

Srimad Bhagavad Gita

Chapter 8
Akshara Brahma Yogah:
Yoga of Imperishable Brahman

Transliterated Sanskrit Text

Free Translation

&

Brief Explanation

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Published
In
Esamskriti.com
&
Medhajournal.com

Nagpur

September 2010

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Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 8 (Part-1)
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Preamble

In the preceding Chapter Bhagavan explained about His integral Self and spoke of the deluded ones seeking finite fruit while the wise seek *Brahman* along with knowing *Adhyatma*, *Karma*, *Adhibhuta*, *Adhidaiva* and *Adhiyajna*. Arjuna could not grasp the intricacies of these terms and the secret of knowing God. Hence he puts seven questions to the Lord to know about these six terms and how to realize God. The 'Akshara' means indestructible or imperishable. As this Chapter deals with the imperishable and absolute nature of God and the Pranava Mantra 'OM', which symbolizes it, it is entitled Akshara Brahma Yoga.

In this chapter Bhagavan elucidates about 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. The chapter also mentions the path of return, a realm of temporary bliss, to which one is transported, only to be brought back to the world of limitation.

The imperishable Brahman whose nature is transcendental and immanent pervades this perishable world of things and beings. Whatever one pursues in this world one gains that alone. By pursuing the Self one realizes the Self. Krishna advises mankind to surrender the mind and intellect to the Self while the body is engaged in action which will lead the seeker to the ultimate state of Brahman.

He further advises 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.

The Text

arjuna uvaacha
kim tadbrahma kimadhyaatman kim karma purushottama
adhibhootam cha kim proktamadhidaivam kimuchyate // 8.1 //

Arjuna said

*What is Brahman? What is the individual soul? What is action, O the Supreme Person?
What is it that is said to underlie all the elements?*

adhiyajnah katham kotra dehesmin madhusoodhana
prayaanakaale cha katham jneyosi niyataatmabhih // 8.2 //

And what is it that is said to underlie all the Gods? And who sustains all the sacrifices here in the body, O Madhusudana? And in what way? And how, again, are You to be known at the time of death by those who have practiced self-control?

Arjuna seeks the explanation of certain terms used by the Lord at the end of the Seventh Chapter.

SRI KRISHNA ANSWERS

**sri bhagavaan uvaacha
aksharam brahma paramam swabhaavodhyaatmamuchyate
bhootabhaavodbhavakaro visargah karma samjnitah // 8.3 //**

Sri Bhagavan said

Brahman is the Imperishable, the Supreme. Dwelling in each body, Brahman is called the individual soul. The offering of the oblation, which, brings into existence all beings and supports them, is called action.

Imperishable is the Supreme Brahman:

Brahman indicates the one changeless and imperishable Essence behind the phenomenal world. It is the Self or the Principle of Consciousness which illumines the body, mind and intellect. Its presence in each individual body is called *Adhyatma*, the individual soul. “At the command of this Imperishable, O Gargi, heaven and earth are held in their proper places”. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (III.viii.9). The Supreme Brahman alone exists in every individual body as the *pratyagatman*, the ego, the inmost Self and is known as the *Adhyatma*. At the culmination of the spiritual discipline, the inmost Self is realized as one with Brahman. Though the Self is formless and subtle and therefore all pervading, its power is felt by every living embodiment. The Self expressing through a given embodiment, as though conditioned by it, is called the *Adhyatma*.

Action (Karma):

According to the Vedas, the offering of oblations to the gods brings about the birth of all creatures; the oblations cause rain and the rain causes food, and food causes created beings. The offering of oblations in sacrifice is called *karma* or action.

**adhibhootam ksharo bhaavah purushashchaadhidaivatam
adhiyajno 'hamevaatra dehe dehabhritaam vara // 8.4 //**

That which underlies all the elements is the perishable entity (Adhibhoota); and that which underlies all the Devas is the Purusha, the Cosmic Spirit (Adhidaivata). And He who sustains all the sacrifices is Myself, here in the body (Adhiyajna), O the best of men.

Adhibhoota is the perishable existence. It comprises all material objects, everything that comes into existence.

Adhidaivata is that which underlies all the Devatas, the presiding deities of the sense organs, mind and intellect.

Adhiyajna: As oblations are poured in the Yajnas, the sense objects are offered into the act of perception, feeling and thought when the Devata or the particular faculty in it is invoked and as a blessing of this act we gain the fruit thereof viz. the knowledge of the perception. That which underlies the Devatas is Purusha, the Cosmic Spirit, *Adhidaivata*.

The implication of these definitions is that the Eternal Self alone is the Real and all the rest is delusory and super-impositions upon It. Thus to know the Self is to know everything and having known It as one's own real nature one is free to act or not to act in any of the fields of Not-Self.

