

Bhagavad Gita Chapter 8 online Part 1 dated 13/06/2020by Swami Dayatmanada (Lecture delivered online from Bangalore, India)

Subject: Summary of Chapter 7, Verses - 2, 7, 14, 16, 19, 21, 28 and 29.

Chapter 8 - Verses 1, 2, and 3.

ॐ वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूरमर्दनम्
देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥

**Vasudeva sutham devam, Kamsa Chanura mardanam,
Devaki paramanandam, Krishnam vande jagat gurum**

I worship Lord Krishna, who is the spiritual master of the universe, who is the son of Vasudeva, who is the Lord, who killed Kansa and Chanura, and who is the bliss of Devaki.

सर्वोपनिषदो गावो, दोग्धा गोपाल नन्दनः।
पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्ता, दुग्धं गीतामृतं महत् ॥

**Sarvopanishado gaavo, dogdha gopala nandanaha|
parthovatsa: sudheerbhoktaa, dugdham gitamrutam mahat |**

All the Upanishads are likened to cows. The milker is Krishna, the son of Nanda.. Partha (Arjuna) is likened to a calf, while the drinkers are the wise ones. The nectar of Gita is the milk.

मूकं करोति वाचालं पङ्गुं लङ्घयते गिरिं ।
यत्कृपा तमहं वन्दे परमानन्द माधवम् ॥

**Mookam karoti vachalam pangum langhayate girim |
Yat-krupa tamaham vande paramananda madhavam ॥**

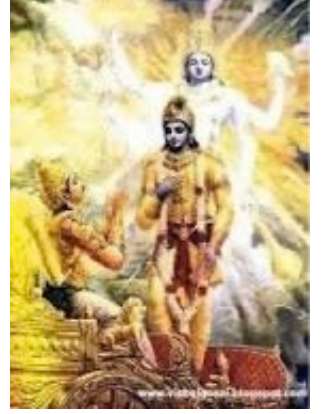
I offer my respectful obeisances unto my spiritual master, the deliverer of the fallen souls. His mercy turns dumb into eloquent speakers and enables the lame to cross mountains.

From today onwards we are going to start the Eighth Chapter of the Bhagavat Gita, very aptly called “**Akshar- Brahm-Yoga** अक्षर ब्रह्म योगः”.

I would like to summarise the Seventh Chapter and its relationship with the Eighth Chapter before we start the new chapter.

Summary of the Seventh Chapter 'Jnana-Vijnana-Yoga ज्ञान - विज्ञान योगः

- **The Promise of Shri Krishna:** Lord Krishna promises to Arjuna that He is going to impart the complete knowledge. What is this knowledge?
- **Jnanam and Vijnanam:** This knowledge includes *Jnanam* or theoretical knowledge about God and also *Vijnanam* means knowledge after God-realisation (i.e. the confirmed practical knowledge about God which comes after God-realisation). That is why this chapter is called 'Jnana-Vijnana-Yoga'. So, *Jnanam*



means - to know that God exists. What is *Vijnanam*? To know that God exists, God is the only truth and to know the real nature of this world. This world is nothing but God in the guise of different forms and names. He is playing with Himself. It is as if God has divided Himself into a triangle - God, Individual soul and the world or *Jagat*. However, this division is only an apparent division. Just like we divide ourselves into three states - our waking state, dream state and deep-sleep state

- **What is the benefit of this knowledge?** The aspirant becomes free from the trammels or bondage of *Samsara* or the world, forever.
- **What is the nature of the world?** Now, the Lord is going to tell us about the nature of the world. The Lord tells us that He has got two types of nature: A Higher Nature and a Lower Nature.
- **The higher nature of God or Consciousness** - The higher nature of God is the 'pure consciousness' behind everybody, which alone sustains entire creation. This is called the higher nature of God because it is changeless, it is conscious, it is infinite and it is independent.
- **The lower nature of God or 'Prakruti'** - the lower nature of God seems to be exactly the opposite of the higher nature. It is changing all the time, it is unconscious, it is finite, and it is totally dependent upon the perceiver or the experiencer. Lower nature means, it is as if something is there and it includes *Jiva* or Individual soul and *Jagat* or world.
- Lord Krishna is beautifully defining that Ishwara is the one principle of pure consciousness. *Jiva/individual soul, Jagat/world* and God have both the higher nature and the lower nature. This world also has both types of nature.
- **Para-prakruti** परा प्रकृति **and Apara-prakruti** अपरा प्रकृति: The Lord is telling us that He has got two types of nature -*Para-prakruti* is the superior nature of God, consciousness is eternal. *Apara-prakruti*: is God's lower nature. It appears to be temporary but is eternal. There is nothing that is not eternal. In the words of Shri Ramakrishna - *Sarvam Brahm-mayam Jagat* - 'as if' God has created this world; 'as if' (like in a drama) God has divided Himself into the audience, actors, actresses etc. The lesson which we need to learn is - there is nothing else apart from God. For example - without wood there is no furniture; without clay there are no pots; without gold, there are no ornaments. (This has been discussed in detail.) What is the problem? We forget about the gold and just focus on the ornament. We only value the ornament because if the ornament gets broken then we get very upset. We should understand that this ornament is nothing but pure gold and only its form has changed but the real substance (gold) has not changed. In the words of Holy Mother, "Do not find fault in anybody." Why? Because there is nobody else; if we are finding faults with others, then in reality, we are finding our own faults. "There are no strangers. The entire world is nothing but our own reflection." This is the highest realisation we need to attain by performing spiritual practices. Therefore, what is the difference between *Apara-Prakruti* / lower nature and *Para-Prakruti* / higher nature? Really speaking

