

॥ श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता ॥

BHAGAVAD GEETA – 8

Yoga of the Imperishable Brahman

“THE SANDEEPANY EXPERIENCE”

**TEXT
28.08**

Reflections by
SWAMI GURUBHAKTANANDA





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List of All the Course Texts in Chronological Sequence:

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1	<i>Sadhana Panchakam</i>	24	<i>Hanuman Chalisa</i>
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13	<i>Drig-Drishya Viveka</i>	36	<i>Taittiriya Upanishad</i>
14	<i>"Tat Twam Asi" – Chand Up 6</i>	37	<i>Jivan Sutrani (Tips for Happy Living)</i>
15	<i>Dhyana Swaroopam</i>	38	<i>Kena Upanishad</i>
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17	<i>Manah Shodhanam</i>	40	<i>108 Names of Pujya Gurudev</i>
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A NOTE ABOUT SANDEEPANY

Sandeepany Sadhanalaya is an institution run by the Chinmaya Mission in Powai, Mumbai, teaching a 2-year Vedanta Course. It has a very balanced daily programme of basic Samskrit, Vedic chanting, Vedanta study, Bhagavatam, Ramacharitmanas, Bhajans, meditation, sports and fitness exercises, team-building outings, games and drama, celebration of all Hindu festivals, weekly Gayatri Havan and Guru Paduka Pooja, and Karma Yoga activities.

This series is an effort to promote the learning of Vedanta; it does not replace the Course, but hopes to inspire young people to spend two years of their life for an experience that is sure to make a far-reaching spiritual impact on their personal lives. Sandeepany is an all-round spiritual course that gives proper direction to the youth and to those approaching retirement. Hinduism is in dire need of a band of systematically trained teachers or Acharyas who can serve this Eternal Religion.

– The Author, February 2019, Shivaratri Day

Om Namah Shivaaya!

Text
28.08



अक्षरब्रह्मयोगः

THE BHAGAVAD GEETA – 8

“Yoga of the Imperishable Brahman”

Sri Veda Vyasaji

Reflections

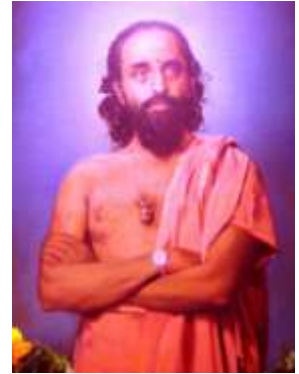
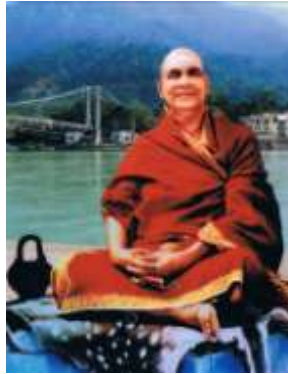
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on the 8 Lectures delivered by Swami Advayanandaji

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14th May – 21st May, 2013



Adi Shankaracharya

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Author:

Swami Gurubhaktananda (ex Krishna Chaitanya, born Bipin R. Kapitan in Durban, South Africa)

Email: gurubhakta.dls@gmail.com

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Personal Dedication

1. To my Parents, Smt Sharadaben & Sri Ratilalbhai Kapitan

who inspired me to study in life, to stick to the path of Dharma and pursue the highest ideals; and swamped me with their abundant Love;

2. To Pujya Sri Swami Vimalanandaji Maharaj

the President of the Divine Life Society of Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, India, who constantly encouraged and supported this effort;

3. To Pujya Sri Swami Tejomayanandaji (Guruji)

for his boundless vision and inspiration to create a vibrant organisation;

4. To Sri Swami Advayanandaji and Sri Swami Sharadanandaji

my Acharyaji and Upa-Acharyaji at Sandeepany, who imparted their bountiful knowledge and wisdom with rare selfless Divine Love, just as the Rishis of yore would wish to see them do.

BHAGAVAD GEETA – 8

“Yoga of the Imperishable Brahman”

॥ श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता ॥

अथ अष्टमोऽध्यायः

अक्षरब्रह्मयोगः

THE BHAGAVAD GEETA

Discourse – 8 (28 Verses)

“Yoga of the Imperishable Brahman”

INTRODUCTION

AN ACCOUNTANT’S HIGHLIGHT of the year is when the final accounts have to be prepared at the end of the financial year. When he presents the Balance Sheet to the Board of Directors, his duty is done.

The discussion in this Chapter is centred around the event of Death. This is the point at which one’s “Final Accounts” are prepared. According to our “Balance Sheet” is determined the path we take after death and the nature of our next birth.

We go forward in our understanding of the Lord’s Plan for mankind. If ever there is a moment in our life when we are most focused on the purpose of life, that moment has to be the point of approaching Death. This Chapter gives us more knowledge on the two distinct pathways that a soul follows after death. The predominant traits of our life determine the summation of our life, and our destiny. The knowledge imparted by the Lord has a practical aspect to it in helping us to set our goals in life more clearly.

The Chapter can be neatly divided into four major sections:

- i) **God’s Imminence and Transcendence** (verses 1-4);
- ii) **Remembrance of the Lord at Death** (verses 5-14);
- iii) **The Creative Cycles in the Cosmos** (verses 15-22);
- iv) **The Life Hereafter** (verses 23-28).



BHAGAVAD GEETA – 8
“Yoga of the Imperishable Brahman”

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8.1 IMMANENCE & TRANSCENDENCE

(Verses 1-4, 4 No.)

QUITE FREQUENTLY A spiritual Teacher would throw out certain terms to the student to see how attentive he is and to find out how interested he is in the subject. Lord Krishna has done that at the end of the last Chapter. He receives the perfect response to it from Arjuna – every new term that was mentioned is questioned in this chapter.

This tells the Teacher that He may continue with the teaching – the disciple is still listening with all attention.

Verse 1 & 2: *Six Technical Terms and a Concept*

अर्जुन उवाच ।

किं तद् ब्रह्म किमध्यात्मं किं कर्म पुरुषोत्तम ।

अधिभूतं च किं प्रोक्तमधिदैवं किमुच्यते

॥ ८-१॥

arjuna uvāca |

kiṁ tad brahma kimadhyātmam kiṁ karma puruṣōttama |

adhibhūtaṁ ca kiṁ prōktamadhidaivaṁ kimucyātē

॥ 8-1॥

	<i>Arjuna Uvaacha:</i>	<i>Arjuna said:</i>
1	Kim tat brahma kim adhyaatmam,	What is that Brahman ? What is Adhyatma ?
2	kim karma purushottama;	What is ' Action ', O Supreme-most Lord?
3	adhibhootam cha kim proktam,	What is declared as Adhibhootam ?
4	adhidaivam kim uchyate.	And what is Adhidaiva said to be?

अधियज्ञः कथं कोऽत्र देहेऽस्मिन्मधुसूदन ।

प्रयाणकाले च कथं ज्ञेयोऽसि नियतात्मभिः

॥ ८-२॥

adhiyajñāḥ katham kō:'tra dēhē:'sminmadhusūdana |

prayāṇakālē ca katham jñēyō:'si niyataātmabhiḥ

॥ 8-2॥

5	Adhiyajnah katham kah atra,	Who, and how, is Adhiyajna
6	dehe asmin madhusoodana;	here in this body, O Destroyer of Madhu?
7	prayaana kaale cha katham,	And how at the time of death ,
8	jneyah asi niyataatmabhih.	are You to be known by the self-controlled?

All these terms have been introduced to us already at the end of the last Chapter. We repeat the six terms and the concept of Life After Death:

A. The Six Technical Terms: These are introduced here as follows:

- 1a i) **Brahma Tat:** "That Supreme Reality"; **Brahman**
1b ii) **Adhyaatmam:** "that which pertains to individual self"; **Jeeva**
2 iii) **Karma:** "actions performed by the individual"; **Sadhana**
3 iv) **Adhibhootam:** "pertaining to the gross plane of existence"; **Virat**
4 v) **Adhidaivam:** "pertaining to subtle plane; living beings"; **Hiranyagarbha**
5 vi) **Adhiyajna:** "pertaining to the causal plane; the Lord"; **Ishwara**

B. The Concept of Life After Death:

7-8 Maam Viduh Prayaana Kaale: "knowing Me at the time of death".

The six terms are answered in verses 3-4.

The Concept of Death is answered in verses 5-7.