As the Inner Controller of the body - *antaryamin* - Sri Krishna is the presiding Deity directing the various physical functions which are described as acts of sacrifice. Though He rests in the body, He is not attached to it and is completely different from the senses.

One who is aware of this play of the Self at all levels of his personality - physical, mental and intellectual - experiences himself as a Witness of the process of his relations with the Not-Self.

**antakaale cha maam eva smaran muktvaa kalevaram
yah prayaati sa madbhaavam yaati naastyatra samshayah // 8.5 //**

Whosoever at the time of death leaves his body remembering Me alone and goes forth - he attains My Being; there is no doubt about this.

**yam yam vaapi smaran bhaavam tyajatyante kalevaram
tam tamevaiti kaunteya sadaa tadbhaavabhaavitah // 8.6 //**

For whatever object a man thinks of at the final moment, when he leaves his body - that alone does he attain, O Son of Kunti, being ever absorbed in the thought thereof.

The most prominent thought of one's life occupies the mind at the time of death. The last thoughts of a dying person determine the quality of his next birth. The soul goes to that on which its mind is set during the last moments. What we think we become. Our past thoughts determine our present birth and our present ones will determine the future.

Therefore, Sri Krishna tells that one who leaves the body with his mind completely turned towards the Self will naturally reach the Eternal and the Immortal - the Supreme abode, reaching which there is no return. We can think of God in the last moments only if we are devoted to Him previously also.

The Lord explains that whatever object one remembers while leaving the body, he reaches that alone because of his constant thought of that object. It is not the casual fancy

of the last moment but a persistent endeavor of the whole life that determines the future birth.

**tasmaat sarveshu kaaleshu maamanusmara yudhya cha
mayyarpitamanobuddhir maamevaishyasyasamshayah // 8.7 //**

Therefore, at all times, constantly remember Me and fight. With your mind and intellect absorbed in Me, you shall doubtless come to Me alone.

Sri Krishna, advises Arjuna to constantly keep his mind fixed on Him and at the same time perform his Swadharma (to fight). The mind is purified when a man performs his own dharma, regarding himself as an instrument of God. Only a pure mind can constantly remember God.

CONSTANT PRACTICE IS NECESSARY TO REALIZE GOD

**abhyaasayogayuktena chetasaa naanyagaaminaa
paramam purusham divyam yaati paarthaanuchintayan // 8.8 //**

Engaged in the Yoga of constant practice and not allowing the mind to wander away to anything else, he who meditates on the supreme, resplendent Purusha reaches Him, O son of Pritha.

Constant practice is the uninterrupted repetition of one and the same idea, with reference to the Lord as the sole object of meditation. Such practice by which one surrenders his heart and soul to the Lord alone is known as Yoga.

Resplendent Purusha means the presiding deity of the solar orb which is considered as the manifestation of the Absolute as the Cosmic Spirit. He is also known as *Saguna Brahman*.

MEDITATING AND ATTAINING PURUSHA

**kavim puraanam anushaasitaaram
anoraneeyaamsam anusmaredyah
sarvasya dhaataaram achintyaroopam
aadityavarnam tamasah parastaat //8.9//**

Whosoever meditates upon the Omniscient, the ancient, the ruler (of the whole world), who is subtler than the subtle, the supporter of all, whose form is inconceivable, effulgent like the sun and beyond the darkness (of ignorance),

**prayaanakaale manasaa'chalena
bhaktyaa yukto yogabalena chaiva
bhruvormadhye praanamaaveshya samyak
sa tam param purushamupaiti divyam // 8.10 //**

At the time of death, with an unshaken mind full of devotion, by the power of 'yoga' fixing the whole 'prana' (breath) between the two eyebrows, he (the seeker) reaches the Supreme Resplendent 'purusha.'

In these two verses Sri Krishna gives Arjuna exhaustive guidance that will help in undertaking meditation by all. The meaning of the various terms used here is as follows.

Verse - 9

Omniscient (*Kavi*) - Just as the sun is said to be seeing everything because it illuminates all the objects of the world, so too is the Principle of Awareness without which no knowledge whatsoever is possible. Thus, in terms of the limited knowledge we presently experience, the Self is considered as the Supreme Knower who knows everything i.e. Omniscient and without whom no knowledge is ever possible.

Ancient (*Puranam*) - The Self is considered as the most ancient because the Eternal Truth which was there before all creation remains the same always.

The ruler of the whole world (*Anushaasitaaram*) - It indicates that if the principle of awareness were not present in our faculties of perception, feeling and comprehension, harmonization of our physical, mental and intellectual experiences would not have been possible to lead a meaningful existence. Hence the Knowing Principle or Consciousness is the very essence of life just as without the mud the mud-pot cannot exist. The mud is the ruler in the world of mud pots so too is the Self the over-ruler of the Universe.