there is no difference, the essence (or the real nature) of both is absolutely the same. That is why in Vishnu Sahastranama - the very first word we get is 'Vishvam' after that only we get 'Vishnu'. This indicates that Lord Vishnu, to whom we imagine to be in *Vaikuntha* वैकुण्ठ (abode of Lord Vishnu), is appearing in front of our eyes as everything that we experience. That is why Swami Vivekananda once said, "Where would you seek that supreme reality? My friends, open your eyes, whatever you see or come across is nothing but the Supreme Lord - who is putting on so many names, forms, dresses etc. And you are also that reality."

- **Deluding power of Maya:** Then, why do we not realise this eternal truth? Because we are deluded and mesmerised by the attractions of this world, by advertisements etc. Why are we deluded? Because of the three-fold nature of Maya. That is why we find very few people, perhaps one in a million, who are seriously trying to understand the nature of God/Atman/Brahman.
- **Surrender to God:** What is the way out of Maya? By realising that there is only one reality or one truth. However, we are unable to understand this because of Maya. This Maya is God's own Maya, consisting of *satva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. The Lord is telling us, "People should realise that this is My Maya. Those who take refuge in Me; those who develop devotion/*bhakti* and those who ultimately surrender themselves to Me, I will give them *buddhi*/wisdom/understanding and they will become completely free from the bondage of the world." Here, we need to note a very important point - we must completely surrender ourselves to God. The rest of the seventh chapter is just an elaboration of this idea.
- **Everyone will move towards God:** Then, the Lord reassures us and says, "In the course of time, everyone will turn his or her face towards Me. Slowly and slowly they will evolve." What does this mean and how will it happen? These people will observe the teachings of the scriptures. For example - if we wish to become a true devotee of Shri Ramakrishna then we must know his commandments and practice them sincerely. Similarly, if we wish to have Holy Mother's grace then we must practice her commandments. There are two most important commandments of Holy Mother - 1) You have a mother and I am your mother. 2) You are my child. So, mould your life with this knowledge. If we follow these commandments then we will progress in our spiritual life.
- **Four types of devotees of God / सुकृतिनः Sukritinh:** There are four types of devotees - *Artha*, *Artharthi*, *Jijnasu* and *Jnani* - and in this order, the subsequent one is higher than the preceding one. 1) आर्तः भक्ता *Artha Bhakta* - means those who are in distress. They are the lowest in this order. 2) अर्थार्थी भक्ता *Artharthi Bhakta*: This is the second category. They are not in distress, but they have innumerable unfulfilled desires. They are higher than *Artha-Bhaktas*. They offer whatever they get from God, to God; they enjoy everything as a prasada of God. Through this practice, their hearts and minds become pure - *Chitta-Shuddhi*. Eventually, they become tired of these worldly enjoyments by realising that this world is temporary, ephemeral and always endowed with its opposites. They also realise that these worldly pleasures are binding them more and more.

Now, they become 3) जिज्ञासुः भक्ता *Jijnasu Bhakta* - this is a higher category. They become enquirers. What is life? Where are we coming from? How do I become a jnani? These subjects have been elaborated on in the Eighth chapter which we are going to start. 4) *Jnani* ज्ञानी - In course of time, the *jijnasu-bhakta* gets a noble teacher, perform his spiritual practices sincerely and becomes a *Jnani*. In the Seventh Chapter, the Lord categorically declares that a *jnani* is very close to Him. Why? Because a *jnani* has the realisation that - only God exists; I am God and God is me; God is one; God is very close to me (means God is myself only.)

- **Only very few seek God-Realisation:** The Lord is telling us, “Only very few seek Me; among those who seek Me, very few retain Me; because it may take thousands of lives (as we say “*chourasi lakh janam* चौरासी लाख जन्म = 8400000 births.”) to achieve liberation/freedom/Moksha/Nirvana.
- **Essence:** Inevitably, each life is progressing towards the Lord. As we have discussed, all of us including inorganic matters are standing on an escalator called evolution. After many births, we get a human body; then we get holy company and a noble teacher; then we get a longing for God-realisation and finally through sadhana/ spiritual practice and with the grace of God and Guru we attain the ultimate knowledge which is - this entire world, I and Brahman is nothing but ‘*Vasudevaha*’

Bhagavat Gita: Chapter 7, Verse 19

बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान्मां प्रपद्यते ।
वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ॥ 19॥
bahūnām janmanām ante jñānavān mām prapadyate
vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti sa mahātmā su-durlabhaḥ

At the end of many lives of sadhana, a spiritual practitioner attains Me. What is the attainment? *Vasudeva sarvam iti* - means God alone is everything. Everything means - He is everything, nothing else exists except Him.

