



श्रीमद्भगवत् गीता

अक्षर ब्रह्मयोगः

Chapter 8

Volume 1

अर्जुन उवाच

किं तत् ब्रह्म किं अध्यात्मं, किं कर्म पुरुषोत्तम ।
अधिभूतं च किं प्रोक्तं, अधिदैवं किं उच्यते ॥

8 - 1

अधियज्ञः कथं कोऽत्र, देहे अस्मिन् मधुसूदन ।
प्रयाणकाले च कथं, ज्ञेयोऽसि नियतात्माभिः ॥

8 - 2

श्री भगवान् उवाच

अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमं, स्वभावः अध्यात्मं उच्यते ।
भूतभाव उद्भवकरः, विसर्गः कर्मसंज्ञितः ॥

8 - 3

अधिभूतं क्षरो भावः, पुरुषः च अधिदैवतं ।
अधियज्ञः अहं एव, अत्र देहे देहभृतां वर ॥

8 - 4

Upanishad words have a dual function: they retain their literary meanings – but that is only their secondary function. Their primary function is to serve as pointers, powerful enough to uplift the मनस् – the mind, चित्तं – the faculty of recollection, and अहंकार – the ego “I”, and direct and propel the बुद्धि – the faculty of discrimination and decision, towards that indefinable all pervading Supreme Being which cannot be objectified by any means.

The बुद्धि, ultimately reaching, which means recognizing, That Supreme Being in oneself, as ONESELF Itself, with the aid of such Upanishad words, is called SELF – Realization. Upanishad words make such Self Realization possible by setting the words in unique directions and infinite dimensions, so that all such words sharply converge at that One indefinable, All-pervading Supreme Being, which can be reached – not by words, not by mind, but only by a well prepared बुद्धि.

Therefore, the Upanishad words have to be understood properly to grasp the Upanishad Message of Self-Realization. In the concluding two verses of the last



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

Chapter, Sri Krishna unfolded Himself as ब्रह्म, अध्यात्मं, कर्म, अधिभूतं, अधिदैवं and अधियज्ञ, just to point out that He, as परमेश्वर, is All and is In All – वासुदेवः सर्वं and ईशावास्यं इदं सर्वं. Arjuna naturally wants to know how these different words have to be understood, so that they serve as pointers to the One and the SAME Supreme Being Whom we call परमेश्वर.

Sri Krishna also said “Those people who are युक्तचेतसः – who have अन्तःकरण शुद्धि and clarity of vision, which means, those who are ज्ञानीs, recognize परमेश्वर in themselves as themselves, even at the time of death. Arjuna naturally wants to know how such recognition of परमेश्वर is possible at the time of death, not only for ज्ञानीs but also for all people like himself.

Thus this 8th Chapter called अक्षर ब्रह्म योग starts with a series of 7 questions from Arjuna as follows:

अर्जुन उवाच

किं तत् ब्रह्म, किं अध्यात्मं, किं कर्म, पुरुषोत्तम ।
अधिभूतं च किं प्रोक्तं, अधिदैवं किमुच्यते ॥

8 - 1

अधियज्ञः कथं कोऽत्र, देहे अस्मिन् मधुसूदन ।
प्रयाणकाले च कथं, ज्ञेयोऽसि नियतात्मिभिः ॥

8 - 2

Addressing Sri Krishna as पुरुषोत्तम and मधुसूदन, Arjuna asks Sri Krishna:

किं तत् ब्रह्म – What is तत् ब्रह्म – That ब्रह्म ? What exactly is indicated by ब्रह्म शब्द – the Sound ब्रह्म ? When you say that those who are युक्त चेतसः – those who have purity of mind and clarity of vision, recognize themselves as ब्रह्म even at the time of their death, what is It exactly they recognize.

ब्रह्म शब्द – The Sound ब्रह्म has been used before several times in different contexts; how should I understand ब्रह्म शब्द now in the context of भक्ति योग. That is Arjuna’s question. Similarly,

किं अध्यात्मं – What is अध्यात्मं ?