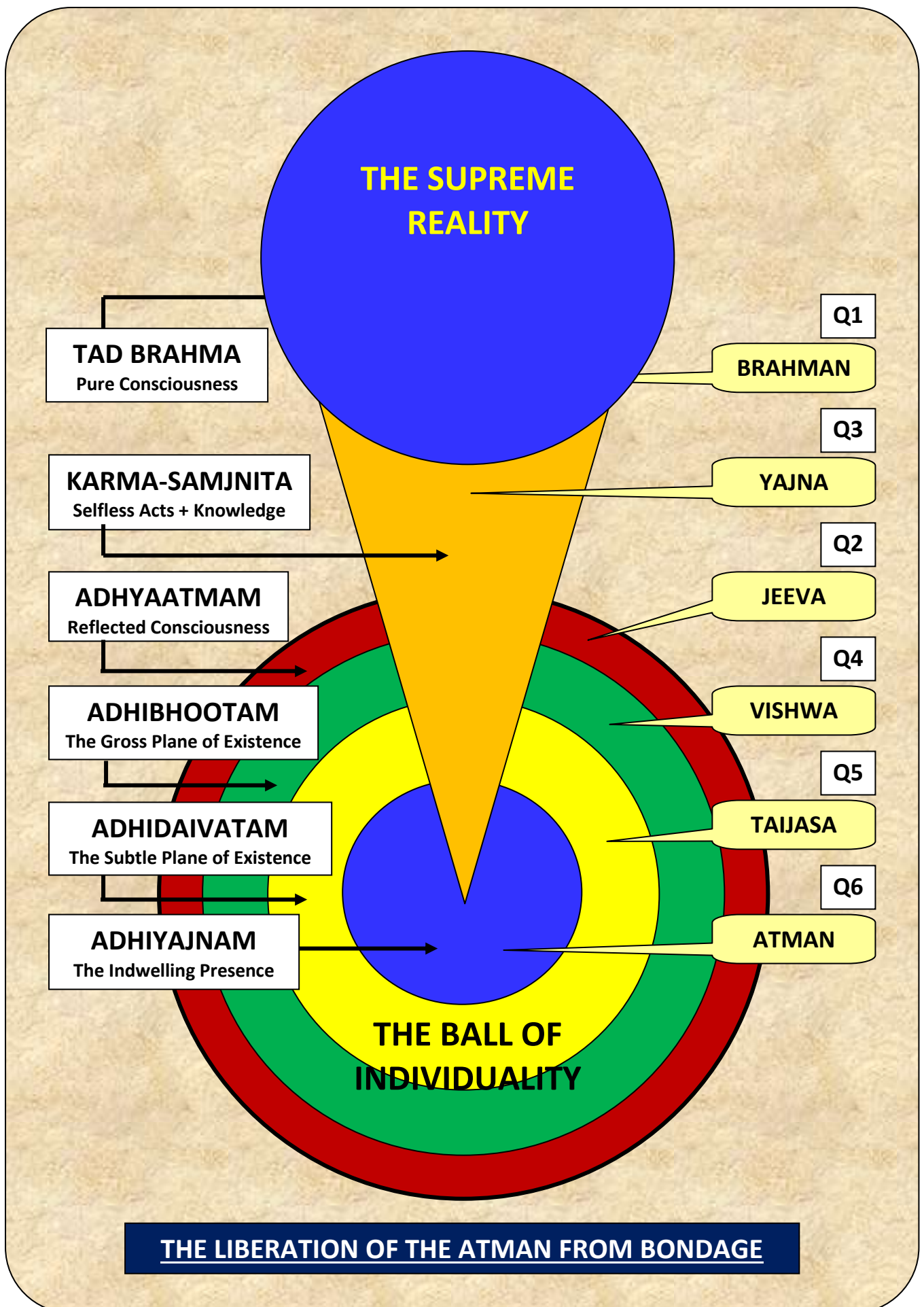
Verse 3 & 4: Six Technical Terms Explained

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमं स्वभावोऽध्यात्ममुच्यते ।
भूतभावोद्भवकरो विसर्गः कर्मसंज्ञितः ॥ ८-३॥
śrībhagavānuvāca |
akṣaram brahma paramam svabhāvō:'dhyātmamucyate |
bhūtabhāvōdbhavakarō visargaḥ karmasamjñitaḥ ॥ 8-3॥

	<i>Shree Bhagavaan Uvaacha:</i>	<i>The Blessed Lord said:</i>
1	<i>Aksharam brahma paramam,</i>	<i>Brahman is the <u>Imperishable</u>, the Supreme;</i>
2	<i>swabhaavah adhyaatmam uchyate;</i>	<i>It is said <u>selfhood (Jeeva)</u> is the entity present on the <u>individual plane</u>;</i>
3	<i>bhoota-bhaava udbhavakarah,</i>	<i>The cause of the origin of the existence of things,</i>
4	<i>visargah karma-samjnitah.</i>	<i>are those 'Actions' which are offered as sacrifice.</i>

अधिभूतं क्षरो भावः पुरुषश्चाधिदैवतम् ।
अधियज्ञोऽहमेवात्र देहे देहभृतां वर ॥ ८-४॥
adhibhūtaṁ kṣarō bhāvaḥ puruṣaścādhidaivatam |
adhiyajñō:'hamēvātra dēhē dēhabhṛtām vara ॥ 8-4॥

5	<i>Adhibhootam ksharah bhaavah,</i>	<i>The <u>gross plane</u> entity is the <u>perishable (Virat)</u>;</i>
6	<i>purushah cha adhidaivatam;</i>	<i><u>Hiranyagarbha</u> is the <u>subtle plane</u> entity;</i>
7	<i>adhiyajnam aham eva atra,</i>	<i>The <u>causal plane</u> entity is <u>I alone</u> here</i>
8	<i>dehe deha-bhritaam vara.</i>	<i>in this body, O noblest of the embodied.</i>



Q1 What is BRAHMAN?

1 He is **Aksharam Brahma**, “the Imperishable Supreme Reality”. This is **Brahman**. Brahman cannot be broken up into parts; He is without limitations, without form and without attributes; He is the highest, Non-Dual Truth in Vedanta. Everything in creation rests in Brahman. He alone is the Existence of all that exists. He is the ‘*Tat Pada*’ Lakshyaartha, the implied meaning of *That* in “Tat Twam Asi”.

The term **Brahman** is used for Reality under two conditions: i) at the macrocosmic totality level; and ii) unassociated with any causal, subtle and gross body.

Q2 What is ADHYAATMAM?

The term Adhyatman is used when neither of the above conditions are met: i.e. i) at the microcosmic, individual level; and ii) associated with the individual subtle and gross body. Under these conditions, we have the **Jeeva** or “individual soul”.

Q3 What is KARMA-SAMJNITAH?

These are **Yajna** or sacrificial acts which are dedicated as offerings to the Lord. Karma-Samjnitah covers all actions which are done in a spirit of service or sacrifice. Here, Yajna is “*that which causes the origin of the existence of things*,” i.e. the whole Cycle is dependent fully on performance of Yajna. Yajna is at the heart of the Cosmic Cycle of Action. Yajna nourishes all beings. It fulfills our indebtedness to all 5 categories of living beings.

The relevance of Yajna in the context of this Chapter is that it sets in motion the journey to Liberation of the individual soul from the cycle of births and deaths. That is the topic in this Chapter. Those who do not perform acts of Yajna, remain bound to the Cycle of Action, and get more and more entangled into actions. It becomes impossible for them to come out of this cycle and get liberated.

Q4 What is ADHIBHOOTAM?

This is the **Gross Plane of Existence**. Perishability (**Ksharah**) is the nature of everything that exists on this plane. All gross objects fall under Adhibhootam. This term, therefore, represents the gross world superimposed on Brahman. As it is a superimposition, it is Unreal – it is created, it has birth and death, and it is perishable. It stands in contrast to Brahman who is its Substratum, the Supreme Reality, uncreated, unborn, and Imperishable.

In association with Total Gross world, Brahman is called **Virat**. However, we are concerned in this Chapter with the individual Atman and its Liberation from bondage to the body. In association with the individual gross body, the Atman is called **Vishwa**. Vishwa ensures that the various functions of the body go on smoothly. Atman Itself is present in all parts of the body as their very Existence.

Q5 What is ADHIDAIVATAM?

This is the **Subtle Plane of Existence**. This is also perishable in nature, but that is not its recognising characteristic. All living entities fall under Adhidaivatam, i.e. the gods, humans and sub-humans. At the helm of all Deities and beings is Hiranyagarbha, named here as **Purushah**: “*the presider over all the Deities*.” It literally means “the Cosmic Womb”, since he is the Deity from whom the entire subtle creation of living entities emerges. He is the recognising characteristic for Adhidaivatam.

In association with Total Subtle world, Brahman is called **Hiranyagarbha**. Here again we are interested in the individual Atman’s Liberation from the subtle body. In association

with the individual subtle body, Atman is called **Taijasa**. Taijasa ensures that the various components of the subtle body function together in harmony. The Atman Itself is present in the subtle body as their very Existence.

A symbolic term for Taijasa is Aditya or the Deity of the Sun. Aditya is the Deity who controls the functioning of all our senses, which are the gateways of the subtle body.

Q6 What is ADHIYAJNAM?

We started with Brahman, the Absolute Consciousness at Absolute level. We end with the same Consciousness with reference to the individual, for which the term used in **Atman**. Adhiyajnam is Brahman dwelling in the individual being. It is the Lord's indwelling Presence as the Inner Being. More is explained in the block below.

Yajna liberates the Atman from its bondage as the illusory **Jeeva** to its subtle and gross body environment, and links it back to Brahman as shown in the following Diagram:

DISTINCTION BETWEEN ADHIYAJNA & ADHYATMAN

A man living in a palace is called a King. Living in a hut, he is called a peasant. When seen behind a desk at the office, he is some business executive. When he in the battlefield marshalling the soldiers, he is a Commander-in-Chief. Even so, Brahman is given different names depending on what He is being associated with.