Then, the Lord concludes the seventh chapter

Bhagavat Gita: Chapter 7, Verse 29

जरामरणमोक्षाय मामाश्रित्य यतन्ति ये ।
ते ब्रह्म तद्विदुः कृत्स्नमध्यात्मं कर्म चाखिलम् ॥ 29॥
jarā-marṇa-mokṣhāya mām āśhritya yatanti ye
te brahma tadviduḥ kṛitsnam adhyātmaṁ karma chākhilam

[**Meaning;** Those who take refuge in Me to gain release from old age and death; they will come to know Brahman, will come to know all about the individual soul and all about action as well.]

जरामरणमोक्षाय - for the sake of getting liberation from this seemingly unending circle of birth and death/ transmigration.

मामाश्रित्य - those who take refuge in Me and strive by MY grace

ते ब्रह्म तद्विदुः **te brahma tadviduḥ** - they know what is Brahman.

कृत्स्नमध्यात्मं **kṛtsnam adhyātmaṁ** - that every *Jiva* जीव is none other than Brahman.

karma chākhilam कर्म चाखिलम् - aspirants also realise that whatever they have been doing throughout this spiritual journey (from the beginning of creation to the end of creation) was nothing but a spiritual journey. They realise that every activity is pulling them away from the ephemeral world and pushing them towards the Divine Lord.

At the end of the Seventh Chapter, the Lord categorically puts certain questions and the Eighth Chapter gives the answers which we are going to discuss. Before we discuss the Eighth Chapter, here are some of the memorable verses of the Seventh Chapter.

Some of the Memorable Verses of the Seventh Chapter

Bhagavat Gita: Chapter 7, Verse 2

ज्ञानं तेऽहं सविज्ञानमिदं वक्ष्याम्यशेषतः ।

यज्ज्ञात्वा नेह भूयोऽन्यज्ज्ञातव्यमवशिष्यते ॥ 2॥

jñānaṁ te 'haṁ sa-vijñānam idaṁ vakṣhyāmyaśheṣataḥ

yaj jñātvā neha bhūyo 'nyaj jñātavyam-avaśhiṣyate

[**Meaning:** O, Arjuna I shall teach you in full, both knowledge and realisation which has been known, nothing more remains here for you to know.]

Bhagavat Gita: Chapter 7, Verse 7

मत्तः परतरं नान्यत्किञ्चिदस्ति धनञ्जय ।

मयि सर्वमिदं प्रोतं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव ॥ 7॥

mattaḥ parataraṁ nānyat kiñchid asti dhanañjaya

mayi sarvam idaṁ protaṁ sūtre maṇi-gaṇā iva

[**Meaning:** O, *Dananjaya* (Arjuna), there exists nothing whatsoever higher than Me. O, *Dananjaya* all is strung on Me as a row of gems on a thread.]

Bhagavat Gita: Chapter 7, Verse 14

दैवी ह्येषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया ।
मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते ॥ 14॥

***daivī hyeṣhā guṇa-mayī mama māyā duratyayā
mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etāṁ taranti te***

[Meaning: My divine Maya, consisting of the three गुणा *gunas*, is very difficult to overcome, but those who surrender unto Me cross over it easily.]

Bhagavat Gita: Chapter 7, Verse 16

चतुर्विधा भजन्ते मां जनाः सुकृतिनोऽर्जुन ।
आर्तो जिज्ञासुरर्थार्थी ज्ञानी च भरतर्षभ ॥

***chatur-vidhā bhajante mām janāḥ sukṛitino 'rjuna
ārto jijñāsur arthārthī jñānī cha bharatarṣhabha***

[The Lord is saying, "O, Arjuna - all good people can be divided into four stages of development - *Artha, Artharathi, Jijnasu and Jnani* - and in this order.]

Bhagavat Gita: Chapter 7, Verse 19

बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान्मां प्रपद्यते ।
वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ॥ 19॥

***bahūnām janmanām ante jñānavān mām prapadyate
vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti sa mahātmā su-durlabhaḥ***

[**Meaning:** Extremely rare is such a *jnani*, at the end of many births a man of wisdom seeks refuge in realising that Vasudeva is all that exists. (Vasudeva is a name of Shri Krishna but here Vasudeva means - not an individual Krishna but Universal Soul called Brahman Himself)]

Bhagavat Gita: Chapter 7, Verse 21

यो यो यां यां तनुं भक्तः श्रद्धयार्चितुमिच्छति ।
तस्य तस्याचलां श्रद्धां तामेव विदधाम्यहम् ॥ 21॥

***yo yo yām yām tanuṁ bhaktaḥ śhraddhayārchitum ichchhati
tasya tasyāchalām śhraddhām tām eva vidadhāmyaham***

[**Meaning:** The Lord is saying, "In whatever form a devotee chooses to worship Me; I will manifest to the devotee in that particular form. I alone manifest in that particular form. I will make the devotee's faith even stronger and unwavering. And the devotee will never lose faith in Me.]

