only about Śrī Kṛṣṇa, religion. It is a way of life. What is the main purpose of the Bhāgavad Gita, and what is it achieving? It is helping one achieve Yoga in various forms - Karma (action), Jnana (knowledge), Bhakti (devotion), and Dhyana/Raja (meditation). All of these forms have 'Yoga' in common. Yoga is the act of balance.

'**Samatvam yoga uchyate**' is a verse from second adhyāya, meaning 'Equanimity is Yoga'. It teaches that maintaining a balanced, calm mind amidst life's dualities—success and failure, pleasure, and pain—is the true essence of Yoga. There are three prime definitions of yoga that come in Bhāgavad Gita. None of them talk about devotion. They all talk about balance.

Then there is an exceptionally beautiful definition that comes from another verse,

taṁ vidyād duḥkha-sanyoga-viyogaṁ yogasañjñitam ||6.23||

That state of severance from union with misery is known as Yog.

Yoga shields practitioner from the sad and happy experiences of life. It is like putting a glove on your mind. No matter what is happening, the mind remains safe. It does not get dirty by the experiences that one gets. That is the beauty of yoga. That is what we are achieving by the means of Bhāgavad Gītā. Devotion is something that will automatically happen when somebody tries to understand themselves and their life. Once they understand, they will start appreciating their life and, they automatically appreciate the creator of this life.

We need not be overly concerned about atheism in the world. What truly matters is ensuring that discipline and right understanding are cultivated. Such discipline does not arise through force, but through wisdom—and that wisdom flows directly from the Bhāgavad Gītā.

Sushil Sinha ji

Q: Śrī Kṛṣṇa was aware that only the Pandavas would survive Kurukṣetra war, then why did he have HIS army assigned to Kauravas?

A: These questions arise as we look at life from a small perspective. Duryodhana and Arjuna both approached Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and by the law of dharma, He was bound to grant whatever they requested.

When Śrī Kṛṣṇa was a child in Nanda's home, he was a shepherd along with other boys in Nandgaon. When he grew older, HE established Dwaraka and ruled it as a King and as a charioteer to Arjuna, he took care of the horses too. By performing every role with responsibility, detachment, and devotion, Bhagavān demonstrated the true spirit of Karma Yoga and set an ideal example for humanity. HE is the biggest Karma yogi.

All through HIS childhood, as the son of the Nanda, Śrī Kṛṣṇa did not hesitate to herd the cows. Nanda

was not an ordinary person; he was somebody who owned more than a thousand cows. 'Nanda' therefore was a title akin to a sarpanch. Being a village royal, Śrī Kṛṣṇa did not think, 'Why should I go with these normal shepherds and take care of the cows?' He never thought of that. Śrī Kṛṣṇa's spirit of Karma Yoga serves as an example for us seekers. We are then forced to contemplate - 'Now what is my role? I am a human being and I will behave as one.'

Doubts should not occur in our minds and in line with HIS Karma and Dharma, he gave his army to Duryodhanā and that is also the reason HE agreed to become the charioteer for Arjuna. Bhagavān set the right example for us to follow. The following verse summarises it succinctly,

yad yad ācarati śreṣṭhas, tat tad evetaro janaḥ ||3.21||

'Whatever action a great man performs, common men follow.'

Suparna Didi

Q: This discussion focuses on birds, small creatures, and the broader topic of different forms of birth known as yonis. We acknowledge that humans currently possess the human yoni (manuṣya yoni), which is seen as highly valuable. The belief is that if we fail to fulfil our responsibilities, act with awareness, or practice discipline in this human life, we might be reborn into a lower form than the human yoni in future lives. When examining a kundali (horoscope), we often encounter images of various animals and beings. This leads to a natural question: Did we exist as animals before attaining our current human birth?

A: The scriptures explain that the jīva (soul) passes through many different yonis in its long journey—plants, birds, animals, and other forms—according to karma. Through accumulated merit from multiple births and gradual evolution of consciousness, one finally receives the human birth. The manuṣya yoni is the only yoni where one can actually earn puṇya or degrade to commit sins. All other yonis are 'bhoga' yonis. Shri Krishna says in the Bhāgavad Gita,

bahūni me vyatītāni janmāni tava chārjuna||4.5||

'The Supreme Lord said to Arjuna: Both you and I have had many births.'