किं कर्म – What is कर्म (in Singular)?



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

अधिभूतं च किं प्रोक्तं – What is said to be अधिभूतं
अधिदैवं किं उच्यते – What is called अधिदैवं

अत्र, अस्मिन् देहे अधियज्ञः कः, कथं – Here, in this physical body, who is अधियज्ञः and how come that अधियज्ञ is there? Further,

नियतात्मभिः – By those whose अन्तःकरण – mind and बुद्धि, are नियतं – well controlled, by those whose mind and बुद्धि remain clear, steady and well-disciplined,

प्रयाण काले च कथं ज्ञेयः असि – how are you, as परमेश्वर, recognizable to them, even at the time of death? At the time of death, it is common to find people struggling to survive, or worried about many matters relating to their life just ending; when that is the case, how do they come to think of परमेश्वर ?

These are the 7 questions of Arjuna. The first Six questions are concerned with the Upanishad meaning of the six words used, and the seventh question is concerned with something more. This is how भगवान् responds to these questions.

श्री भगवान् उवाच

अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमं, स्वभावः अध्यात्मं उच्यते ।

भूतभाव उद्भवकरः विसर्गः कर्मसंज्ञितः ॥

8 - 3

अधिभूतं क्षरो भावः पुरुषः च अधिदैवतं ।

अधियज्ञः अहं एव, अत्र देहे देहभूतां वर ॥

8 - 4

These two verses answer the first six questions. The first question is:

किं तत् ब्रह्म – What is That ब्रह्म ; the answer is :

अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमं –That ब्रह्म is अक्षरं, ब्रह्म and परमं all in ONE.

अक्षरं, ब्रह्म and परमं are words which serve as pointers – all converging to That ONE SAME तत् ब्रह्म – That ONE SAME Supreme Being Whom we call ब्रह्मन्, Who cannot be defined by words or reached by the mind, but Who can be recognized only by a well-prepared, well-directed, and well-pointed बुद्धि, with the aid of Upanishad pointers, such as अक्षरं, ब्रह्म, परमं etc.

The content of such words, which make them as pointers for That ब्रह्मन् is indeed the



ब्रह्मचिद्या **Brahma Vidya**

subject matter of all our Upanishads. For example, अक्षरं simply means That which is not subject to change, decay or destruction; That which is ever as It is.

Unfolding briefly the content of the pointer word अक्षरं, the Mundaka Upanishad says:

यत् तत् , अद्रेश्यम्, अग्राह्यं, अगोत्रं, अवर्णम्,

अचक्षुः श्रोत्रं, तत् अपाणिपादम् ।

नित्यं, विभुं, सर्वगतं, सुसूक्ष्मं,

तत् अव्ययं, यत् भूतयोनिं, परिपश्यन्ति धीराः ॥

(MU 1-1-6)

यत् धीराः परिपश्यन्ति, तत् ब्रह्म, अक्षरं ब्रह्म – That ब्रह्मन् which is always recognized very clearly, directly and immediately by all धीर-पुरुषs – by ज्ञानीs – people of wisdom, people who have विवेक वैराग्य बुद्धि – आत्मज्ञानं SELF Knowledge.

तत् ब्रह्म – That अक्षरं ब्रह्म

अद्रेश्यं – is not an object which can be perceived by any of the sense organs, ज्ञानेन्द्रियाs

अग्राह्यं – is not an object which can be grasped by any of the organs of action, कर्मेन्द्रियाs

अगोत्रं – is not anything that has any connection, any root, any source, in any object in this creation

अवर्णम् – is not anything comparable to any object in this creation in terms of color, quality, features, attributes etc.

अचक्षुः श्रोत्रं , अपाणिपादं – is not Itself the eye, the ear, the hand or the leg – which means, It is not Itself any organ of perception and/or action.