Bhagavat Gita: Chapter 7, Verse 28

येषां त्वन्तगतं पापं जनानां पुण्यकर्मणाम् ।
ते द्वन्द्वमोहनिर्मुक्ता भजन्ते मां दृढव्रताः ॥ 28॥
*yeṣhām tvanta-gataṁ pāpaṁ janānām puṇya-karmaṇām
te dvandva-moha-nirmuktā bhajante mām dṛiḍha-vratāḥ*

[**Meaning:** But the man of virtuous deeds, whose sins have been destroyed; who is free from the delusion of these *dvandavas* द्वंद्व or dualities; worship Me with firm resolve.]

Bhagavat Gita: Chapter 7, Verse 29

जरामरणमोक्षाय मामाश्रित्य यतन्ति ये ।
ते ब्रह्म तद्विदुः कृत्स्नमध्यात्मं कर्म चाखिलम् ॥ 29॥
*jarā-maraṇa-mokṣhāya mām āśhritya yatanti ye
te brahma tadviduḥ kṛitsnam adhyātmaṁ karma chākhilam*

[**Meaning;** Those who take refuge in Me to gain release from old age and death; they will come to know Brahman, will come to know all about the individual soul and all about action as well.] Recording Time 14 minutes.

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Bhagavat Gita Chapter 8 - Akshar Brahm Yoga'

Now we are entering into the Eighth Chapter which is called 'Akshar Brahm Yoga'. Akshar-Brahm means Supreme-Brahman. Brahman has got two aspects. 1) *Saguna-Brahman* सगुण ब्रह्म (Personal aspect of God) and 2) *Nirguna-Brahman* निर्गुण ब्रह्म (Impersonal suspect of God). There is not much difference between these two, although it has been a subject of long debate for many philosophers.

Shri Ramakrishna's teachings regarding *Saguna-Brahman* and *Nirguna-Brahman*.

Shri Ramakrishna used to explain this in very simple language. He used to say, "Brahman and *Shakti* are अभेद *abheda/not different*, one and the same." When we view Brahman without activity then it is called *Nirguna-Brahman*. When we view the same Brahman with activity then it is called '*Saguna-Brahman* or *Shakti*'.

Shri Ramakrishna used to give a beautiful analogy to explain this. *Nirguna-Brahman* is - like a snake that is coiled up and not moving. *Saguna-Brahman* or *Shakti* is - when the same snake uncoils itself and starts moving.

We are the creators or Brahmas of our body, mind, fate, happiness and unhappiness. Whereas Brahman is the cause/creator of the entire universe. In the

simplest words, this chapter is going to describe us 'Sarvam khalv idam brahma. सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म' - everything is nothing but Brahman.

This Eighth Chapter is based on the last two verses of the Seventh Chapter. In the Seventh Chapter, Shri Krishna introduces certain technical words without explaining them to Arjuna. As if, He is saying that the next episode of the serial will start tomorrow. In the TV serials usually, some hints are given regarding the next episode.

Akshar-Brahm-Yoga and *Prasno-Upanishad*:

This Eighth Chapter called 'Akshar-Brahm-Yoga' is the most wonderful chapter. Some of you probably know that there are many Upanishads and one of them is called 'प्रश्नोपनिषद् Prashno-Upanishad'. This entire Upanishad is nothing but answers to six questions by a Sadh-Guru/noble teacher. Similarly, in this Eighth Chapter/Akshar-Brahm-Yoga there are seven questions, but really speaking there are six questions only just like in the *Prasno-Upanishad*. Shortly, I will explain this in a simpler language.

What is the seventh question? We have heard about it many times. Whatever will be the dominating '*bhava*' (or thought or overwhelming yearning) at the last moment of our life (before we give up this body) that *bhava* will be the determining factor of our next birth. If we remember God at the last moment of our life then we will attain God; if we remember a dog then will become a dog in our next birth.

We have discussed a beautiful story of 'जड़ भरत Jad-Bharata'. He remembered deer at the time of his death and was born as a deer. That is why, in his next birth when he was born as a human being; he behaved like a Jada or a fool although he was a great *jnani*.