Minuter than the Atom (*Anoraneeyam*) - The smallest divisible particle of any element maintaining the properties of that element is called its atom. It indicates that the Self is the subtlest of the subtle.

The more a thing is subtle the more is its pervasiveness. Water is subtler than the ice and hence water is said to be more pervasive than the ice and similarly steam is more pervasive than water. So also, the Self is the subtlest of the subtle which pervades all but nothing pervades it.

The nourisher of all (*Sarvasya Dhaataram*) - Nourishment here means the support which sustains everything. Just like the canvas supports ever so many different paintings of an artist, the Consciousness illuminates constantly the ever changing things and happenings, around and within us, from birth to death, through all situations which results in homogeneous oneness of life.

Of inconceivable form (*Achintyaroopam*) - Various descriptions of the Self given above should not lead to the wrong conclusion that It can be thought about and understood as any finite object or idea. We should be clear that the Infinite cannot be comprehended by the finite instruments of perception, feeling or understanding. Although the Self is in the form inconceivable, It is not inexperienceable since an individual can apprehend It to be of his own real nature during the process of Divine awakening.

Effulgent like the sun (*Aadityavarnam*) - So long as a man identifies himself with his limited auxiliaries in his body he lives in the external world of multiplicities wherein the Self is in-conceivable, inexperienceable and in-comprehensible. Once these auxiliaries are crossed through a process of contemplation of the Self, he realizes his own nature of Pure Being.

To see the sun no other light is necessary or a dreamer cannot know the waker, because to know the waker the dreamer has to end his dream state and become the waker. So too, on ending the egocentric existence during spiritual awakening, one realizes that he is nothing but the Self at all times.

Beyond all the darkness (*Tamasah parastaat*) - The sun is variable in nature like its brightness during the day with various degrees of intensity and its total absence during the night. It may be erroneously concluded that the Self is also variable in its intensity or there are times when It is totally absent. To remove this possible misunderstanding The Lord says that the Self is beyond darkness of ignorance.

Thus, the one who meditates upon the Self as omniscient, ancient, over-ruler, subtlest of the subtle, nourisher of all, of in-conceivable form, self illuminating as the sun and beyond all ---

Verse - 10

At the time of death (*Prayaanakaale*) - These words do not mean 'the physical death' but they are to be understood as 'at the moment of the death of the ego' when all identifications with the body, mind and intellect are consciously withdrawn during meditation.

Endowed with full devotion (*Bhakti*) - It means selfless love for the Divine without any expectation which implies identification of the ego with its real nature. The idea is that the meditation should be accompanied by the meditator's readiness to identify himself with the principle of awareness as earlier indicated.

By the power of Yoga (*Yogabalena*) - This is the inward strength that grows in the mind of the meditator when he meditates upon the Supreme for long periods of time when the mind is withdrawn from its agitations and the intellect rests on contemplation of the Absolute. When one is thus engaged in meditation, all his *pranas* get concentrated at the point of his concentration between the eyebrows which represents the seat of steady thought.

Fixing the whole *prana* between the eyebrows - This is the process of controlling the breath. Life expressing itself at the various functions in a living body is called the Prana which can be classified under five categories viz. *Prana*: faculty of sense perception, *Apana*: the excretory system, *Vyana*: the digestive system, *Samaana*: the circulatory system and *Udana*: capacity to visualize some greater concepts beyond the present world

of knowledge. When an individual gets himself merged with the Self, at that moment all these faculties are temporarily arrested.

Reaches the resplendent Supreme person - Such a person in whom the mind becomes completely silent and calm, all manifestations of life's presence through his body are halted. At this stage he goes to the Supreme Resplendent Self (*Purusha*) i.e. completely identifies himself with his point of contemplation, the Self.

MEDITATION ON THE SUPREME PERSON THROUGH 'OM'

**yadaksharam vedavido vadanti
vishanti yadyatayo veetaraagaah
yadicchanto brahmacharyam charanti
tatte padam samgrahena pravakshye // 8.11 //**

What the knowers of the Vedas speak of as Imperishable, what the self-controlled (Sannyasins) freed from attachment enter and to gain which goal they live the life of a Brahmachari, that state I shall declare to you in brief.

Sri Krishna now starts giving guidance for meditating upon the monosyllable 'OM' or the Pranava which is the ultimate goal for man. Worship of the syllable OM is advised in almost all the Upanishads as a prelude to the meditation for an easier concentration of the mind. OM is considered as an expression of the Supreme Self or Its symbol like an idol.

Freed from attachment means detachment from the world of objects with full understanding of the goal of life. Men of least desires will have the maximum success in traveling the Path of Knowledge. Brahmachari is a religious student who takes the vow of continence etc. Every moment of this stage is one of hard discipline and asceticism.