It is the same principle which distinguishes **Adhiyajna** from **Adhyatman**. The former is the Immaculate Lord, the Pure Consciousness taking up His residence in our heart as the Inner Witness or *Antaryamin*. He is the **Atman** or pure Self. The latter is the **Jeeva**, the Adhyatman, the Consciousness reflected through man's subtle body. Atman is the Reality within; Jeeva is the Unreality within. Jeeva is the pseudo-Self, the apparent Self, not the real Self. But man ignorantly thinks he is the unreal Jeeva. The real man is the Atman. This will be explored further later in the Geeta.

Adhiyajna is the '**Me**' spoken of in the Geeta. He is the 'voice of our conscience', the indwelling Presence. He is the silent, persistent, constant voice within that guides our actions. He is the inner Guru, the unfailing truthful companion who cannot be ignored. His name as Adhiyajna is appropriate because it is He that makes us do *Yajna* or noble deeds. Adhiyajna makes us follow the path of Dharma, and adhere to the cosmic laws.

Yajna stands for a divine, selfless act. It is what should be done, it may not be pleasant. It pertains to all divine things in life. If we listen to the inner prompting to do Yajna, we shall promote maximum happiness and harmony in ourselves; if we fail to follow its prompting, we face great hardships.

Karma or action is seen by the devotee of the Lord as a means to attain the Lord. The devotee does not waste his time on actions which are desire-prompted. Such actions do not take him an inch forward towards God. Only Yajna unites him to the Supreme Reality.

Yajna is the unfailing compass that steers the ship of our life safely to its destination. Through it, we feel the Lord's Presence at all times in life. Hence the name Adhiyajna.



8.2 MEETING THE LORD AT DEATH

(Verses 5-15, 11 No.)

THE NEXT ELEVEN verses answer the concept of death that Arjuna asked about: “How, at the time of death, are You to be known by the self-controlled?”

Verses 5-7 answer the question directly. They speak of the ‘last thought’ as the key factor which determines where we go after death. Remembrance is the key Sadhana.

Verses 8-14 examine the attainments of the Jnani, the Yogi and the Bhakta. They cover the attainment of Jivanmukti, Videhamukti and Krama Mukti. The paths followed by various types of seekers of Truth are traced so that we get the whole picture.

The last verse of the section confirms that there is no rebirth for the seeker once he has attained the Lord, either through Jivanmukti or Krama Mukti.

REMEMBRANCE & THE “LAST THOUGHT”

Verse 5 *Remembering Me, One Comes to Me*

अन्तकाले च मामेव स्मरन्मुक्त्वा कलेवरम् ।

यः प्रयाति स मद्भावं याति नास्त्यत्र संशयः

॥ ८-५॥

antakālē ca māmēva smaranmuktva kalēvaram |

yah prayāti sa madbhāvaṁ yāti nāstyatra saṁśayaḥ

॥ 8-5॥

1	<i>Antakaale cha maam eva,</i>	<i>Even at the very end of Life, <u>Me alone</u></i>
2	<i>smaran muktva kalevaram;</i>	<i>does he remember while leaving his body.</i>
3	<i>yah prayaati sah mad-bhaavam,</i>	<i>Whosoever goes forth thus, to My Being</i>
4	<i>yaati na asti atra samshaya.</i>	<i>does he <u>reach</u>; there is no doubt about this.</i>

This verse states what happens in the specific case of a devotee of the Lord. The next verse takes up the general case.

1 Antakaale Cha: The ‘Cha’ is significant as it makes the meaning “even at the time of death”. It brings the whole life into the context, not just the last one. The idea is that it is not to be seen as a matter of chance, but a summation of one’s entire life. The predominant thought pattern in one’s life is what will arise as the last thought at death.

2 Maam Eva Smaran: “Remember Me alone”; if this is the most predominant thought of the devotee, then it will surely arise at the time of death, and, the promise of the verse will prevail – the devotee *will* certainly reach Me.

3 Prayaati: “going forth”. It indicates the ‘going’ of the subtle body to a heavenly abode after death for a limited duration. It implies a ‘coming back’, a **Rebirth**, to continue on the spiritual path here on earth. This is the common case that applies to all who have not

yet reached God, although they are making sincere efforts to reach Him. Jivanmukti and Krama Mukti are the only exception to this case, as will be seen later.

4 Attaining the Lord by thinking of Him is to be differentiated from the case of Jada Bharata who became a deer due to his constant thought of the deer. The case of Jada Bharata was a kind of Saroopya relationship or attachment to the deer. Attaining God is not an attachment, but total oneness with Him. Individuality is sacrificed.

Verse 6: Remembering Anything, to That One Goes

यं यं वापि स्मरन्भावं त्यजत्यन्ते कलेवरम् ।

तं तमेवैति कौन्तेय सदा तद्भावभाषितः

॥ ८-६॥

yam yam vāpi smaranbhāvaṁ tyajatyantē kalēvaram |

taṁ tamēvaiti kauntēya sadā tadbhāvabhāviṭaḥ

|| 8-6||

5	<i>Yam yam vaa api smaran bhaavam,</i>	<i>Whosoever, thinking of any being,</i>
6	<i>tyajati ante kalevaram;</i>	<i>leaves the body at the end,</i>
7	<i>tam tam eva eti kaunteya,</i>	<i>to <u>that being</u> only he <u>goes</u>, O Kaunteya,</i>
8	<i>sadaa tat bhaava bhaavitaḥ.</i>	<i>due to his constant thought of that being.</i>

5-8 This is the general version of the same rule. The case of Jada Bharata just mentioned applies here. Any thought which is the most predominant in our life, invariably something one is attached to, is what will come up to the conscious mind at the time of death. This will 'go forth and come back' to determine our next life.

The Last Thought

The main point regarding this is that it is not something that can be planned for at the moment of death; it will always be that which was predominant throughout life. It is not an accidental thought; it is the summary of our whole life that crystallises before the mind's eye at the moment of death.

There is another point about the "last thought" which was mentioned by Acharyaji. In no way does it guarantee a human birth to fulfill it. If it was the thought of desiring a *laddu*, one could even take birth as a worm to eat it and fulfill the desire!

One more point about the last thought is that, in the general case, it will reflect the attachment that dominated our life. That needs no training; it happens of its own accord. However, if the thought of God is desired at the time of death, then one has to make a conscious effort throughout life to cultivate this thought. It is not an attachment to God, but devotion to God.

Verse 7: Remember Me Always While Doing Duty

तस्मात्सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च ।

मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्मामेवैष्यस्यसंशयः

॥ ८-७॥

tasmātsarvēṣu kālēṣu māmanusmara yudhya ca |
mayyarpitamanōbuddhirmāmēvaiṣyasyasaṁśayaḥ || 8-7||

9	<i>Tasmaat sarveshu kaaleshu,</i>	<i>Therefore, at all times,</i>
10	<i>Maam anusmara yudhya cha;</i>	<i>do thou <u>remember Me</u> and fight.</i>
11	<i>mayi arpita mano buddhih,</i>	<i>With mind and intellect <u>fixed in Me</u>,</i>
12	<i>maam eva eshyasi asamshayam.</i>	<i>you shall doubtless come to Me alone.</i>

9-12 Sarveshu Kaaleshu: “at all times”. Here the Lord makes it very clear that the last thought is not an accidental thought. There is no fluke about it. It can be the end result of a consistency during life of that thought. That being so, the devotee of God has to cultivate the thought of God conscientiously throughout his life from the moment he decides to make God the central goal of his life.

JIVANMUKTI – LIBERATION WHILE LIVING

Verse 8: *Jnana Yoga Method: Meditation*

अभ्यासयोगयुक्तेन चेतसा नान्यगामिना ।
परमं पुरुषं दिव्यं याति पार्थानुचिन्तयन् || ८-८||
abhyāsayōgayuktēna cētasā nānyagāminā |
paramaṁ puruṣaṁ divyaṁ yāti pārthānucintayan || 8-8||

1	<i>Abhyaasa yoga yuktena,</i>	<i>By the steadfast practice of <u>habitual meditation</u>,</i>
2	<i>chetasaa naanya gaaminaa;</i>	<i>with the mind <u>not moving</u> towards any other thing</i>
3	<i>paramam purusham divyam,</i>	<i>but the Supreme, Resplendent Purusha,</i>
4	<i>yaati paarthaanu chintayan.</i>	<i>meditating upon It, he <u>goes to It</u>, O Partha.</i>

1-2 Here the Lord prescribes the best means possible to remember the Lord – meditation upon Him on a regular basis. That will ensure that at time of death, the last thought will be of Him.

CULTIVATING A “THOUGHT-HABIT”

The following are ideal conditions to strengthen any habit. They are important factors in planting and watering a ‘**thought habit**’ in one’s mind. Meditation is the best time to do this cultivation.

- i) There should not be any distraction of the mind towards any other thing.
- ii) In the stillness of meditation one can abide totally in Brahman.
- iii) Meditation requires the qualifications of Chitta Shuddhi and Chitta Ekaagrata.
- iv) There should be no dependence on anything external in meditation.

3-4 Here the Lord is referring to the Jivanmukta. He says, “Why, you need not even wait for death in order to come to Me. If you do this practice of meditation over a long period of time with sincerity, then you can come to Me even while you are still alive!”