As I said earlier, this chapter has got seven questions as in the *Prasno-Upanishad*. Why did I say that? Because we have just chanted -

सर्वोपनिषदो गावो, दोग्धा गोपाल नन्दनः।
पार्था वत्सः सुधीर्भक्ता, दुग्धं गीतामृतं महत् ॥

Sarvopanishado gaavo, dogdha gopala nandanaha|

parthovatsa: sudheerbhoktaa, dugdham gitamrutam mahat |

[The Bhagavat Gita is like the essence of all the Upanishads handed over to all the spiritual aspirants. All the Upanishads are like milk yielding cows. The milker is Bhagwan Krishna / son of Nanda; milk from all these cows have been collected and mixed. *Partha*/Arjuna is like a calf. The drinkers of this milk/nectar are all-wise spiritual aspirants represented by Arjuna.]

Now, we will see that certain technical Sanskrit terms are used in this chapter, but we do not need to worry about them. I will try to explain them in the simplest language possible. These terms or questions are:

1. **What is ब्रह्म Brahman?**
2. **What is कर्म Karma?**
3. **What is अध्यात्म Adhyatmam?**
4. **What is अधिभूतम् Adhibhutam?**
5. **What is अधिदैवम् Adhidaivam?**
6. **What is अधियज्ञम् Adhiyajnam?**

These are the six questions and the seventh question is-

7. **How can I remember God at the time of my death? What is the benefit of doing this?** Only those people who remember God all the time, relate every event with God. (Even this COVID-19 pandemic is the will of God. Whether we live or die is not due to Corona but it is the will of God.) Those who can remember God under favourable or unfavourable situations, in happiness or unhappiness, profit or loss, victory or defeat etc. will be able to remember God at the time of death.

This entire Eighth chapter is devoted to answering these seven questions asked by Arjuna. We must remember that Arjuna is representative of all spiritual aspirants. Let's enter into the Eighth chapter with this background.

The Eighth Chapter - Akshar Brahma Yoga

The Way to the Imperishable Brahman

Instead of using this big term "Brahman", we can simply say - how can we attain Shri Ramakrishna or Shri Rama or Krishna or Narayana or Shiva or Jesus or Divine Mother or Buddha etc.

Arjuna is asking Bhagwan Krishna to clarify these seven questions. Here, Lord Krishna is a सद्गुरु *Sadh-Guru* /the noblest teacher - representative of God's grace and none other than Brahman.

अर्जुन उवाच ।
किं तद्ब्रह्म किमध्यात्मं किं कर्म पुरुषोत्तम ।
अधिभूतं च किं प्रोक्तमधिदैवं किमुच्यते ॥ 1॥
अधियज्ञः कथं कोऽत्र देहेऽस्मिन्मधुसूदन ।
प्रयाणकाले च कथं ज्ञेयोऽसि नियतात्मभिः ॥ 2॥

arjuna uvācha

kiṁ tad brahma kim adhyātmaṁ kiṁ karma puruṣhottama

***adhibhūtaṁ cha kiṁ proktam adhidaivaṁ kim uchyate
adhiyajñāḥ kathaṁ ko tra dehe smin madhusūdana
prayāṇa-kāle cha kathaṁ jñeyo si niyatātmabhiḥ***

Meaning: Arjuna asks, “O, Supreme Lord 1) What is Brahman? 2) What is *adhyatman* or the individual soul? 3) What is *karma* or action? 4) What is *adhibhūtam* or that is said to under lie all the elements, the entire world? 5) What is *adhidaivam* that is said to underlie all the gods? 6) O, *Madhusudana* What is *adhiyajnah*? Who sustains all the sacrifices here in the body? (The seventh question is a secondary question.) 7) How are You to be known at the time of death by those who have practised mind-control?

Actually, the sixth question has got a sub-question so we can say that there are eight questions.

पुरुषोत्तम purushottama - why is this word used? If we reverse it then it becomes *uttama-purusha* - means beyond temporary; beyond individual consciousness; the supreme consciousness. It is an epithet of Lord Krishna.

Madhusudana: A very important point is - Arjuna addresses the Lord as *Madhusudana*. *Madhusudana* is an epithet of Lord Krishna. Why is it used here?

Meaning of *Madhusudana*:

There are two meanings of *Madhusudana*:

1. A demon called *Madhu* was killed by Shri Krishna. That is why Shri Krishna is called *Madhusudana*.
2. However, there is a deeper meaning of this epithet. The word ‘मधु *Madhu*’ is also mentioned in the Upanishads as कर्मफल *karma-phala* or *result of an action*. Usually, *Madhu* is known to us as honey or sweet thing or enjoyment or happiness, but here *Madhu* means *karma-phala* (results of our actions) which could be a good *karma-phala* or an evil *karma-phala*. Whether it is a good *karma-phala* or an evil *karma-phala*; they both are the results of our actions; a righteous action will produce a good result and an evil action will produce an unpleasant evil result. However, both types of *karma-phalas* are our real bondages. How? We have got a body and are forced to experience the results of our actions. If we would have not performed those actions, then we would have not been responsible for the results of those actions. If we would not have performed those actions, then we would not have taken birth at all. When every action along with its result is destroyed then that is called *Moksha* (or liberation). *Madhusudana* means destroyer of all *karma-phala*.

