

VIII. The Yoga of the Imperishable Brahman

Summary of Eighth Discourse

Lord Krishna explains how those who attain Him do not have to come again into this impermanent world of sorrow and pain. All beings, including even the gods, come again and again into this created universe from the state of unmanifest being wherein they remained at the end of an age-cycle. But the Lord exists even beyond this unmanifest being. That radiant, imperishable Divine Reality is the highest goal to be attained. Single-minded devotion of our heart is the means of attaining this highest blessed state.

Even though there are auspicious and inauspicious circumstances of departing from the physical body and journeying forth, yet if one steadily abides in the Lord through firm devotion and faith, then these conditions do not matter. By always remaining in tune with the Lord through pure love, everything is made auspicious, if one can ever remain united with the Divine through deep devotion, constant remembrance, regular meditation and continuous communion, then all times, places, conditions and situations become auspicious and blessed. This is the secret of invoking His Grace and attaining Him and becoming eternally free and blissful.

Arjuna here asks Lord Krishna about the meaning of the different terms referred to by Him in the last two verses of the previous chapter. He wishes to know what is the Supreme Being, what is Karma or action that He refers to, and what is the meaning that pertains to this spirit, the elements and the centre of all things within this human body.

Beyond all things manifest and unmanifest, beyond these names and forms, there is the Supreme Being—Brahman. He indwells this body as the centre of all things, including even our own self (individual soul). We are a spiritual being residing in this body and supported by the Silent Witness within—the Supreme Antaryamin. Prakriti or Nature is the being pertaining to the elements. Worship, prayer and offering to the gods with faith and devotion constitute actions that lead to blessedness.

The secret of reaching the Divine Being and thus freeing oneself forever from birth and death and the pains and sufferings of this earth-life, is to constantly practise unbroken remembrance of the Lord at all times, in all places and even amidst one's daily activities. If one practises such steady remembrance through regular daily Sadhana, then he will be rooted in His remembrance even at the time of departing from this body at death. Thus departing, he will go beyond darkness and bondage and attain the realm of eternal blessedness.

One must practise sense-control. The senses must be well disciplined and gradually withdrawn from outside objects. The mind should be centred within upon God, by uttering Om or any Divine Name. By such steady practice daily the Lord is easily attained.

*Kim tadbrahma kim adhyaatmam kim karma purushottama;
Adhibhootam cha kim proktam adhidaivam kimuchyate.*

Arjuna said:

1. What is that Brahman? What is Adhyatma? What is action, O best among men? What is declared to be Adhibhuta? And what is Adhidaiva said to be?

*Adhiyajnah katham ko'tra dehe'smin madhusoodana;
Prayaanakaale cha katham jneyo'si niyataatmabhih.*

2. Who and how is Adhiyajna here in this body, O destroyer of Madhu (Krishna)? And how, at the time of death, art Thou to be known by the self-controlled one?

COMMENTARY: In the last two verses of the seventh discourse, Lord Krishna uses certain philosophical terms. Arjuna does not understand their meaning. So he proceeds to question the Lord.

Sri Bhagavaan Uvaacha:

*Aksharam brahma paramam swabhaavo'dhyaatmamuchyate;
Bhootabhaavodbhavakaro visargah karmasamjnitah.*

The Blessed Lord said:

3. Brahman is the Imperishable, the Supreme; His essential nature is called Self-knowledge; the offering (to the gods) which causes existence and manifestation of beings and which also sustains them is called action.

*Adhibhootam ksharo bhaavah purushashchaadhidaivatam;
Adhiyajno'hamevaatra dehe dehabhritaam vara.*

4. Adhibhuta (knowledge of the elements) pertains to My perishable Nature, and the Purusha or soul is the Adhidaiva; I alone am the Adhiyajna here in this body, O best among the embodied (men)!

*Antakaale cha maameva smaran muktwaa kalevaram;
Yah prayaati sa madbhaavam yaati naastyatra samshayah.*

5. And whosoever, leaving the body, goes forth remembering Me alone at the time of death, he attains My Being; there is no doubt about this.