**sarvadaaraani samyamya mano hridi nirudhya cha
moordhnyaadhaayaatmanah praanamaasthito yogadhaaranaam // 8.12 //**

Having closed all the gates (controlled all the senses), having confined the mind in the heart, having fixed the life-breath in the 'head', engaged in the practice of concentration,

**Omityekaaksharam brahma vyaaharan maamanusmaran
yah prayaati tyajan deham sa yaati paramaam gatim // 8.13 //**

Uttering the monosyllable OM-the Brahman-and remembering Me, he who so departs, leaving the body, attains the supreme goal.

The conditions to be fulfilled in the meditator for achieving effective concentration are narrated in these verses in the same order in which they are to be practiced.

Closing all the gates - The sense organs Viz. skin, ear, nose, eyes and the tongue are the five entry points through which the external stimuli reach the mind and cause agitations

in it. To close these five entrances through discrimination and detachment means controlling all the senses.

Confining the mind in the heart - Although external stimuli can be prevented through controlling senses, it is always possible for the mind to get disturbed on account of the accumulation of past impressions gathered from the external world of change and pleasure. It is therefore advised that the mind which is the tool for emotion and feeling should be confined to the heart. Here heart does not mean the physical part of the body but an imaginary centre of the mind from which all positive thoughts like love, kindness, devotion, surrender etc. emanate which means the mind whose functions are checked.

Drawing Prana into the Head and occupied in the practice of concentration - The mental condition wherein the intellect is withdrawn from its identification with all the perceptions and engaging it in the total contemplation of the Self. In this condition of mental and intellectual equipoise the seeker is fit for meditating upon the monosyllable OM.

He who departs, leaving the body - This does not mean 'at the time of death'. While chanting and meditating on OM, the seeker gets so much detached from his identification with the world of objects that the ego gets tuned towards a higher objective. This is called death - leaving the body - when he attains the Supreme goal.

WHO CAN EASILY ATTAIN THE LORD?

**ananyachetaah satatam yo maam smarati nityashah
tasyaaham sulabhah paartha nityayuktasya yoginah // 8.14 //**

*I am easily attainable by that ever-steadfast yogi who constantly and daily remembers
Me not thinking of anything else, O Partha.*

Ever-steadfast, Constantly: One who does not allow his mind wander freely among sense objects. The meditator who constantly keeps himself aware of the Self is the successful practitioner.

Daily: One has to remember The Lord daily till the end of his life and not merely at fixed times of the day or on fixed days of the week. No part-time behaviorism or weekly engagements in religion are advised. Divine consciousness must be maintained by the seeker constantly and continuously like a 24 hour TV channel.

Not thinking of anything else: One is not to think of any other object except his Deity. If these conditions are negated none can hope for an easy success in Meditation

Concepts and Issues

Arjuna asks Sri Krishna seven questions with a view to understand the technical and philosophical terms used by Him in the previous Chapter. The questions and The Lord's answers are as follows.

Sr.No.	Arjuna's Questions (What is ---)	Sri Krishna's Answers
1	Brahman	Brahman is that which is Supreme, Imperishable, Unchanging and all-pervading. It is the cause for all effects. It is a causeless cause.
2	Adhyatma	One's own individual Self or essential nature or individual consciousness is called Adhyatma. It is that part of Supreme Consciousness together with limiting ancillaries viz. time, space, name and form.
3	Karma	It is the creative force which is the cause of existence, manifestation and sustenance of all beings
4	Adhibhuta	It means all perishable things - the five elements of the Universe with all its objects, all things that have a beginning and an end, the intellect, mind, senses and body.
5	Adhidaiva	The Universal Soul or the Divine Intelligence which is the controller of all. He is the vital energy or life-force behind all movable and immovable objects of the entire Universe.
6	Adhiyajna	It is the presiding Deity of all sacrifices and the witnessing consciousness i.e. who dwells in the body
7	How The Lord is to be known by the self-controlled one at the time of death?	He who dies with his last thought fixed on God will reach God alone.

As the moment of departure from the physical body is not known to anybody Sri Krishna advises Arjuna that one should always keep the mind and intellect absorbed in Him when he will come to Him alone. Sri Krishna emphasizes the need to practice Yoga at all times. If one practices meditation through out one's life fixing the mind on God, God-consciousness will remain steady even at the time of death instead of on worldly objects.

Just as in the disturbed waters of a lake pebbles lying at the bottom cannot be seen, the Self that is indwelling in one's body cannot be experienced due to agitated mind. Sri Krishna therefore suggests a way out by the practice of which this problem could be got over. He suggests meditating on `OM' which is the symbol of the Supreme Purusha, Brahman. The repetition of `Om' creates a harmony in the nervous system and the entire personality of the practitioner will feel single-pointed consciousness which will lead to the experience of the Supreme Consciousness.