Verse 9: Some Techniques of Meditation

कविं पुराणमनुशासितारम्
अणोरणीयंसमनुस्मरेद्यः ।

सर्वस्य धातारमचिन्त्यरूपम्
आदित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात्

॥ ८-९॥

kaviṁ purāṇamanuśāsītāra-
maṇōraṇīyaṁsamanusmarēdyaḥ |
sarvasya dhātāramacintyarūpa-
mādityavarṇaṁ tamasaḥ parastāt

॥ 8-9॥

5	<i>Kavim puraanam anusha-sitaaram,</i>	<i>i) Upon the Omniscient, ii) the Ancient, iii) the Ruler of the whole world,</i>
6	<i>Anoh aneeyaam samanusmaret yah;</i>	<i>iv) minuter than the atom, he who meditates;</i>
7	<i>sarvasya dhaataaram, achintya- roopam, aaditya varnam,</i>	<i>v) Upon the Nourisher of all, vi) inconceivable in form; vii) effulgent like the sun –</i>
8	<i>tamasah parastaat.</i>	<i>beyond the darkness of ignorance (he goes).</i>

The Jnani's Sadhana

We have seven aids to the Jnani's practice of meditation. They give details of the object of meditation and certain exercises or Upasanas to help keep the mind fixed:

5 In this Pada we have three descriptions of Brahman, the object of meditation.

6 To train our thought, it is suggested we use some aspect of the Lord's qualities to meditate upon. “Minuter than the minutest” is one such suggestion. There are many others by which we can consciously focus our mind on the nature of that Reality.

7-8 Three other themes that make our meditation more effective are given here. By flooding our thoughts with knowledge of Brahman in the above manner, our meditation becomes more effective and fruitful. We fill our meditation with knowledge of God.

Acharyaji added one more very effective means that covers all the above points. It was to meditate upon one's **Guru** by feeling that he is the embodiment of these qualities.

Verse 10: Raja Yoga Method: Via the Mind

प्रयाणकाले मनसाऽचलेन
भक्त्या युक्तो योगबलेन चैव ।

भ्रुवोर्मध्ये प्राणमावेश्य सम्यक्
स तं परं पुरुषमुपैति दिव्यम्

॥ ८-१०॥

prayāṇakālē manasā:'calēna

bhaktyā yuktō yōgabalēna caiva |

bhruvōrmadhyē prāṇamāvēśya samyak

sa tam param puruṣamupaiti divyam

|| 8-10||

1	<i>Prayaana kaale manasaa achalena,</i>	At the time of death – i) with a mind that is unshaken;
2	<i>bhaktyaa yuktah yoga balena cha eva;</i>	ii) yoked to the Lord in devotion; iii) by the power of Yoga alone;
3	<i>bhruvoh madhye praanam aaveshya samyak,</i>	iv) in the middle of the two eyebrows having placed the whole Prana;
4	<i>sah tam param puruṣam upaiti divyam.</i>	v) fixed in That Supreme Reality, he (the Yogi) goes to That Resplendent Purusha!

The Yogi or Ascetic

The Yogi or ascetic uses the method of controlling the thought Vrittis in his mind to come to a state of absorbing all his attention on one point in his body – the Ajna Chakra at the point in between the eyebrows. With his mind fixed at this point, the Yogi merges into the Samadhi state, united with Brahman through the sheer power of Yoga.

This is not a practice that can be done by all and sundry. It requires a very disciplined mind and very strong will-power to practice this form of Yoga, known as **Raja Yoga**.

KRAMA MUKTI – LIBERATION AFTER DEATH

Verse 11: *The Krama Mukti Candidates*

यदक्षरं वेदविदो वदन्ति

विशन्ति यद्यतयो वीतरागाः ।

यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति

तत्ते पदं सङ्ग्रहेण प्रवक्ष्ये

|| ८-११||

yadakṣaram vēdavidō vadanti

viśanti yadyatayō vītarāgāḥ |

yadicchantō brahmacaryam caranti

tattē padam saṅgrahēṇa pravakṣyē

|| 8-11||

1	<i>Yat aksharam vedavidah vadanti,</i>	Declared as Imperishable by <u>knowers of Vedas</u> ;
2	<i>vishanti yat yatayah veetaraagaah;</i>	Entered into by <u>ascetics</u> free from attachment;
3	<i>yat icchhantah brahmacharyam charanti,</i>	Desiring which <u>celibacy</u> is practised;
4	<i>tat te padam sangrahena pravakshye.</i>	That Goal I will declare to thee in brief.

Three candidates are mentioned who have their minds set on the Supreme Brahman. Their goal is the highest offered in the Vedas:

i) **Vedavid:** “*knowers of the Vedas*”, who know the Imperishable Brahman very well, having studied the Vedas deeply.

ii) **Yatayah:** “*self-controlled ascetics*”; those who are free from all attachment. These are the Sannyasis, who have formally taken the vows to practice spirituality on a full time basis, and hence they are free from all social responsibilities. They can therefore practice intense austerities and meditation.

iii) **Brahmachari:** “*the celibate*”. These are Sadhakas who abide by the rules of celibacy. They are the students who live in Gurukulas studying the scriptures under their Guru. The observance of celibacy is vital for them to succeed in their studies. Study cannot bear fruit unless strict celibacy is observed.

All these three categories of aspirants follow the Sadhana outlined in the next two verses to reach their goal – namely, union with the Supreme Brahman through the practice of deep meditation. This goal is the same as that of the Jnanis, but liberation is a step away.

Verse 12 & 13: *Krama Mukti: Integral Method*

सर्वद्वाराणि संयम्य मनो हृदि निरुध्य च ।
मूर्धन्याधायात्मनः प्राणमास्थितो योगधारणाम् ॥ ८-१२॥
sarvadvārāṇi saṁyamya manō hṛdi nirudhya ca |
mūrdhnyādhāyātmanah prāṇamāsthitō yōgadhāraṇām ॥ 8-12॥

1	<i>Sarva-dvaaraani samyamy,</i>	<i>Having closed all the <u>gates</u>,</i>
2	<i>manah hridi nirudhya cha;</i>	<i>having confined the mind in <u>the heart</u>,</i>
3	<i>moordhni aadhaaya aatmanah praanam,</i>	<i>having fixed the life-breath in <u>the head</u>,</i>
4	<i>aasthitah yoga dhaaranaam.</i>	<i>They engage in the practice of <u>concentration</u>.</i>

ओमित्येकाक्षरं ब्रह्म व्याहरन्मामनुस्मरन् ।
यः प्रयाति त्यजन्देहं स याति परमां गतिम् ॥ ८-१३॥
ōmityēkākṣaram brahma vyāharanmāmanusmaran |
yaḥ prayāti tyajandēham sa yāti paramāṁ gatim ॥ 8-13॥

5	<i>Om iti eka aksharam brahma,</i>	<i>Om – the one-syllabled Brahman –</i>
6	<i>vyaaahan maam anusmaran;</i>	<i>Uttering this and <u>remembering Me</u>,</i>
7	<i>yah prayaati tyajan deham,</i>	<i>he who departs thus when <u>leaving his body</u>,</i>
8	<i>sah yaati paramaam gatim.</i>	<i>such a person attains the Supreme Goal.</i>

- 1** This refers to closing the ‘gates’ of the senses, i.e. sense-control.
- 2** This refers to the Bhakta who devotes his mind to worship of the Lord.
- 3** This refers to the Yogi practising breath-control in order to control his mind.
- 4** Having done the above three practices, he gets prepared for concentration.
- 5-6** Under concentration, some Yogis do “Om-chanting” to calm the mind.

7 As mentioned in the above note, Krama Mukti is to be deduced from this fact.

8 The Goal is the same as for the Jivanmuktas, but there is a little difference which will be explained later.

AN IMPORTANT NOTE

The key difference between the verses 8-9-10 and verses 11-12-13, is that the former dealt with Jivanmukti where the Jnana Yogi is liberated while living; in the latter case, Krama Mukti is being dealt with where the Jnani-Yogi-Bhakta, while still having the same goal, chooses to go first to Brahmaloaka and hence get liberated from there by taking knowledge of the Self from Brahmaji.

In the case of **Jivanmukti**, no mention is made of the moment of death. This is because in Jivanmukti, liberation is attained while still living. There is no waiting till death to attain the Lord. The death of the body is not significant.

In the case of **Krama Mukti**, departure at the time of death is mentioned (7). Here, Liberation comes in steps to the aspirant. ['Krama' means "step".] In general, whenever reference is made to the path one takes after death, it can be said with certainty that Krama Mukti is being meant.

In verse 12 and 13 combined, the practices described are a combination of Yoga techniques, Jnana (knowledge of Brahman) and Bhakti. The method of pure Bhakti is described in verse 14.

Verse 14: *The Saguna Bhakta: Method of Pure Love*

अनन्यचेताः सततं यो मां स्मरति नित्यशः ।

तस्याहं सुलभः पार्थ नित्ययुक्तस्य योगिनः

॥ ८-१४॥

ananyacētāḥ satataṁ yō māṁ smarati nityaśaḥ |

tasyāhaṁ sulabhaḥ pārtha nityayuktasya yōginah

|| 8-14||

1	<i>Ananya chetaah satatam,</i>	<i>i) Not thinking of <u>any other</u> object constantly,</i>
2	<i>yah maam smarati nityashah;</i>	<i>ii) he who <u>remembers Me daily</u>;</i>
3	<i>tasya aham sulabhah paartha,</i>	<i>for him, I become <u>easily attainable</u>, O Partha,</i>
4	<i>nitya yuktasya yoginah.</i>	<i>to such an ever-steadfast Bhakta.</i>

This is an easy method when compared to the very technical methods described above. The Bhakta of the Lord has to just cling on to Him, as a baby monkey clings to its mother. It becomes the Lord's responsibility to take the Bhakta safely to Liberation by the step by step method called Krama Mukti. Everything is done by the Lord.