We must note here that the words अद्रेश्यं, अग्राह्यं, अगोत्रं, अवर्णं, अचक्षुः श्रोत्रं, अपाणिपादं – all these words are negative indicators. That is how The Upanishad creates the context – the mental environment, for revealing the Nature of ब्रह्मन्. Through the above words, The Upanishad points out that what is indicated by the pointer-word अक्षरं is not any object in this creation. Then, what is It? The Upanishad continues:

That अक्षतं ब्रह्म is नित्यं – Unborn, Eternal, Ever-existent. विभुं means विविधं भवन शीलं – सर्वव्यापी – That which is capable of existing in all different forms and names, and That which is all pervasive, existing in every form and name in this creation



ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

सर्वगतं – That which in-dwells in everything in this creation. That which is non-separate from anything in this creation, Itself being independent of everything while nothing in this creation is independent of It

सुसूक्ष्मं – That which is the most subtle, there is nothing more subtle than That

अच्ययं – Unchangeable, Imperishable, Immutable

भूतयोनिं – That which is the ultimate cause, the ultimate source of everything in this creation, including the creation itself. Such is the Nature of अक्षरं ब्रह्म. Such अक्षरं ब्रह्म, does It really exist? Has any body seen such अक्षरं ब्रह्म ? The Upanishad says – “Yes, That अक्षरं ब्रह्म does exist.

तत् धीराः परिपश्यन्ति – The धीर पुरुषs – the ज्ञानीs – see That अक्षरं ब्रह्म – recognizes That अक्षरं ब्रह्म through direct experience at all times – so declares the Upanishad.

If I do not recognize That अक्षरं ब्रह्म it only means that I have not yet grown up to the State of a धीर पुरुष. How can one grow up to become a धीर पुरुष ? As Sri Krishna said earlier (7 – 1)

मय्यासक्त मनाः पार्थ योगं युञ्जन् मदाश्रयः – anyone can become a धीर पुरुष – through ध्यान योग, कर्म योग and बुद्धि योग together, which means भक्ति योग. Through such भक्ति योग, any one can recognize That अक्षरं ब्रह्म anywhere at any time, and more importantly, in oneself as ONESELF Itself at all times. That is the Message of The Mundaka Upanishad on अक्षरं ब्रह्म. Further, the Upanishad says:

तत् विज्ञानेन परिपश्यन्ति धीराः

आनन्दरूपं अमृतं यत् विभाति

MU 2-2-7

We will talk about this Message in the M.U. sometime later.

Now, about ब्रह्म शब्द – the Sound ब्रह्म

ब्रह्म itself is a pointer-word for ब्रह्मन्; ब्रह्म simply means “Great or Big”, with no qualification whatsoever, which means-unqualified Greatness or unqualified Bigness with reference to anything that exists in this creation. Such unqualified Greatness includes Greatness in all dimensions, from the most subtle to the most gross, which means such ब्रह्म is all-inclusive and all-pervasive. Such all-inclusive and all-pervasive



ब्रह्म is the स्वरूप of ब्रह्मन् – The Nature of ब्रह्मन्.

The Taittiriya Upanishad unfolds the Upanishadic content of ब्रह्म शब्द – The Sound ब्रह्म – as:

सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्म – Which is one of the famous declarations of Vedanta, revealing the स्वरूप of ब्रह्मन्. The three words सत्यं, ज्ञानं, and अनन्तं are themselves pointer-words for ब्रह्मन्, each individually, as well as in association with the other two words.

सत्यं means That which is Absolute Truth – That which is Ever-existent and never subject to negation. ज्ञानं means That which is Pure, undifferentiated Knowledge, Pure consciousness, Pure Awareness, and अनन्तं means That which is Endless, Limitless, and All-inclusive पूर्णं.

Consequently, That which is सत्यं is ब्रह्मन्, therefore ब्रह्मस्वरूपं is सत्यं – Ever Existent Absolute Truth. Similarly, That which is ज्ञानं is ब्रह्मन्. Therefore ब्रह्मस्वरूपं is ज्ञानं – Pure Knowledge – Pure Consciousness – Pure Awareness – and That which is अनन्तं is ब्रह्मन्. Therefore ब्रह्मस्वरूपं is अनन्तं – Endlessness, Limitlessness, All-Inclusiveness itself – पूर्णम् Itself.