Live as the Gita Teaches You to Live

In this Chapter Sri Krishna explains the glory of human existence. Scriptures say that one has to pass through several cycles of births and deaths to take a human birth. In such a rare human birth if one fails to utilize the opportunity of attaining The Supreme and instead, spends his entire life in satisfying sensual desires it will not be possible for him to remember The Eternal Purusha at the time of death and hence it will lead him to enter this world again and again.

The recipe for this Self-Realization is contained in Verses 7 and 14 discussed above. Verse 7 says eternal remembrance of the Lord is the prize of Moksha (Liberation). Verse 14 assures that He is easily attainable by whosoever constantly and daily remembers Him.

Points to Ponder

1. What are the questions asked by Arjuna?
2. What is re-birth and how does one get it?
3. What is the easy way of attaining liberation?

Next time we will proceed from the Verse 8.15

HARIH OM

Bhagavad Gita:Chapter 8 (Part-2)
Akshara Brahma Yogah :
Yoga of Imperishable Brahman
T.N.Sethumadhavan

Preamble

Every individual being remains as vasanas, unmanifest desires, in deep sleep at night. His vasanas manifest at daybreak upon awakening. This cycle of dissolution and emanation continues until the individual completely exhausts his vasanas, reaching the state of Self-realization. A similar phenomenon takes place at the macrocosmic level. The entire macrocosm manifests during the day of Lord Brahma (a God of Hindu Trinity as distinguished from Brahman, the Supreme Reality). Brahma's celestial day consists of 4.32 billion terrestrial years. Similarly, the macrocosm folds back into the unmanifest state during the night of Lord Brahma, covering an equal period as his day. Beyond this unmanifest lies the Supreme Unmanifest, Brahman. Humans reach Brahman through spiritual disciplines culminating in single-pointed meditation.

The Path of Sun, Uttarayana and the Path of Moon, Dakshinayana are discussed. The Path of Sun takes a seeker to Brahmaloaka, the heaven of Lord Brahma wherefrom he goes to the supreme Brahman. Whereas the Path of Moon takes the individual to pitrloka, only to enjoy heavenly pleasures and return to the cycle of birth and death in this world. The latter path provides only temporary pleasures of heaven for meritorious deeds done here. The former, however, takes the seeker to Brahman, through heaven because of having mixed meritorious deeds with his spiritual practice. But the true yogi, through his determined effort on the path of yoga of meditation goes directly from here to the abode of supreme Brahman.

The Text

RESULT OF THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE LORD

**maamupetya punarjanma dukkhaalayamashaashwatam
naapnuvanti mahaatmaanah samsiddhim paramaam gataah // 8.15 //**

Having attained Me, these great souls are no more subject to rebirth (herein this mortal world) which is the abode of pain and transitory for they have reached the highest perfection (liberation).

The question why should one struggle so hard to realize the Self is answered. The benefit accruing on realization of the Self is that having attained Me, The Lord, the Mahatmas are no more subject to rebirth because the world of rebirth is the starting point for all pains and miseries and also impermanent .

Those who die without realizing the Lord come back again to the earth. Life on earth, in spite of many moments of happiness, is intrinsically painful. On account of the intense love of God, the devotees do not experience suffering on earth and after death they attain Him.

**aabrahmabhuvanaanlokaah punaraavartino'rjuna
maamupetya tu kaunteya punarjanma na vidyate // 8.16 //**

The dwellers in all the worlds, O Arjuna , including the realm of Brahma, are subject to return to rebirth, but for those who reach Me, O Son of Kunti, there is no rebirth.

Even after reaching the Brahmaloaka, the realm of the Creator, all cannot achieve total liberation because of their remaining Vasanas for exhausting which they have to take rebirth. But to those who rediscovered their Essential Eternal Nature and realized themselves to be the One, All Pervading Self (after attaining Me) there is no rebirth, the *Samsar*, the plane of limited existence.

Complete liberation, attended by cessation of birth and death, is possible only for a man who has realized his identity with Brahman. All other worlds, whether sub-human or super-human, are places of transitory enjoyments, where men departing from earth, experience the fruit of their actions and after exhausting such fruits are re-born on this earth.

But one can directly attain liberation from re-birth through love of God alone without waiting till the end of the cosmic cycle.

ALL THESE WORLDS ARE LIMITED BY TIME

**sahasrayugaparyantam aharyad brahmano viduh
raatrim yugasahasraantaam te'horaatravido janaah // 8.17 //**

Those who know that the day of Brahma lasts for thousand Yugas (ages) and that the night of Brahma lasts thousand Yugas again, are indeed people who know day and night.

Brahma is the first manifestation of the Absolute, Brahman in time and space. He is also known as Prajapati and Viraj.