Just to put in other words -

- *Karma* can only be done through body and mind.
- *Karma-phala* can be experienced only through the body and mind.
- When a person succeeds in relating himself to God; I am not the body and mind; I am the child of Divine Mother or child of God or I am a ray/ part of God or Brahman.
- The moment this detachment from body and mind comes, immediately the entire gamut of karma and *karma-phala* is completely destroyed.
- *Jnana* destroys every karma and *karma-phala*. As we have discussed in the fourth chapter of the Gita Chapter.

श्रेयान्द्रव्यमयाद्यज्ञानयज्ञः परन्तप, सर्वं कर्माखिलं पार्थ ज्ञाने परिसमाप्यते ॥ C4,V33॥
***śhreyān dravya-mayād yajñāj jñāna-yajñah parantapa
sarvaṁ karmākhilam pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate***

Just as fire destroys firewood similarly *Jnanam*/true knowledge destroys all *karmas* along with their *karma-phala*. What is meant by *Jnanam*? I am not the body and I am not the mind. This is the essence of every scripture in this world. If I am not the body and mind then who am I? I am divine; I am the child of Divine Mother; I am a devotee of Vishnu or Shiva or Durga etc.

Rephrase of Seven Questions:

This entire Eighth Chapter is the explanation of the seven questions as described previously. Now, I am going to rephrase these seven questions into simple words. I have simplified them and also elaborated these questions into so many other questions for our easy understanding. These can be rephrased as:

- Who am I?
- Wherefrom am I coming?
- Why am I here on this Earth?
- What is my origin?
- Is there a God?
- Did God create this world?
- What is the nature of this world?
- What is the meaning of all my actions in life?
- What is the goal of life?
- What am I supposed to do?
- How am I going to attain this goal?
- What is bondage and what is liberation?
- Who is going to teach me?
- Will I ever reach/attain my goal?

Now, I would like to further rephrase these seven questions in the words of Swami Vivekananda (As I have said several times in my previous classes.)

From the Raj-Yoga of Swami Vivekananda:

At the beginning of the Raj-Yoga, Swami Vivekananda has expressed beautifully in four sentences - the essence of all teachings of every single scripture that was available in the past, is available now and will be available in future.

- Each Soul is potentially divine.
 - The goal is to manifest this divinity within, by controlling our nature externally and internally. (To know - who am I?)
 - Do this either by work or worship or psychic control or philosophy - by one or more or all of these - and be free. (In other words, through the practice of karma-yoga, bhakti-yoga, raj-yoga and jnana-yoga.) This is the ideal of Ramakrishna Order.
 - This is the whole of religion. Doctrines or dogmas or rituals or books or temples or forms, are but secondary details.
- By Swami Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda has summarised the essence of all scriptures so beautifully, so simply and incomparably clearly.

In other words, these three statements will be elaborated in this Eighth Chapter.

Now, the Divine Lord is going to elaborate on these questions and answers.

The Lord said,

“I shall teach you so that there is not even the slightest doubt in your mind about the questions which you have asked.

- You (Arjuna) are divine.
- Who am I? I (The Lord) am divine.
- Wherefrom are you coming? From God.
- Why did you come? To rediscover that you are divine.
- What is the nature of this world? It is also God.
- Why are you doing all these actions? By performing these actions, you will be removing the veil which is hiding your true nature, in course of time you will reach the same goal.
- When are you going to reach? Yes, it appears that it will take a long time. But at the end of many births बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते bahūnām janmanām ante (C7,

V19) ज्ञानवान्मां प्रपद्यते *Jnanam an mam prapadyate* - you are going to become a man of knowledge and there is not the least doubt about it.”

This means - we would know the secret of all scriptures; we would know that we are potentially divine and our goal is to know our true nature. We will do this with the help of four yogas. Eventually, we will become 'Free'. Nobody will be left out, not even so-called non-living beings. They appear non-living because of our ignorance. I will give an illustration:

Dead Body and a Farmer:

There was a farmer, he was cultivating and digging his field. Suddenly, he found a dead body. He tried to dig up the dead body with the help of other people. To everyone's surprise, the body looked very fresh, as if it was still alive. When the farmer came to know that this body was lying under the earth for quite some time but it looked very fresh, he was shocked to see this. Everybody was watching the 'dead body' with tremendous curiosity and to everyone's surprise - the body showed some signs of life! The so-called 'dead man' started moving his body parts and began to breathe!! The person who appeared dead, came back to life.

Why did I tell you this story?

If the farmer would have taken this dead body to a scientist for examination, then within no time the body would have been declared dead. Sometimes it is not easy to differentiate between living and non-living - what appears non-living, may be living.

Shri Ramakrishna Samadhi and Mahendra Lal Sarkar:

In Shri Ramakrishna's life, something very beautiful happened. He had a very skeptical devotee called Mahendra Lal Sarkar. Mahendra Lal had seen Shri Ramakrishna entering into samadhi several times. Sometimes, Shri Ramakrishna would appear completely dead in samadhi state - no palpable heartbeat or signs of breathing.