*Yam yam vaapi smaran bhaavam tyajatyante kalevaram;
Tam tamevaiti kaunteya sadaa tadbhaavabhaavitah.*

6. Whosoever at the end leaves the body, thinking of any being, to that being only does he go, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), because of his constant thought of that being!

COMMENTARY: The most prominent thought of one's life occupies the mind at the time of death. It determines the nature of the body to be attained in the next birth.

*Tasmaat sarveshu kaaleshu maamanusmara yudhya cha;
Mayyarpitamanobuddhir maamevaishyasyasamshayam.*

7. Therefore, at all times remember Me only and fight. With mind and intellect fixed (or absorbed) in Me, thou shalt doubtless come to Me alone.

*Abhyaasayogayuktena chetasaa naanyagaaminaa;
Paramam purusham divyam yaati paarthaanuchintayan.*

8. With the mind not moving towards any other thing, made steadfast by the method of habitual meditation, and constantly meditating, one goes to the Supreme Person, the Resplendent, O Arjuna!

*Kavim puraananamanushaasitaaram
Anoraneeyaamsam anusmaredyah;
Sarvasya dhaataaram achintyaroopam
Aadityavarnam tamasah parastaat.*

9. Whosoever meditates on the Omniscient, the Ancient, the ruler (of the whole world), minuter than an atom, the supporter of all, of inconceivable form, effulgent like the sun and beyond the darkness of ignorance,

*Prayaanakaale manasaachalena
Bhaktyaa yukto yogabalena chaiva;
Bhruvormadhye praanamaaveshya samyak
Sa tam param purusham upaiti divyam.*

10. At the time of death, with unshaken mind, endowed with devotion and by the power of Yoga, fixing the whole life-breath in the middle of the two eyebrows, he reaches that resplendent Supreme Person.

*Yadaksharam vedavido vadanti
Vishanti yadyatayo veetaraagaah;
Yadicchanto brahmacharyam charanti
Tatte padam samgrahena pravakshye.*

11. That which is declared imperishable by those who know the *Vedas*, that which the self-controlled (ascetics) and passion-free enter, that desiring which celibacy is practised—that goal I will declare to thee in brief.

*Sarvadwaaraani samyamya mano hridi nirudhya cha;
Moordhnyaadhaayaatmanah praanamaasthito yogadhaaranaam.*

12. Having closed all the gates, confined the mind in the heart and 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.*

13. Uttering the monosyllable Om—the Brahman—remembering Me always, he who departs thus, leaving the body, attains to the supreme goal.

*Ananyachetaah satatam yo maam smarati nityashah;
Tasyaaham sulabhah paartha nityayuktasya yoginah.*

14. I am easily attainable by that ever-steadfast Yogi who constantly and daily remembers Me (for a long time), not thinking of anything else (with a single or one-pointed mind), O Partha (Arjuna)!

COMMENTARY: Constantly remembering the Lord throughout one's life is the easiest way of attaining Him.

*Maamupetya punarjanma duhkhaalayamashaashwatam;
Naapnuvanti mahaatmaanah samsiddhim paramaam gataah.*

15. Having attained Me these great souls do not again take birth (here), which is the place of pain and is non-eternal; they have reached the highest perfection (liberation).

*Aabrahmabhuvanaalokaah punaraavartino' rjuna;
Maamupetya tu kaunteya punarjanma na vidyate.*

16. (All) the worlds, including the world of Brahma, are subject to return again, O Arjuna! But he who reaches Me, O son of Kunti, has no rebirth!

*Sahasrayugaparyantam aharyad brahmano viduh;
Raatrim yugasahasraantaam te' horaatravido janaah.*

17. Those who know the day of Brahma, which is of a duration of a thousand Yugas (ages), and the night, which is also of a thousand Yugas' duration, they know day and night.

*Avyaktaadvyaktayah sarvaah prabhavantyaharaagame;
Raatryaagame praleeyante tatraivaavyaktasamjnake.*

18. From the unmanifested all the manifested (worlds) proceed at the coming of the "day"; at the coming of the "night" they dissolve verily into that alone which is called the unmanifested.