Day means evolution or projection of the universe. It is the period of cosmic manifestation. Night means cosmic involution or dissolution of the universe. It is the period of non-manifestation. According to the Hindu philosophy time is the measurement of interval between two different experiences.

In a given single experience there is no perception of time just as in one point there is no concept of distance for distances can be measured between two points only.

The worlds are conditioned by time and hence they manifest again and again although the duration of their cycles vary and are very long - each cycle lasting for crores of years (in

terms of our present understanding of 365 days). A thousand such cycles makes a day of Brahma and another such cycle is the night of Brahma. Those who can see and live through the day and night of Brahma can really know what a day is and what a night is meaning thereby that such yogis can visualize many Brahmas arising and disintegrating in the Ocean of great Cause. Thus they do not feel any attachment even to the happiness of the highest heaven, how much less to that of earth.

In this and the following two verses Gita points out the life of the Cosmic Man and his concept of time. It points out the non-distinction between microcosm (vyashti) and macrocosm (samashti).

The God principle (Hiranyagarbha - the source of all objects) is a concept which represents the total mind and intellect of all the living creatures living at any given point of time in the world. To understand the ways of the mind projecting the world of its own objects is to understand not only the all powerful nature but also the limitations of God-principle as conceived to be a Creator, Sustainer and Annihilator. Sri Krishna brings out this subtle idea clearly in the mind of Arjuna in these three verses.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING BRAHMA'S DAY AND NIGHT?

**avyaktaadvyaktayah sarvaah prabhavantyaharaagame
raaatryaagame praleeyante tatraivaavyaktasamjnake // 8.18 //**

At the approach of the day all manifest objects come forth from the unmanifested and at the approach of the night they merge again into that which is called the unmanifest.

**bhootagraamah sa evaayaam bhootwaa bhootwaa praleeyate
raatryaagamevashah paartha prabhavatyaharaagame // 8.19 //**

The same multitude of beings, coming forth again and again, merge in spite of themselves, O Partha, at the approach of the night and remanifest themselves at the approach of the day.

How the Creator keeps Himself occupied during His day and night each of which is of long duration is explained. It is indicated that the Creator creates during His day and the entire creation ends during His night by merging itself in the unmanifested. Creation is the crystallization of the unmanifested dormant existence into the manifested existence with names, forms and qualities. That is, creation is only the production of a name, form with some specific qualities, out of the raw material in which the same name, form and quality are already existing in an unmanifested condition. When a pot is created out of the mud the potness is already prevalent in the mud because no other thing than a pot can be created out of mud.

The thought impressions in the mind (vasanas) which lie unmanifested to the sense-organs and the mental and intellectual perceptions become manifested as gross actions, thoughts and words making the life either tough or smooth depending on the quality of the thoughts manifested. A doctor, advocate and a criminal are all same as human beings

while they are asleep which is their unmanifested state (Pralaya) but when they wake up their respective qualities as a doctor, advocate or criminal get manifested which in philosophy is called creation.

In the cosmic process of creation and dissolution the Creator or the total mind during the waking hours of long ages project out the already existing vasanas and at the night they merge into the unmanifested. The declaration that the very same beings are born again and again and merge in spite of themselves shows that Hinduism does not believe in a creation preceded by the condition of absolute non-existence.

The same multitude meant that which comprised of the moving and non-moving who existed in the preceding cycle or age and who did not attain liberation. They repeatedly come forth and dissolve by the effect of their own karma. "In spite of themselves" implies the law of karma is inexorable. In this world of Maya there is no freedom as long as one is caught in the wheel of karma. The only way of liberation is to free oneself from Maya.

**parastasmaat tu bhavo'nyo'vyakto'vyaktaatsanaatanah
yah sa sarveshu bhooteshu nashyatsu na vinashyati // 8.20 //**

But beyond this unmanifested, there is yet another Unmanifested Eternal Being, who does not perish when all beings perish.

This unmanifested means the seed state of the whole multitude of created things; the night of Brahma. Another unmanifested eternal Being refers to the imperishable Brahman, which is imperceptible to senses and which is altogether of a different kind, It is supra-cosmic and beyond ignorance. It does not perish because it is beyond time, space and causality. All beings perish implies that everything from Brahma downwards all beings.

That which is The Truth, the ignorance of which projects the manifested, is the factor that is changeless substratum. The idea is that the Ultimate Reality, the Self, is that which lies beyond the delusory experiences of creation, dissolution and repeated re-creations.

**avyaktokshara ityuktastamaahuh paramaam gatim
yam praapya na nivartante taddhaama paramam mama // 8.21 //**

The unmanifested is called the imperishable; It is said to be the ultimate Goal from which those who reach it never come back. That is My Supreme abode.

What has been indicated in the previous verse as 'the other Unmanifest - which is the Eternal Existence - which does not perish' is explained here as the Imperishable mentioned in Verses 3 & 13 of this Chapter. The Imperishable was defined therein as the Brahman, the substratum for the entire universe and that we should meditate on 'OM' as the symbol of this Imperishable.

