

Reflections from Shrimad Bhagavadgita– Part 75: Chapter 8, Summary of Chapter 8

(October 9 –October 15, 2019)

AKSHARA BRHMA YOGA



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TO
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THE
ENTIRE
CHAPTER-8
VERSES 1-28
OF
SHRIMAD
BHAGAVAD
GITA**

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The Summary of

Chapter 8

Akshara Brahma Yoga

(The Yoga of Imperishable Brahman)

(A) The Summary of Summary:

In this chapter, Lord Krishna explains the methodology to gain Brahman - how one can reach Brahman through concentrated Yoga and single-pointed meditation. This is the path which leads one to the Supreme abode wherefrom there is no return (liberation). The chapter also explores the path of temporary bliss, to which one is transported, only to be brought back to the material world of limitation. Lord Krishna further advices to turn the attention from the mundane world to the Supreme Self within and to control the senses and mind through spiritual practices and thereafter to let the intellect direct such

controlled mind to single-pointed meditation upon the pranava mantra OM. By continuous and sustained meditation, one will reach the Supreme abode of Brahman.

(B) The Most Important Verses of Chapter 8: Verses 8 and 10:

Verse 8: “With practice, O Parth, when you constantly engage the mind in remembering Me, the Supreme Divine Personality, without deviating, you will certainly attain Me.”

Verse 10: “The one, who at the time of death, with unmoving mind attained by the practice of Yoga, fixes the prāṇ (life airs) between the eyebrows, and steadily remembers the Divine Lord with great devotion, certainly attains Him”

(C) The Verse-By-Verse Summary of Chapter 8:

Based on the contents of the 28 verses of Chapter 8, it can be divided into the following six sections:

<u>The Topic</u>	<u>Verses</u>
1. Definition of the terms Brahman, Adhyātma, Karma, Adhibhūta, Adhidaiva and Adhiyajña	1-4
2. The Significance and The Method of Remembering Lord at The Time of Death.....	5-14
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1. Definition of the terms Brahman, Adhyātma, Karma, Adhibhūta, Adhidaiva and Adhiyajña:

Lord Kṛiṣṇa concluded the seventh chapter by glorifying jñāni-bhakta as one who knows Brahman, adhyātma, karma, adhibhūta and adhiyajña (i.e., the complete nature of God consisting of parā and aparāprakṛti). He remembers the God at the time of death also. With the desire to understand the above new terms, Arjuna asks seven questions to Lord Kṛiṣṇa. The eighth chapter begins with these questions — the first six dealing with the six terms beginning with Brahman and the last one dealing with the thought of a person at the time of death (V1, 2). Lord Kṛiṣṇa answers — Brahman is the imperishable Truth, Adhyātma (or ātman) is the same Brahman behind the individual equipments. Karma refers to all actions which are the cause for the birth of all beings (V3). Adhibhūta is the entire perishable, inert universe. Adhidaiva is the Hiranyagarbha who blesses all the organs of of all beings. Adhiyajña is the Lord as the presiding deity of all the actions of the individual (V4).

2. The Significance and The Method of Remembering Lord at The Time of Death

Whatever be the predominant thought-pattern at the time of death, that determines the place of the rebirth as well as the type of rebirth (V6). Hence, if a person yearns for the Lord at the time of death, his rebirth will be conducive for the pursuit of the Lord in which he will naturally be successful (V5). [It is said that those who are saguṇa-upāsakas will go to Brahmāloka. They will attain liberation by gaining knowledge from Brahmā, the creator himself. This is called krama-mukti]. But the thought pattern at the time of the death is determined by the predominant thought pattern throughout one's life. Lord Kṛṣṇa asks to remember God all the time so that we will remember Him at the time of death also (V7). Though it may appear difficult, one can succeed in this by constant effort and sincere practice (V8). From the 9th to the 13th verse, Lord Kṛṣṇa describes elaborately the practice of *upāsana* at the time of death. One should control the organs of perception as well as action. Then by the skill of *yoga*-practice, *prāṇa* has to be withdrawn (through the *suṣumnā-nāḍī*) to the top of the head between the eyebrows. Then, he should withdraw the mind back to the heart, its source. With such a mind he should meditate on *omkāra* or any chosen deity with all devotion. He attains God who is omniscient, eternal, the ruler, subtler than the subtlest, the sustainer of all, incomprehensible, effulgent, and beyond ignorance. All scriptures talk about Him alone. All dispassionate seekers reach Him alone. All disciplines are for attaining Him alone. He is the ultimate goal of *upāsakas*. For a person who is sincerely committed to the practice of meditation of God and whose devotion is undivided, God is easily attainable (V14).

3. Comparison between Two Types of Goals –God and World:

Then the Lord compares two types of goals, i.e., God and the world. Nobody can put the end to the cycle of birth by reaching higher lokas (worlds) or by acquiring better bodies. Even Brahmā, the creator, who has the longest duration of life (his day being two thousand chaturyugas) cannot be free from finitude. Then what to talk of all other things and beings which appear during the day of Brahmā and disappear during his night? Hence all the lokas and achievements therein are finite. God is the only eternal and changeless principle who is beyond the unmanifest and manifest creation. He is imperishable and is the supreme goal of life. All beings exist in Him and everything is pervaded by Him. Attaining Him, one does not take rebirth in the mortal world (*samsāra*) (V15 to V22).

4. The Bright and Dark Paths:

Thus, the Lord established that attainment of God is the highest goal compared to all other achievements. Now Lord Kṛṣṇa discusses the two paths that lead to the two goals which are subject to non-return and return. An *upāsaka* attains krama-mukti by departing through the bright-path (*shukla-gati*) which is presided over by the deities of fire, day, bright-fortnight and *uttarāyaṇam*. (He goes to Brahmāloka, gains Self-knowledge from Brahmā and becomes liberated.) Ritualists go by the dark-path (*kṛṣṇa-gati*) which is presided over by the deities of smoke, night, dark-fortnight and *dakṣiṇāyaṇam*. They come back after enjoying in the heavens (V23 to V26). Since the

bright path takes one to God, one should choose that alone. To take to that path one should become an upāsaka. Lord Kṛiṣṇa advises Arjuna to be committed to upāsana (27).

5. *Glory of Upāsana:*

Concluding the topic, Lord Kṛiṣṇa glorifies the result of *upāsana* as superior to all other results gained through all other pursuits. Because, none of them can take one to that goal which the *Upasaka* attains —the supreme, primal God. (*Upāsana* can take a seeker to *Guru* and *shāstra*. Naturally *upāsaka* becomes *jñāni-bhakta*. He is liberated in this very life. He has no travel. This aspect (*jīvanmukti*) was talked in the seventh chapter and will be continued from the ninth chapter. If *upāsana* does not take one to *guru* and *shāstra*, he continues to be self-ignorant. He is not liberated in this life. But he travels by the bright-path to *Brahmaloka*. Instructed by *Brahmā*, the creator himself, he becomes *jñāni-bhakta* and is liberated. This is called *krama-mukti*, which is discussed in the eighth chapter. Thus, *upāsana* is useful for *jīvanmukti* as well as *krama-mukti*.)