The devotee focuses his whole Sadhana on surrender to the Lord dwelling within his heart. He may also use an external aid to focus his mind on. The important part of his

Sadhana is to relate everything he does to the Lord. He does everything for His sake, with no thought of any other object. The two features of his Sadhana are:

- i) **Satatam**: it is constant.
- ii) **Nityashah**: it is regular, that is, daily for lifelong.

Such a devotee eventually reaches the Feet of the Lord by the Krama Mukti method. That is, he goes to Brahmaloka and from there he attains liberation.

The following table will be useful to summarise the fine differences we note in the verses from 8 to 14. Although they may appear to be very similar, when examined closely we note the difference in the type of aspirant being described.

TABLE SUMMARISING VERSES 8-14.

VERSE NO.	ASPIRANT DESCRIBED	THE METHOD	THE GOAL
8 & 9	The Jnaani (Vedantin)	Meditation on Nirguna Brahman	The Supreme Brahman Jivanmukti
10	The Yogi, the Ascetic	Combination of Yoga, and Devotion	The Supreme Brahman Jivanmukti
11	i) Vedavid, ii) The Sannyasi, iii) The Brahmacharin,	Study of Vedas Self-control, non-attachment Celibacy and study	Krama Mukti candidates
12 & 13	The above three types The 'Om' Upasaka	Yogic Concentration + Knowledge of Brahman + Meditation on "Om".	Supreme Brahman via Krama Mukti
14	The Bhakta	Pure Saguna Bhakti on the Lord's Form.	Krama Mukti

Verse 15: *No Rebirth After Reaching Me*

मामुपेत्य पुनर्जन्म दुःखालयमशाश्वतम् ।

नाप्नुवन्ति महात्मानः संसिद्धिं परमां गताः

॥ ८-१५॥

māmupētya punarjanma duḥkhālayamaśāśvatam |

nāpnuvanti mahātmānaḥ saṁsiddhiṁ paramāṁ gatāḥ || 8-15||

1	<i>Maam upetya punah janma,</i>	<i>Having <u>attained Me</u>, another birth,</i>
2	<i>dukhha aalayam ashaashwatam;</i>	<i>in this place of <u>pain</u> which is <u>ephemeral</u>,</i>
3	<i>na aapnuvanti mahaatmaanah,</i>	<i>is not taken by the realised souls,</i>
4	<i>sam-siddhim paramaam gataah.</i>	<i>as they have reached the highest <u>perfection</u>.</i>

When the Lord is finally reached, whether through Jivanmukti or Krama Mukti; in whichever manner He is remembered; whether by a Jnani, Ascetic Yogi, the Krama Muktas of different types or the Saguna Bhakta; when the aspirant reaches Me, the Supreme Brahman, he is liberated from the endless cycle of births and deaths. There is **no rebirth** for a realised, perfected soul.

Liberation is the central purpose of the human birth. Without striving for liberation, this human birth tantamounts to endless cycles of births and deaths in the realm of Samsara.

A TRIBUTE TO SRI VEDA VYASAJI

Acharyaji paid the following glowing tribute to the Author of the Geeta:

"How grateful we should all feel towards Sri Veda Vyasaji for bringing together the cream of the Upanishads into the pages of the Geeta. The Geeta is complete in itself, because of the great effort of Veda Vyasaji. It is the most systematic presentation of all the Shastras before it. It is the very distillation of all the Vedas that is presented in the Geeta. Sri Veda Vyasaji has really done a great service to mankind."



SRI RAMA

8.3 THE COSMIC CYCLES

(Verses 16-22, 7 No.)

THE SUBJECT MATTER of this section is the “COSMOLOGY” of the universe we are living in. The need for the knowledge contained here will be seen in the following section, when different pathways are discussed for different goals that one desires to attain after death. This subject is an introduction to the next and last section of this Chapter.

We are about to get a glimpse of some of astonishing facts about the universe. Much of this information was obtained by realised seers of ancient India living during the last Satya Yuga. Modern sciences like Geology, Astronomy, Geometry and Physics are gradually merging to bring to light these facts.

The most revealing point about this section is that the Indian scientists viewed Time as a cyclic phenomenon, not a linear phenomenon as modern science views it. This greatly changes the perspective of Indian Cosmology in comparison to the western viewpoints. In the cyclic view of Time, creation is followed by dissolution as birth is followed by death and death by rebirth. It is a never-ending.

From the above fact, History, as we learn the subject at schools and universities today, is seen in a different light in the East. Data and numbers in History become less and less important. Everything recurs. There comes a point when we realise there is no such thing as ancient and modern – the only event happening is NOW.

With that interesting introduction, we begin a thrilling account of Cosmology as viewed by the seers of ‘ancient’ India . . .

Verse 16: *The Two Commodities Available in Life*

आब्रह्मभुवनाल्लोकाः पुनरावर्तिनोऽर्जुन ।

मामुपेत्य तु कौन्तेय पुनर्जन्म न विद्यते

॥ ८-१६॥

ābrahmabhuvanāllōkāḥ punarāvartinō:'rjuna |

māmupētya tu kauntēya punarjanma na vidyātē

|| 8-16||

1	<i>Aabrahma bhuvanaat lokaah,</i>	<i>The worlds upto the world of Brahmaloka,</i>
2	<i>punah aavartinah, arjuna;</i>	<i>are subject to Rebirth, O Arjuna;</i>
3	<i>maam upetya tu kaunteya,</i>	<i>but he who reaches Me, O Kaunteya,</i>
4	<i>punar-janma na vidyate.</i>	<i>for him there is no Rebirth.</i>

An Introduction to the Subject:

The precision of the Lord in launching a new topic is something worth taking note of. Here the Lord firmly places before us the main purpose of going into the elaborate factual details that are to follow. Because of the danger we face of losing track of our original

purpose behind the vast data we have to digest, the Lord pins us down to the essential purpose in the very first verse. Central to this whole section is the **Theory of Rebirth and Liberation from Rebirth**, which will be affirmed by the data we are going to soon digest.

Rebirth or No Rebirth?

These are the two “products” available to human beings in the cosmic marketplace. Another word used in place of rebirth is ‘Return’ or ‘No Return’. What does this mean in terms of our spiritual life?

There are two Options open to all spiritual aspirants. The choice is ours:

1-2 A. The Path of REBIRTH: One major sector of mankind wishes to earn merit in order to spend it on “holidays” in the heavenly worlds. When they have exhausted that wealth they find they are back to square one, returning to Earth, i.e. taking *rebirth* on earth, to earn more merit for another round of the same pleasures. This is the [PRAVRITTI MARGA](#), also known as the path of activities.

3-4 B. The Path of NO REBIRTH: The minor sector of mankind has seen through the futility of this endless, meaningless round of births and deaths. They are tired of this game. They wish to get out of the game. They obtain the knowledge from scriptures and from a Guru who is fully conversant with the path by which they can ‘opt out’ of the game. This is the [NIVRITTI MARGA](#), also known as the path of renunciation.

Since these are the only two options available, the Lord deals with this subject in great detail in this Chapter devoted to answering people’s questions on “What Happens After Death?” This subject will see us to the end of the Chapter.

The Fourteen Worlds

1 As we shall be discussing these worlds, we list the whole fourteen worlds which make up the Universe. They are grouped into two categories, namely the 7 higher worlds and the 7 lower worlds:

The Higher Worlds: Bhuh (Earth), Bhuvah, Suvah, Mahah, Janah, Tapah, and Satyah.

The Lower Worlds: Atala, Vitala, Sutala, Rasatala, Talatala, Mahatala, and Patala.

The highest world, Satyah is also more commonly called the world of Brahmaji, or Brahmaloaka. This is the world mentioned in the verse. It is meant to refer to all 14 worlds.

Of these Bhuh, Bhuvah and Suvah are the manifested gross worlds of the universe. The other four higher worlds are subtle worlds and includes the heavens, the highest heaven being Brahmaloaka.

Beings who depart from the earth-plane, go to any one of the other planes listed. After spending due time in those places, either to enjoy their merits (in higher planes) or to suffer their demerits (in lower planes), they *return* to Earth to continue their evolution.

4 However, there are three known exceptions to this rule, for those who strive not to be born into the Samsaric cycle, and who are very devoted to the Supreme Brahman:

i) **Jivanmukti:** This has been covered categorically in the last verse. Those who succeed in realising Brahman while alive, have all their Karma wiped out.

ii) **Krama Mukti:** This, too, has been covered in the last section. They do not realise God, but opt to go to Brahmaloaka to enjoy their remaining merits there, and from there to obtain liberation from Brahmaji.

iii) **Yoga-Brashta**: We have come across this case in Chapter 6. They do take rebirth, but only to gradually perfect themselves in a few more births and eventually be liberated.