The Self which is Pure Awareness gives existence and dynamism to the unmanifested vasanas and makes them to project out to form the manifested world of activities and behaviors. This eternal Unmanifested Factor, the Imperishable Self, is the highest goal for man to achieve.

The knower of such Imperishable, Eternal Brahman never again falls under the spell of Maya or ignorance (never comes back). The abode of Brahman is called Supreme because the relative universe is the inferior manifestation of Brahman.

The ultimate goal referred to in the text does not indicate any state or condition but the Imperishable Brahman Itself, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss absolute, *sat-chit-ananda*.

MEANS TO ATTAIN THAT SUPREME ABODE

**purushaha sa parah paatha bhaktya labhyastwananyayaa
yasyaanthahsthaani bhootaani yena sarvamidam tatam // 8.22 //**

That Supreme Purusha, in whom all beings abide and by whom the entire universe is pervaded, can be attained, O Partha, by undistracted devotion directed to Him alone.

The technique by which the Unmanifest, the Imperishable - the Supreme Purusha is attainable is explained. Single pointed devotion with the total detachment from the world of body, mind and intellect is the means to achieve the Supreme Purusha. The detachment from the false is achieved by the growing attachment with the Real. Total Identification of oneself with the experience of the Self or the realization that nothing exists except the Lord, is undistracted devotion.

In whom all beings abide - All the beings (which are the effects) dwell within the Purusha, the Supreme Person (which is the cause) because every effect rests in its cause just as all mud pots (which are the effects) exist in the mud (which is the cause). The mud pervades all mud-pots irrespective of their size and shape. The essential nature of the mud-pot is nothing but the mud from which it is born. So also all beings and the world rest within their cause, the Purusha and hence the whole world is pervaded by the Purusha.

But for the cotton the beauty of the design woven in the cloth made out of that cotton cannot get projected. When Pure Awareness acts through vasanas It becomes the multiple worlds of names and forms. Therefore when one realizes the Self, he understands the very core out of which the world of multiplicity called *Samsar* has arisen.

Brahman is called Purusha (Person) because It dwells in every body (*pura*) or It is full (*poornam*).

THE TWO PATHS

**yatra kale twanaavrittim aavrittim chaiva yoginah
prayaataa yaanti tam kaalam vakshyaami bharatarshabha // 8.23 //**

Now I will tell you, O Chief of Bharatas, the time in which the yogis depart never to return and also the time in which they depart to return.

Sri Krishna now tells about the routes taken by the seekers to reach the two different destinations viz. the one from which there is a return and the other from which there is no return. The former is a Divine Mission seeking the Imperishable by ending the ego and re-discovering ones own Real Nature as none other than the Eternal Consciousness, the Changeless Substratum of the whole universe. The latter path is the life of satisfying the ego by gaining the experiences of joy among sense objects each of which ultimately brings forth sorrow.

These two worlds differ from each other since the one leads to a return again and again to a finite embodiment for living a life of limitations and the other assures a goal, having reached which, there is no return and where one enjoys Absolute Bliss.

If there are two different destinations there will be two separate routes guiding the respective types of seekers to reach their correct places. The Lord promises Arjuna that He will explain both the 'Path of return' and the 'Path of no return'. Here, the word 'Kale' means the time of departure as well as the path pursued by different types of seekers at the end of their present manifestations.

**agnirjyotirahah shuklah shanmaasaa uttaraayanam
tatra prayaataa gacchanti brahma brahmavido janaah // 8.24 //**

Fire, flame, day-time, the bright fortnight, the six months of the northern passage of the sun, departing when the men who know Brahman go to Brahman.

**dhoomo raatristathaa krishnah shanmaasaa dakshinaayanam
tatra chaandramasam jyotir yogee praapya nivartate // 8.25 //**

Attaining to the lunar light by smoke, night-time, the dark fortnight, or the six months of the southern passage of the sun, the yogi returns.

The verses 24 and 25 have been commented upon differently by different commentators. Fire, flame, day-time, the bright fortnight, the six months of the northern passage of the sun - all these indicate the path of the Gods presided over by the sun while the path of the ancestors is described in the verse 25 which is presided over by the moon. The path of Gods is the path of illumination that leads to liberation from where there is no return for the departed souls. On the other hand the path of ancestors is the path of darkness which leads to rebirth.

These two verses indicate that a seeker trying to raise himself above the various matter-envelopments and his identifications with them, can reach the higher spiritual realms of the Ultimate in his life time itself. But in case he happens to run after pleasure and sensuality, he comes back again to the field of action here wherein he can again make or unmake himself.