Therefore, we really never know how many cycles have elapsed and in what form. This process of recycling is continuous and extends a Kalpa or more. Therefore, the human yoni is not meant to be taken lightly. It is an opportunity. If we use it properly, we move forward toward higher understanding and liberation. If we waste it, we risk moving backward in the cycle of birth and death. This is why responsibility, discipline, and right living are emphasized so strongly in the scriptures.

Jñāneśvara Mahārāj humbly says that the knowledge flowing from his words is the fruit of Tapasyā performed over many kalpas. What is a Kalpa? Kalpa means 'aeon' or 'age.' It is the unit of time to measure exceedingly long time periods, especially the ages of the gods and goddesses. One Kalpa is the one day of Brahma ji and it equals to 1008 maha-yugas. One Kalpa equals 4.32 billion years. It is impractical to count or even imagine the number of cycles of births and deaths would have happened in that period. It is unimaginable because our intellect is restricted to this human birth. That is the reason we cannot go beyond this. But each one of us has gone through this process uncountable and unimaginable number of times.

In His infinite compassion and in our best interest, Śrī Kṛṣṇa has wiped away the memory (**Smṛti**) of our countless past lives. Śrī Kṛṣṇa remembers but we do not. If we were constantly burdened by remembering what happened in previous births—our mistakes, sufferings, relationships, and

losses—it would be extremely difficult to live fully and responsibly in the present life. Such memories would distract the mind and weaken our ability to focus on our current duties.

By removing this remembrance, Bhagavān gives us a fresh opportunity to devote ourselves wholeheartedly to this life, to perform our present responsibilities with clarity, and to strive sincerely toward devotion, discipline, and **chitta śuddhi**.

Q: As a follow-up question, is it safe to conclude that the Kundali does not represent the previous birth? Can we rely on our kundali?

A: A kundali (horoscope) can give some indication of past karma, but it cannot show all our previous lives in full detail. According to the scriptures, we have gone through countless births and deaths, across many species and even across many kalpas. It is therefore not possible for a single kundali to record or display all those past lives.

Regarding reliance on Kundali - To an extent possible wherever we can rely on we could, but our life should not be driven by them. They matter to a small percentage of our life's scheme. Horoscope and its reading are a big science and we bow down to that Sastra. However, karma is our biggest guide and one should focus on that instead of getting diverted on aspects beyond our control. What is reflected in any kundali is something of the past, we cannot change it and it beyond our control.

Arpana Didi

Q: What is the difference between love and attachment? How do I know if I love my family or is it an attachment?

A: Love and attachment is better explained through a story.

The Pigeon family - A Story

There was a male pigeon who lived happily with his wife and children. One day, he saw that his wife and young ones had been caught in a bird catcher's net. Seeing this, the pigeon became extremely agitated and desperate. He made many attempts to save them, flying around the net, pulling at it with his beak and wings, but nothing worked. Slowly, he became despondent and overwhelmed by grief. His mind was no longer clear. He began thinking, 'What am I going to do? My wife and children are going to die. There is no point in living without them.' Instead of asking 'What is the right action for me now?' his thoughts became completely fixed on the outcome. In this clouded state, he decided, 'I will also go and die.' Driven by attachment rather than clarity, the male pigeon flew into the net himself and was caught. In this way, attachment destroyed not only his peace of mind, but also his capacity to act wisely. This is an apt illustration of attachment, Where one forgets about own karma and own duties in the deep attachment for family and loved ones.

The Heart Surgeon - An Anecdote

Another example is of a prominent heart surgeon. He has cured so many patients and performed many surgeries. However, one fateful day in the emergency room he saw his own son who had suffered a heart attack. The surgeon was devastated and in his grief, he could not attend to him. He could not fulfil his duties the moment he set eyes on his own son. That is attachment. Love is a powerful emotion, but when that love pulls one away from responsibilities it becomes attachment. Love is when we follow the path of what we are set for. When as parents we nourish and bring up children, encourage them on the right path or as children we care for our parents or grandparents with affection. That is love as an emotion. True love is ensuring that all responsibilities and duties towards our loved ones is carried out without expecting anything in return. It is to be noted that the affection and love that we show towards our children should not be selfish. If we come across other children, we should be as kind and gentle too. That is true love. If our love is only limited to our

family, that is also termed as attachment.



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