Verse 17: The Cosmic Time Cycle

सहस्रयुगपर्यन्तमहर्षद् ब्रह्मणो विदुः ।
 रात्रिं युगसहस्रान्तां तेऽहोरात्रविदो जनाः ॥ ८-१७॥
 sahasrayugaparyantamaharyad brahmaṇō viduḥ |
 rātrim yugasahasrāntām tē:'hōrātravidō janāḥ ॥ 8-17॥

1	<i>Sahasra yuga paryantam,</i>	<i>Of a <u>thousand Yugas</u> (aeons) in duration,</i>
2	<i>ahah yat brahmanah viduh;</i>	<i>know that to be the length of Brahmaji's day;</i>
3	<i>raatrim yuga sahasra-antaam,</i>	<i>and a thousand Yugas long is His night;</i>
4	<i>te ahah raatra vidah janaah.</i>	<i>The <u>realized</u> ones know this to be day and night.</i>

1 The 1000 Yugas of one **Day of Brahma** are split into four unequal portions. Elsewhere it is said that an hour of Brahma's Day is equal to a year in cosmic time, we get:

1. Satya Yuga	400 Yugas	x 12 years	= 4,800 years
2. Treta Yuga	300 Yugas	x 12 years	= 3,600 years
3. Dwapara Yuga	200 Yugas	x 12 years	= 2,400 years
4. Kali Yuga	100 Yugas	x 12 years	= 1,200 years
<hr/>			
2 Brahma's Day	1000 Yugas		= 12,000 years
3 Brahma's Night	1000 Yugas		= 12,000 years
2-3 One full Brahma's Day			= 24,000 years
<hr/>			
One Year of Brahma	x 360 days		= 8,640,000 years
One Lifetime of Brahma	x 100 'years'		= 864,000,000 years
			i.e. close to 1 billion years.

After each day of Brahma, we complete a full cycle of all the four Yugas in their ascending and descending period. After the lifetime of Brahmaji, the whole cosmos dissolves, including Brahmaloaka itself.

4 The last statement of the verse is quite significant. It tells us of the region that the realized sages are in. How is it possible for them to know Brahmaji's day and night? It is only possible if they are outside the realm of Brahmaji's day and night. This verse thus indirectly tells us that the realized sages are in the realm of the Indestructible Brahman.

Verse 18: The Cycle of Manifestation

अव्यक्ताद् व्यक्तयः सर्वाः प्रभवन्त्यहरागमे ।
 रात्र्यागमे प्रलीयन्ते तत्रैवाव्यक्तसंज्ञके ॥ ८-१८॥

avyaktād vyaktayaḥ sarvāḥ prabhavantyaharāgamē |
rātryāgamē pralīyantē tatraivāvyaktasamjñakē

|| 8-18||

1	<i>Avyaktaat vyaktayah sarvaah,</i>	<i>From the unmanifested, all the manifested</i>
2	<i>prabhavanti ahah aagame;</i>	<i><u>proceed</u> at the <u>coming of "day"</u>;</i>
3	<i>raatri aagame praleeyante,</i>	<i>and at the <u>coming of "night"</u> they verily <u>dissolve</u></i>
4	<i>tatra eva avyakta samjnake.</i>	<i>into that which is called the unmanifested.</i>

The above verse tells us that each day and night cycle, there is a dissolution of all that is manifested. This is a short cycle and is called **Naimitika Pralaya**. This cycle of dissolution applies only to the Bhuh, Bhuvah and Suvah worlds. This means that all Jeevas are forced to go to any of the other world's to 'sleep' there for Brahma's night in an unmanifested form. This happens every 24,000 years, one full Day of Brahman.

The long cycle of dissolution takes place at the end of Brahmaji's life (nearly a billion years) and is called **Prakriti Pralaya**. At this time all 14 Lokas get dissolved.

Everything is Perishable, Even Brahmaloaka, Even Brahmaji!

The point made here is that if even Brahmaloaka is not a permanent place to be, then what to speak of the lesser worlds of which Earth is a part?

In most depictions of Brahmaji, He is shown as an *old man with a very white beard!* This is supposed to convey the idea that His lifespan of 100 'Brahmaji years' is almost a billion of our years on Earth. It also stands for the fact that although He lives so long, even His life comes to an end. He is also just like us in that respect. He is like the captain of a ship who is the first to enter and the last to leave, but he too has to go one day!

The idea is that all these worlds are a temporary residence for us. Only if we attain the highest Brahman are we free from perishing. The sages who have realized are one with the Supreme Brahman, which is higher than Brahmaloaka; thus they alone are not affected by such dissolution. Everyone else is destroyed during this Pralaya.

Verse 19: The Relentless Cycle of Samsara

भूतग्रामः स एवायं भूत्वा भूत्वा प्रलीयते ।

रात्र्यागमेऽवशः पार्थ प्रभवत्यहरागमे

|| ८-१९||

bhūtagrāmaḥ sa ēvāyaṁ bhūtvā bhūtvā pralīyatē |

rātryāgamē:'vaśaḥ pārtha prabhavatyaharāgamē

|| 8-19||

1	<i>Bhoota graamah sah eva ayam,</i>	<i>This same multiple number of beings that</i>
2	<i>bhootvaa bhootvaa praleeyate;</i>	<i>are being born again and again, are dissolved</i>
3	<i>raatri aagame avashah paartha,</i>	<i>helplessly at the coming of night, O Partha,</i>
4	<i>prabhavati ahah aagame.</i>	<i>and come forth again at the coming of day.</i>

The point being made here is not so much to tell us the facts about the creation and dissolution cycles of the universe, as to tell us that it is relentless and futile. When one

knows that this is an endless process, he realizes that he is trapped in a **state of bondage**. It is a big step just to be able to recognize this fact! The sooner it is realized the better.

Acharyaji put it in very graphic terms: “This is the relentless, grinding machine of Samsara! It never ends, except through getting knowledge of the Self and then realizing Brahman. Beings are forcibly thrown out into creation, sampling each mother’s womb – from being a bacteria to a human being. All wombs are sampled endlessly.

For how long are we going to allow this to go on? *This is the issue here*. The poet in Veda Vyasaji is driving home the fruitlessness of living a life in the “cage” of Samsara. If we can catch this point, that is enough from this verse, the rest is just poetry. There is no escape from this “chakkar”.

The only ‘relief’ is that we don’t remember how boring this is!

Verse 20: *The Permanent Resting Place*

परस्तस्मात्तु भावोऽन्योऽव्यक्तोऽव्यक्तात्सनातनः ।

यः स सर्वेषु भूतेषु नश्यत्सु न विनश्यति

॥ ८-२०॥

parastasmāttu bhāvō:'nyō:'vyaktō:'vyaktātsanātanah |

yah sa sarvēṣu bhūtēṣu naśyatsu na vinaśyati

|| 8-20||

1	<i>parah tasmaat tu bhaavah anyah,</i>	But there exists <u>higher</u> even than that
2	<i>avyaktah avyaktaat sanaatanah;</i>	<u>unmanifest</u> , another Unmanifest that is <u>eternal</u> .
3	<i>yah sah sarveshu bhooteshu,</i>	When all the beings and all the worlds
4	<i>nashyatsu na vinashyati.</i>	are destroyed, this Unmanifest is <u>not destroyed</u> .

1-4 The relentless, whirling round of births and deaths may already have created dispassion in some people’s minds, the dispassion to put an end to this tireless cycle once and for all. This verse gives some hope to the seeker that at least there is a permanent place after all, where one can seek rest from the onslaught of Samsara.

Two Avyaktas are described – the perfect way to confuse the inattentive reader:

1. The Lower Avyakta: This is denoted with a small letter as ‘unmanifest’. This is the condition of the dissolution going into a seed or Causal state, so that at the coming of the day it can re-manifest. The creation has not been destroyed altogether, but merely dissolved and put into a seed state.

This is the state when **Hiranyagarbha** goes to sleep into the lap of **Ishwara**, the Causal Consciousness. Everything manifested, both subtle and gross, goes into seed form. On the coming of the day, everything re-manifests from the Causal.

To illustrate the possibility of this, we find an example in our sleep. When we sleep, the thoughts do not get permanently destroyed. They are available to us as soon as we get up. So, too, is the state of sleep of Hiranyagarbha, Creation goes into seed form, only to sprout out again as soon as the night has passed.

2. The Higher Avyakta: This is denoted as the ‘Unmanifest’ (with a capital letter). It is the Indestructible Brahman which remains changeless at all times. It is the foundation or substratum upon which the whole universe is superimposed. It is the Reality behind the

Unreality. It is never destroyed or dissolved. It is unchangeable. This is the realm to which the realized sages reach. Now even **Ishwara** goes to sleep into the lap of **Brahman**!

This Higher Unmanifest is the “Land of No Return” . . .