**shuklkrishne gatee hyete jagatah shaashwate mate
ekayaa yaatyanaavrittim anyayaavartate punah // 8.26 //**

Truly these bright and dark paths of the world are considered eternal; one leads to non-return, and the other one returns.

Both these paths are eternal because worldly existence of finitude and change or Samsara is eternal. But as per Vedanta the Samsara can be ended for the individual through sincere meditation.

Life is a conflict between light and darkness. The former makes for release and the latter for rebirth. The Lord here uses the ancient belief to illustrate the great spiritual truth that those who are lost in the darkness of ignorance go by the path of the ancestors and are subject to rebirth and those who live in the day of illumination and walk on the path of knowledge obtain release from rebirth. This attainment of liberation through Self-Knowledge, while living in a physical body, is the goal of human life. The other courses, paths etc. are described in order to spur men to strive for Self-Knowledge and for attainment of liberation here on earth.

**naite sruti paartha jaanan yogee muhyati kashchana
tasmaat sarveshu kaaleshu yogayukto bhavaarjuna //8.27 //**

O son of Prtha, no Yogi is deluded after knowing these paths. Therefore Arjuna, at all times you be steadfast in Yoga.

Knowing that one of the paths leads to Samsara and the other to Moksha, the Yogi takes up the one leading to illumination and rejects the other. Here Yogi is the one who has withdrawn himself from his false-identifications and entered into contemplation of the Self with single-pointed mind.

In short, this entire Chapter is Krishna's advice to Arjuna that he should, even while acting in this world, strive constantly to be the one living in the awareness of the Divine, through selfless identification with the Eternal, the Imperishable Purusha. The guiding principle is that whatever work one undertakes, he should not lose sight of the Eternal.

GLORY OF YOGA

**vedeshu yajneshu tapahsu chaiva
daaneshu yat punyaphalam pradishtam
atyeti tatsarvam idam viditwaa
yogee param sthaanamupaiti chaadyam // 8.28 //**

The Yogi who knows this transcends all rewards laid down for the study of the Vedas, for sacrifices, for austerities, for making charities; he reaches the supreme, Primal abode.

Sri Krishna means a true Yogi - a sincere meditator - goes beyond whatever meritorious results are promised in the Scriptures from the study of Vedas, performance of yajnas,

practice of austerities and from charities to reach the final goal, the Primeval, Supreme Abode

The word 'this' in the verse means the answers given by the Lord to the seven questions of Arjuna. One should not only understand but also follow the teachings contained in these answers of the Lord.

**om tat sat iti srimadbhagavadgeetaasu upanishatsu brahma vidyaayaam
yogashaastre sri krishnaarjuna samvaade akshara brahma yogo naama
ashtamo'dhyaayah ||**

Thus in the Upanishads of the glorious Bhagavad Gita, the science of the Eternal, the scripture of Yoga, the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, ends the eighth discourse entitled : The Yoga of Imperishable Brahman.

Concepts and Issues

The Supreme Lord who creates the Universe is Brahma. The Lord describes the day and night of Brahma each of which lasts for thousands of ages. He says those who know the day and night of Brahma they really understand the terms day and night. From the unmanifested all the manifested worlds proceed at the coming of the 'day' and at the coming of the 'night' they dissolve into that alone which is called the unmanifested.

But the Supreme Purusha stands as a witness apart from this process of evolution and dissolution. Therefore, those who remember and meditate on the Supreme Being as the eternal witness, at the time of death, will never have re-birth in this world but will reach the Supreme itself, which is beyond space, time and causation.

Sri Krishna explains how Yogis realize the Supreme Self at the time of death. He mentions the two paths by which the souls of the Yogis travel. The realized Yogis following the path of Light will merge in the Supreme Being and will have no return; they attain Liberation. The others who have attachment for the material world will go through the path of darkness and will take birth in the mortal world to go through the cycle of birth and death afresh.

A Yogi knowing these two paths will not follow ritualistic practices expecting to enjoy their fruits because he understands that everything other than the Self is a source of pain and is transient. Hence he is always immersed in the awareness of Eternal Consciousness. He ultimately attains the Primeval Abode.

Live as the Gita Teaches You to Live

The basic advice given by the Lord is that this mortal world is the place of pain and sorrow and is non-eternal and hence the one with God-Consciousness will alone reach the highest perfection i.e. Liberation. Therefore, The Lord emphasizes that one should

constantly practice Yoga and meditation so that even at the time of death God-thought alone will come instead of the thoughts of attachment to this materialistic world.

Points to Ponder

1. Who is the Supreme Purusha, what are His characteristics and how to attain Him?
2. How can one develop single-pointed concentration?
3. Write short notes on:
 - Paths of Return and Non-Return
 - Necessity for Meditation
 - Unmanifest, Manifest and Unmanifested Eternal Being

Next time we will take up Chapter 9

HARIH OM