Once Mahendra Lal Sarkar brought some of his friends (they were not devotees of Shri Ramakrishna) to meet Shri Ramakrishna. It so happened that Shri Ramakrishna was in deep samadhi at the time and he appeared completely dead. These curious visitors poked their fingers into the eyes of Shri Ramakrishna to test him (very unthoughtful and unkind act) - there was no response from Shri Ramakrishna. After a while, Shri Ramakrishna came back from his samadhi, in full life.

Now tell me, what should we call living and what should we call non-living?

Science and Vedanta - What is life? What is consciousness?

We have discussed this previously as well. According to scientists, the matter was inorganic in the beginning. Then after millions of years, life started manifesting which we call organic life. Then life started evolving into higher and higher complex bodies and brains, the human beings are the highest peak of this evolutionary process. Strangely, scientists do accept life but do not accept consciousness.

There are many questions that have not been answered by scientists and remained a mystery for them. What is life or *prana*? What is consciousness? Are life and consciousness the same or different? From where has this *prana* originated? Has life entered from the outer planets?

Vedanta provides the most beautiful answer to all these questions 'Each soul is potentially divine'. Nothing comes from outside, everything is inherent. However, three factors are necessary - time, space and causation. There is no such gross division between living and non-living. The evolutionary circle makes the non-living as living and living as non-living.

This great fact is expressed beautifully in Ishavashya Upanishad - the whole universe is nothing but God; try to see God everywhere; there is nothing called "this world" or "you" or "me" - everything is God.

(1st Mantra, Ishavashya-Upanishad)

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम् ॥

***īśāvāsyamidam sarvaṃ yatkiñca jagatyāṃ jagat |
tena tyaktena bhujjīthā mā gṛdhaḥ kasyasviddhanam ||***

Coming back to our verses:

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।
अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमं स्वभावोऽध्यात्ममुच्यते ।
भूतभावोद्भवकरो विसर्गः कर्मसञ्ज्ञितः ॥ 3॥

***śhrī bhagavān uvācha
akṣharaṃ brahma paramaṃ svabhāvo dhyātmam uchyate
bhūta-bhāvodbhava-karo visargaḥ karma-sanjñitaḥ***

Meaning: The Lord says - Brahman is imperishable. It is called the *Akshara* or the Supreme Reality. The same supreme or Brahman dwelling in each body is called the individual soul or *Jiva*. The offering of the oblation which brings into existence all beings and supports them, is called action.

Here, three technical terms are being explained so beautifully. In simple words -

- 1) अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमं **akshara brahma paramam** - the only truth is 'God alone exists'.
- 2) **What is this adhyatman?** The same supreme soul when viewed as associated with the body and the mind, is called *Jiva*. A ray or part of consciousness associated with body and mind, is called *Jiva*. It is called *Chidabhasa* or reflection etc.
- 3) **What is karma?** The divine Lords answers - ***bhūta-bhāvodbhava-karo visargaḥ karma-sanjñitaḥ*** - *karma* is defined thus - whatever actions or activities (through the help of the three *gunas*.) brings about a manifestation of every creature in this world - in other words, the act of the creation.

What is action? Creation सृष्टि ***srithi***, **maintenance**/स्थिति ***esthiti*** and **dissolution**/प्रलय ***pralaya***:

Creation/*srithi*, maintenance/*esthiti* and dissolution/*pralaya* - these three can be interpreted in a spiritual way.

Creation/*srithi* - means God apparently separates Himself from Himself. God becomes an individual to enjoy and experience Himself. This is called सृष्टि *srithi*.

Maintenance/*esthiti* - He plays for some time in this world which is also His creation. So, God is the creator; the world is the creation; God identifies Himself as an actor or experienter or knower in the field called this world. He plays in this world through all these bodies and minds. This is called *esthithi*. The play continues for some time.

Laya or dissolution; At the end or after some time the whole creation just withdraws itself or dissolute or goes back to its own nature that is called *Laya*.

The Lord has given the answers to three wonderful questions.

Explanation of the word अक्षर ***Akshara***:

The Supreme Reality is called Brahman or *Akshara*. *Shara* क्षर means which slowly decays or gets destroyed. But Brahman is infinite and infinite can never be destroyed. That is why called अक्षर *Akshara*.

Interestingly, the alphabets are also called *Akshara*. Why? I don't know the real reason, but my best guess is - alphabets are the ideas manifested in the form of sounds; alphabets make words; words make a sound; words become sentences; sentences are nothing but meaningful words - this is how we convey our thoughts. So, this is an expression of knowledge and knowledge is indestructible. So, *Akshara* is indestructible. Alphabets are nothing but a way to express or manifest knowledge.

A small child when learning alphabets is called 'Akshara-Abhyasa'. The child learns the alphabet, slowly tries to understand them, reads and thinks and eventually gains the right knowledge. One day he will realise that he is none other than the Supreme Akshara or Brahman.