Verse 21: *The Highest Abode – the Goal*

अव्यक्तोऽक्षर इत्युक्तस्तमाहुः परमां गतिम् ।

यं प्राप्य न निवर्तन्ते तद्धाम परमं मम

॥ ८-२१॥

avyaktō:'kṣara ityuktastamāhuḥ paramāṁ gatim |

yam prāpya na nivartantē taddhāma paramaṁ mama || 8-21||

1	<i>Avyaktah aksharah iti uktah,</i>	<i>Known as the <u>Unmanifest</u>, the <u>Imperishable</u>,</i>
2	<i>tam aahuh paramaam gatim;</i>	<i>That they say is the Highest Goal.</i>
3	<i>yam praapya na nivartante,</i>	<i>They who reach It, <u>never return</u> again;</i>
4	<i>tat dhaama paramam mama.</i>	<i>That is My <u>Highest Abode</u> (or state).</i>

1 Aksharah: “Indestructible”. This is a very common word used in the scriptures to denote the Supreme Brahman. It underscores the most essential feature of this state. It is pure Existence Itself, that never dies. It just remains on and on for ever! That is why It is called the Supreme Reality.

2 This is the Goal that Vedanta holds aloft before us always. It is this Unmanifest which is the goal of all serious spiritual endeavour. Man, seeking permanent happiness that is not adulterated by any external factor, can find it by striving to reach this state. Hence it is called as the ‘Highest Goal’, the **Paramaam Gatim**, of spiritual life. This Highest Goal is outside the “playing field” of Samsara!

3 Reaching this Goal, as per verse 15, there is no return to Samsara, no Rebirth.

4 The main point of this verse is that this unchanging place is considered to be the ‘Abode of the Lord’. A minor Samskrit grammatical twist gives added emphasis to this fact:

Pronouns ‘Tam’ and ‘Yam’ in Padas **2** and **3** should grammatically be followed by pronoun ‘Tam’ here, but we find that ‘Tat’ the neuter form is used, because ‘Dhaama’ is a neuter word. The grammarians can ponder over that, but for us it draws attention to *the only Abode where permanent rest may be found from the whirling round of Samsara*.

Verse 22: *“Love God” – the Only Way*

पुरुषः स परः पार्थ भक्त्या लभ्यस्त्वनन्यया ।

यस्यान्तःस्थानि भूतानि येन सर्वमिदं ततम्

॥ ८-२२॥

puruṣaḥ sa paraḥ pārtha bhaktyā labhyastvananyayā |

yasyāntaḥsthāni bhūtāni yēna sarvamidaṁ tatam || 8-22||

1	<i>Purushah sah parah paartha,</i>	<i>That Highest Purusha, O Partha,</i>
2	<i>bhaktiyaa labhyah tu ananyayaa;</i>	<i>is attainable by <u>unswerving devotion</u> to Him alone,</i>
3	<i>yasya antah-sthaani bhootaani,</i>	<i>within whom <u>all beings</u> dwell,</i>
4	<i>yena sarvam idam tatam.</i>	<i>and by whom <u>all this</u> is pervaded.</i>

This section started by describing the worlds by which one returns to Samsara. Here it ends by taking a look at the other extreme – the path, attaining which, one does not return to Samsara ever again. Is it not significant – that the two paths, which are so different from each other, should even physically be placed furthest from each other in this text!

1 The path of no return is certainly the one which the Lord of the *Geeta* would prefer us to strive for despite the enormous difficulty in doing so. The Highest Purusha is a Goal worth striving for, and the only way to avoid endless **Transmigration**.

The Price of Realisation

2 This Goal requires 100% dedication to the Ideal. Many other things have to be renounced in pursuit of It. Very few people are there to pursue this path. As we have already studied, even of these few a very small percentage succeed. The number of saints in the world are very few, indeed.

This means **Love** for God is no different from Love for mankind. Love alone will make us think of Him always. What we love, we remember at all times, even while busy engaged with other work. The example is given of a mother who is busy with her kitchen duties, but whose mind is always on her child, or on her husband.

We have already had verses 5 and 14 in this Chapter that echo the same message – that we should remember Him alone with single-pointed devotion if we wish to attain to His being. Thus in three verses, evenly spaced apart, the Lord repeats His clarion call to the devotee to remain totally devoted to him. It is our good fortune that He is attainable through no other way except through pure, unconditional Love.

Is the Price Worth it?

Is it worth taking all this trouble to attain this ultimate goal? The next two Padas describe two aspects which adequately justify treading this path at any cost.

3 Lord Krishna is being very helpful here to indicate to us how we go about developing this “unswerving devotion”. In this Pada, Sri Krishna tells us that all beings exist in the Lord, i.e. they are all superimpositions upon Him. This is from the perspective of the beings. Only they have the subtle body to feel the Presence of God in them. Inert objects are included in the next Pada.

4 In this Pada, the same truth is expressed from the point of view of the Lord. As far as He is concerned, He is the Substratum of everything in creation, not only the living beings but also all inert objects and things.

Since the Goal is attainable only by man among all living creatures, we can certainly make a start by widening our narrow limits of love beyond just family, friends and relatives. The way to love God is to learn to see Him in all, humans and animals.

As we begin to follow this instruction to its logical end, we realise that it contains the quintessence of life without the **Ego**. Ego-centred life focuses on the individual alone; all others are seen as threats to that individuality. The one who realizes the Self sees the very

opposite; he sees himself and everyone else in God, and God as the support of all beings and things. This radical new vision is in stark contrast to the narrow, limited vision of the Ego. That is incentive enough for the one who loves God; who loves the Truth; and who lives only for the Truth, and will die for Truth.



8.4 LIFE HEREAFTER

(Verses 23-28, 6 No.)

THE SUBJECT DEALT WITH in this last section can be thought of as an Appendix to Question 7 asked by Arjuna, regarding how the Lord is to be realized at the time of death. The question has already been answered. The pathways by which the departing soul is led to its appropriate destination are now described.

Verse 23: *The Two Paths Summarised*

यत्र काले त्वनावृत्तिमावृत्तिं चैव योगिनः ।

प्रयाता यान्ति तं कालं वक्ष्यामि भरतर्षभ

॥ ८-२३॥

yatra kālē tvanāvṛttimāvṛttiṁ caiva yōginah |

prayātā yānti taṁ kālaṁ vakṣyāmi bharatarṣabha

|| 8-23||

1	<i>Yatra kaale tu anaavrittim,</i>	<i>Now the path by which Yogis never return,</i>
2	<i>aavrittim cha eva yoginah;</i>	<i>as also (the path) by which one returns</i>
3	<i>prayaataah yaanti tam kaalam,</i>	<i>when they are departing from here – these</i>
4	<i>vakshyaami bharatarshabha.</i>	<i>I will tell you, O chief of the Bharatas.</i>

1-2 A summary is made here, virtually repeating the two paths which have been explained in verse 16, the introduction to the last section.

The Interpretation of Kaala as a “Path”

Acharyaji specifically stressed the need to interpret ‘*Kaala*’ not as Time but as a Path. The differentiation lies in the path that one follows during one’s life, not the literal time when one departs from the earthplane at the moment of death.

Those who erroneously take it to mean time, get into great difficulty interpreting these verses. They wait for an auspicious *time* to die, whereas no such thing is meant in the *Geeta*. It is illogical to think that the time when one departs determines to which world one goes. This would make a mockery of justice – what if a righteous person happens to die at the wrong time? For this reason, we have to interpret Kaala as a path, not as time.

The only reference to time is the moment of death which has to have a date and a particular time.

The Devatas Who Deliver the Soul

3 There are Deities (Devatas) who preside over various functions in nature. These Deities function in their respective posts only. Since they are associated only with that particular post, they are said to have an “Ego-sense” or Abhimana with respect to that function. Hence they are called Abhimana Devatas. That is the general case.

At the time of death, the soul is taken by the relevant Deity presiding over that particular time. This is explained in the next two verses...

अग्निर्ज्योतिरहः शुक्लः षण्मासा उत्तरायणम् ।
तत्र प्रयाता गच्छन्ति ब्रह्म ब्रह्मविदो जनाः ॥ ८-२४॥

agnirjyōtirahaḥ śuklaḥ ṣaṇmāsā uttarāyaṇam |
tatra prayātā gacchanti brahma brahmavidō janāḥ ॥ 8-24॥

The soul described here, i.e. the soul which has known Brahman, travels the “Path of the Gods” or Devayana. The above-mentioned Devatas of the ‘Bright Path’ take charge of the soul and deliver it to the appropriate “bright” location or world that it deserves to reach. Going along this ‘Bright Path’, the soul merges into Brahman and does NOT RETURN to this earth-plane again. This is all figuratively speaking, as Brahman is all-pervading.

धूमो रात्रिस्तथा कृष्णः षण्मासा दक्षिणायनम् ।
तत्र चान्द्रमसं ज्योतिर्योगी प्राप्य निवर्तते ॥ ८-२५॥

dhūmō rātristathā kṛṣṇaḥ ṣaṇmāsā dakṣiṇāyanam |
tatra cāndramasaṁ jyōtiryoḡī prāpya nivartatē ॥ 8-25॥

1	<i>Dhoomah raatrih tathaa krishnah,</i>	<i>Smoke, night-time, the dark fortnight,</i>
2	<i>shan-maasaah dakshinaayanam;</i>	<i>the six months of the southern solstice –</i>
3	<i>tatra chaandramasam jyotih,</i>	<i>following this (dark) Path of the lunar light,</i>
4	<i>yogee praapya nivartate.</i>	<i>and attaining it, the Yogi returns.</i>

This is the path *alternate* to the above (please note the word ‘alternate’, not ‘opposite to’). This other path is for those who have not realised their unity with Brahman, and do not qualify for the “Path of the Gods”. Their path is indicated here.