COMMENTARY: Coming of the "day" is the commencement of creation. Coming of the "night" is the commencement of dissolution.

*Bhootagraamah sa evaayam bhootwaa bhootwaa praleeyate;
Raatryaagame'vashah paartha prabhavatyaharaagame.*

19. This same multitude of beings, born again and again, is dissolved, helplessly, O Arjuna, (into the unmanifested) at the coming of the night, and comes forth at the coming of the day!

*Parastasmaat tu bhaavo' nyo' vyakto' vyaktaatsanaatanah;
Yah sa sarveshu bhooteshu nashyatsu na vinashyati.*

20. But verily there exists, higher than the unmanifested, another unmanifested Eternal who is not destroyed when all beings are destroyed.

COMMENTARY: Another unmanifested Eternal refers to Para Brahman, which is distinct from the unmanifested (primordial Nature), and which is of quite a different nature. It is superior to Hiranyagarbha (the creative Intelligence) and the unmanifested Nature because It is their cause. It is not destroyed when all beings from Brahma down to a blade of grass are destroyed.

*Avyakto'kshara ityuktastamaahuh paramaam gatim;
Yam praapya na nivartante taddhaama paramam mama.*

21. What is called the Unmanifested and the Imperishable, That they say is the highest goal (path). They who reach It do not return (to this cycle of births and deaths). That is My highest abode (place or state).

*Purushah sa parah paartha bhaktyaa labhyastwananyayaa;
Yasyaantahsthaani bhootaani yena sarvamidam tatam.*

22. That highest Purusha, O Arjuna, is attainable by unswerving devotion to Him alone within whom all beings dwell and by whom all this is pervaded.

*Yatra kaale twanaavrittim aavrittim chaiva yoginah;
Prayaataa yaanti tam kaalam vakshyaami bharatarshabha.*

23. Now I will tell thee, O chief of the Bharatas, the times departing at which the Yogis will return or not return!

*Agnijyotirahah shuklah shanmaasaa uttaraayanam;
Tatra prayaataa gacchanti brahma brahmavido janaah.*

24. Fire, light, daytime, the bright fortnight, the six months of the northern path of the sun (northern solstice)—departing then (by these), men who know Brahman go to Brahman.

*Dhoomo raatristathaa krishnah shanmaasaa dakshinaayanam;
Tatra chaandramasam jyotir yogee praapya nivartate.*

25. Attaining to the lunar light by smoke, night-time, the dark fortnight or the six months of the southern path of the sun (the southern solstice), the Yogi returns.

*Shuklakraishne gatee hyete jagatah shaashwate mate;
Ekayaa yaatyanaavrittim anyayaa'vartate punah.*

26. The bright and the dark paths of the world are verily thought to be eternal; by the one (the bright path) a person goes not to return again, and by the other (the dark path) he returns.

COMMENTARY: The bright path is the path to the gods taken by devotees. The dark path is of the manes taken by those who perform sacrifices or charitable acts with the expectation of rewards.

*Naite sritee paartha jaanan yogee muhyati kashchana;
Tasmaat sarveshu kaaleshu yogayukto bhavaarjuna.*

27. Knowing these paths, O Arjuna, no Yogi is deluded! Therefore, at all times be steadfast in Yoga.

*Vedeshu yajneshu tapahsu chaiva
Daaneshu yat punyaphalam pradishtam:
Atyeti tatsarvam idam viditvaa
Yogee param sthaanamupaiti chaadyam.*

28. Whatever fruits or merits is declared (in the scriptures) to accrue from (the study of) the *Vedas*, (the performance of) sacrifices, (the practice of) austerities, and (the offering of) gifts—beyond all these goes the Yogi, having known this; and he attains to the supreme primeval (first or ancient) Abode.

Hari Om Tat Sat
Iti Srimad Bhagavadgeetaasooapanishatsu Brahnavidyaayaam
Yogashaastre Sri Krishnaarjunasamvaade
Aksharabrahmayogo 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 the Imperishable Brahman”