This instrument called the alphabet leads us to that indestructible, unchangeable knowledge called 'Akshara'. This is the relationship between knowledge and the instrument of knowledge.

This is expressed very beautifully in this Shanti-Mantra of Ishavashya-Upanishad.

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

**Om Purnamadah Purnamidam
Purnaata purnamudachyate
Purnasya purnamaadaaya purnamevaavashishyate
Om Shāntiḥ, Shāntiḥ, Shāntiḥ**

Om Purnamadah - that is infinite.

Purnamidam - this visible world which we are experiencing from birth to death. This world is also nothing else but Brahman. Brahman with names and forms is the world and the world without names and forms is Brahman. Because, neither the Purnam/infinite cannot become finite, nor the finite can become infinite. Is this world finite? No! It appears to be finite but if we remove names and forms then only Brahman or Supreme Reality remains. I will give an illustration to explain this point.

Illustration of Sugary Sweetmeat at the time of Diwali Festival:

During the time of Diwali festival, a particular type of sweetmeat is prepared which is made of sugar. Sugar is melted and moulded into various shapes such as in the shape of an elephant head or the head of a horse or the head of a man etc. Now, a child is offered these sweets. He has his preferences; he may like the sweetmeat in the shape of the elephant head or maybe some other shape. However, if we remove the shape by melting the sweetmeat in a pan then what remains? Only a formless sugary lump. Forms and shapes are not permanent but the sugar lump is real and permanent. Brahman is like this.

Purnaata purnamudachyate - this so-called visible world is not finite but infinite. This visible world is also coming from the infinite Brahman therefore it is also infinite.

Infinite has come out of infinite. Infinite is merging in infinite.

Infinite plus infinite is infinite. Infinite minus infinite is infinite.

Infinite multiplied by infinite is infinite. Infinite divided by infinite is infinite.

What is the meaning of 'Love'?

If we can understand the above analogy, then we will get the knowledge that Brahman is infinite and can never become finite. However, everything appears to be seemingly separate and we all experience this every day. But, one thing is common to all living beings (men, women, animals etc.) What is that? We all want to become one, or in other words, we all want to love. However, this 'love' has not been understood or interpreted properly and often misapplied in many instances. When a mother says to her child, "I love you my child." What does this mean? I want to be one with you; your happiness is my happiness; your unhappiness is my unhappiness; your welfare is my welfare; you are me and I am you. This is the identity and is called 'Love'.

Yajnavalkya याज्ञवल्क्य and Maitreyi मैत्रेयी

This is what Rishi Yagyavalka याज्ञवल्क्य was teaching to his wife Maitreyi मैत्रेयी. "It seems that the husband loves his wife for her body and mind, but actually he does not love her body; he loves himself through the form of his wife. Similarly, when the wife loves her husband, then it is not for the sake of husband's body and mind; this is just a doorway; she actually loves herself. At the moment she is in a state of finite knowledge and thinks that she loves her husband."

We all appear separate from each other. However, when we will strive for real knowledge then we will come to understand that we are not separate but one.

[From the Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda - Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi]

[We say, "That day is indeed a bad day on which you do not hear the name of the Lord, but a cloudy day is not a bad day at all." Yajnavalkya was a great sage. You know, the Shastras in India enjoin that every man should give up the world when he becomes old. So Yajnavalkya said to his wife, "My beloved, here is all my money, and my possessions, and I am going away." She replied, "Sir, if I had this whole earth full of wealth, would that give me immortality?" Yajnavalkya said, "No, it will not. You will be rich, and that will be all, but wealth cannot give us immortality." She replied, "What shall I do to gain that through which I shall become immortal? If you know, tell me." Yajnavalkya replied, "You have been always my beloved; you are more beloved now by this question. Come, take your seat, and I will tell you; and when you have heard, meditate upon it." He said, "It is not for the sake of the husband that the wife loves the husband, but for the sake of the Atman that she loves the husband because she loves the Self. No-one loves the wife for the sake of the wife; but it is because one loves the Self that one loves the wife. No-one loves the children for the children; but because one loves the Self, therefore one loves the children. No-one loves wealth on account of the wealth; but because one loves the Self, therefore one loves wealth. No-one loves the Brahman for the sake of Brahman; but because one loves the Self, one loves Brahman."]

We have discussed the shanti path — *purnamadah purnamidam*. Even though the so-called infinite world seems to have come from that infinite; nothing has really come; it cannot come; but that perfect, one without the second, invisible, *akhanda*/indivisible, *advaitiya*/one only Brahman.

These beautiful ideas are elaborated in Verse 3 of this Eighth Chapter. (Please see above) We will discuss these beautiful ideas in our future classes.

Vasudeva sutham devam kamsa Chanoora mardhanam,

Devaki paramanandam Krishnam vande Jagat Gurum.

वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूरमर्दनम् ।
देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥

May Shri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda bless us all.

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti

With kind regards

Mamta Misra