The Path of the “Dark” Devatas:

1-2 The “Dark” Devatas are those who have jurisdiction over the dull elements or dull periods of time.

In the above verse out of the four Devatas mentioned, **Dhoomah** (Smoke) is an *Abhimana Devata*, while **Raatrih** (Night), the **Krishnah** (Dark Fortnight) and **Dakshinaayanam** (the Southern Solstice) are *Kala Abhimana Devatas*.

The soul described here, i.e. the soul which has practised various Karmas and Upasanas prompted by its desires, travels along the “Path of the Ancestors” or Pitryana. The above-mentioned Devatas of the ‘Dark Path’ take charge of the soul and deliver it to the appropriate “dark” location or world that it deserves to reach. Going along this ‘Dark Path’, the soul reaches the world of its choice, and after spending due time there, it has to RETURN to this earth-plane again.

Again, this is all figurative, as in actual fact, no such ‘travelling’ is meant.

Chaandramasam: This Path is presided over by the Moon. The moon is closely linked to the mind, and the mind is linked to desires; it is the seat of all desires. Since this is the path taken by those in whom desires are still dominant, it is also called as the ‘Lunar Path’.

Acharyaji drew our attention to the possible misinterpretation of taking the moon to be the world to which this group of people go. This is not so. Moon is symbolic, and tells us that the worlds from Brahmaji down to Suvah, the lower heavens, have got ‘moon-like effulgence’. They also have the coolness of the moon which inspires joyous feelings in these heavens. They are pleasant and pleasurable as being in the moonlight.

And, finally, the moonlight is a reflection of sunlight, not the direct effulgence of the sun. This represents the fact that the joy people experience in heaven is only a reflection of the Pure Bliss of Brahman. It is like “imitation” joy. To get the true Bliss one has to tread the other path which is the path of No Return. In this way, the Upanishads always draw the mind of people towards the higher path at every opportunity it gets.

Verse 26: *These Paths are Eternal*

शुक्लकृष्णे गती ह्येते जगतः शाश्वते मते ।

एकया यात्यनावृत्तिमन्ययावर्तते पुनः

॥ ८-२६॥

śuklakṛṣṇe gatī hyētē jagataḥ śāśvatē matē |

ēkayā yātyanāvṛttimanyayāvartatē punaḥ

|| 8-26||

1	<i>Shukla krishne gatee hi ete,</i>	<i>Verily, the paths of light and of darkness</i>
2	<i>jagata shaashwate mate;</i>	<i>of the world, are thought to be <u>Eternal</u>.</i>
3	<i>ekayaa yaati anaavrittim,</i>	<i>By one – the <u>light path</u> – a man goes and never returns;</i>
4	<i>anyayaa aavartate punah.</i>	<i>by the other – the <u>dark path</u> – he returns again.</i>

Apart from being a re-statement of the facts already told to us, there is the new fact of eternality introduced in this verse. What is the point we learn from this fact that both these paths are Eternal? In class, Acharyaji brought out the following important point:

Both paths are Eternal – does that mean that either path will do? No, their eternality is not an attraction in itself. After all, the path of Light brings us Bliss, while the path of Darkness brings us sorrow and suffering. So they are not equally attractive.

Their Eternality is a fact, just as it is a fact that there will always be good and bad people on earth. Hence, the paths have to be eternally opened to cater for both types.

Acharyaji explained: “The Path of Light is a permanent abode in union with Brahman, wherein the experience is of absolute Bliss, independent of any external factor. No objects are needed, no other person is needed, no amount of wealth, power, prestige, and so on are needed.

“The Path of Darkness is riddled with pain, suffering, disappointment, fear, and so on. It is just no comparison to the former Bliss. A few paltry drops of pleasure and joy are mixed with tons of sorrow and pain. The deluded, clouded intellect on the latter path is no comparison to the clear, subtle, piercing intellect possessed on the former path. And when this is stretched out to eternity, what a miserable feeling it must surely bring! What hope is there on this relentless round of birth and death, tossed about in the sea of Samsara!

That is the whole point of this single line in the verse – that both paths are eternal.

Verse 27: *Knowledge Makes the Choice Clear*

नैते सृती पार्थ जानन्योगी मुह्यति कश्चन ।

तस्मात्सर्वेषु कालेषु योगयुक्तो भवार्जुन

॥ ८-२७॥

naitē sṛtī pārtha jānanyōgī muhyati kaścana |

tasmātsarvēṣu kālēṣu yōgayuktō bhavārjuna

|| 8-27||

1	<i>Na ete sritee paartha jaanan,</i>	<i>Knowing these <u>two paths</u>, no</i>
2	<i>yogee muhyati kashchana;</i>	<i>Yogi is deluded anymore.</i>
3	<i>tasmaat sarveshu kaaleshu,</i>	<i>Therefore, at all times,</i>
4	<i>yoga-yuktah bhava arjuna.</i>	<i>be thou steadfast in Yoga, O Arjuna.</i>

1-2 A proper understanding of these two paths, as we have in this Chapter, is certain to make us turn earnestly to the Path of Light. Why?

The mind of the seeker becomes very clear on what the real Goal of life is. There is a certainty and clarity that arises from this knowledge. When delusion has been removed, who will remain contented with the ordinary, commonly trodden path of desire? Even if it is

Making the Final Resolve

3-4 That is the million dollar question that this verse resolves for us. It places us firmly on the Nivritti Marga, the expressway to eternal, permanent happiness.

Once we know with certitude what each path offers, we can weigh the two fairly and see for ourselves on which path lies our maximum good. The Path of Light would be the obvious choice for the sincere seeker of the Truth. He can launch himself wholly in the spiritual path just from the understanding obtained by this knowledge of the two paths.

वेदेषु यज्ञेषु तपःसु चैव
दानेषु यत्पुण्यफलं प्रदिष्टम् ।
अत्येति तत्सर्वमिदं विदित्वा
योगी परं स्थानमुपैति चाद्यम् ॥ ८-२८॥

1	<i>Vedeshu yajneshu tapasu cha eva,</i>	<i>From the study of <u>Vedas</u>, from <u>sacrifices</u>, and from the performance of <u>austerities</u>;</i>
2	<i>daaneshu yat punya phalam pradishtam;</i>	<i>as also from <u>charity</u> – whatever merit or fruit is said to accrue from them (in the scriptures);</i>
3	<i>atya iti tat sarvam idam viditvaa,</i>	<i><u>beyond</u> all these goes the one who has the knowledge (of these two paths).</i>
4	<i>yogee param sthaanam upaiti cha aadyam.</i>	<i>Becoming a Yogi, to the <u>Supreme Abode</u> he goes, surpassing the attainment of all the others.</i>

In verse 16, the two major commodities in the ‘cosmic marketplace’ were introduced, namely, Rebirth and No Rebirth. In this concluding verse the Lord presents His assessment of the relative value of these to the aspirant. What is His assessment?

Discourse 8 | *Yoga of the Imperishable Brahman*



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3-4 In the other basket of the scale, the Lord places the fruit earned by the Yogi who commits himself to the spiritual path, after taking due account of both paths available to him. What the Yogi earns as his fruit outweighs all the other fruits put together! What does he earn that makes his earning so much greater than all the others combined?

The Most Valuable Commodity

In the Lord's assessment, it is better to choose the Lord than to choose all the gifts He offers in the world. The Supreme Abode of the Lord is voted far superior to anything else obtained as boons by any other devotee doing Sadhana. Their fruits are no match in comparison with the priceless commodity of **No Rebirth**.

Example 1: It is like a hundred people walking out of a supermarket with their trolleys full. Even if all the trolleys were put together, they will not be of greater value than what is inside the whole supermarket itself!

Example 2: The crown Prince does not need to concern himself with getting small favours from the King, because one day he himself will be Master of the whole Kingdom!

Example 3: We recall what happened just a few days before the dialogue of the Geeta took place. Arjuna and Duryodhana approached Sri Krishna, each one desiring to ask Him for something. Both had their preference in mind. For once, Arjuna and Duryodhana did not have to quarrel over what they got. Arjuna wanted Krishna Himself, and Duryodhana wanted the Krishna's army. Both got what they wanted! The result of the Mahabharata War is proof that having the Lord outweighs having His vast army. Arjuna chose wisely, Duryodhana chose like a common worldly person.

That is the comparison that is being made between the fruit obtained through realizing Brahman, and the fruit obtained jointly through any other path of Sadhana. There is just no case for comparison. The infinite Bliss of Brahman outweighs everything else.

The aspirant has yet another reason to goad him to the right choice – onto the '*Path of Light*' as opposed to the '*Path of Darkness*'.

ॐ तत्सदिति श्रीमद्भगवद्गीतासूपनिषत्सु
ब्रह्मविद्यायां योगशास्त्रे श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे
अक्षरब्रह्मयोगो नामाष्टमोऽध्यायः ॥ ८॥

ōm tatsaditi śrīmadbhagavadgītāsūpaniṣatsu
brahmavidyāyāṁ yōgaśāstrē śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṁvādē
akṣarabrahmayōgō nāmāṣṭamō:'dhyāyaḥ || 8||

Om Tat Sat!

END OF DISCOURSE 8

"THE YOGA OF THE IMPERISHABLE BRAHMAN"