Again, even though सत्यं, ज्ञानं and अनन्तं are different words with different meanings, as pointers for ब्रह्मन् – as ब्रह्मलक्षणं, they enjoy total identity in meaning with respect to तत् ब्रह्म – The ONE to which they converge. That means, when we understand that ब्रह्म स्वरूपं is सत्यं, we must also understand That सत्यं as ज्ञानं सत्यं as well as अनन्तं सत्यं. Similarly, when we understand that ब्रह्म स्वरूपं is ज्ञानं, we must also understand That ज्ञानं is सत्यं ज्ञानं as well as अनन्तं ज्ञानं, and, when we understand that ब्रह्म स्वरूपं is अनन्तं, we must also understand That अनन्तं is सत्यं अनन्तं as well as ज्ञानं अनन्तं.

Thus we have to set our vision along the pointers सत्यं, ज्ञानं and अनन्तं, each in terms of Itself together with the sense of the other two pointers, in order to get a hold on the pointers for ब्रह्मन्. We will talk more about these pointers for ब्रह्मन् in Taittiriya Upanishad which we will take up a little later. Now, about the Upanishad word परमं as ब्रह्मलक्षणं – as Pointer for ब्रह्मन्.



ब्रह्मचिद्या **Brahma Vidya**

परमं means That which is The Supreme – The Highest – The Most Exalted being there is. The कठोपनिषत् unfolds परमं as अध्वनः पारं – तत् विष्णोः परमं पदं – सा काष्ठा सा परा गतिः (कठ ३-९/३-११).

As we may recall, the 4-step process of Self-Realization has been described in कठोपनिषत् (कठ ३-१३) as, resolving one's "I" notion successively

- (1) from one's names, forms, attributes, actions, possessions, accomplishments etc. into one's Mind, and then
- (2) resolving that "I" notion from one's Mind into one's अहंकार बुद्धि (ego "I" of the intellect), and then
- (3) resolving that "I" notion from one's अहंकार बुद्धि into the अहंकार – free हिरण्यगर्भ – the जीव of the entire creation devoid of all notions of individuality, and finally
- (4) resolving one's "I" notion from one's हिरण्यगर्भ बुद्धि into The सत् चित् आनन्द स्वरूप पूर्ण पुरुष – The आत्मा – The Innermost SELF already in oneself as ONESELF Itself.

Reaching That पूर्ण पुरुष by one's बुद्धि, through आत्मज्ञानं – Self-Knowledge, is reaching अध्वनः पारं – transcending संसार गति, which means, being totally released from all अविद्या काम-कर्म बन्धनs – the bondages caused by अविद्या – Self-ignorance, काम desires and cravings for worldly objects of transient existence and such desire prompted कर्म and कर्म फल.

Reaching that अध्वनः पारं, one finds oneself in, one discovers oneself as, विष्णोः परमं पदं – The Abode of the All-pervading महा विष्णु, The पर ब्रह्मन् – The परमेश्वर in oneself as ONESELF Itself. That State of Self-Realization is सा काष्ठा सा परा गतिः – It is the Innermost Reach, The Supreme Destination, The Ultimate Destination there is for one to reach, and indeed, for all beings to reach in this creation.

That ultimate Destination, reached by oneself, in oneself, and discovered as ONESELF Itself – is परमं, The पर ब्रह्मन् – The परमेश्वर – The Supreme Being indicated by the ब्रह्म शब्द – The Sound ब्रह्म. Thus परमं is ब्रह्म लक्षणं – ब्रह्मस्वरूपं. Such is the Upanishadic content of the pointer words अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमं for ब्रह्मन्.

Therefore, the moment one hears the word ब्रह्मन्, or thinks about ब्रह्मन्, one's बुद्धि should spontaneously uplift itself, orient itself, and propel itself towards That which is अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमं – which is everywhere including ONESELF. So much about अक्षरं ब्रह्म



परमं.

Regarding the second question किं अध्यात्मं – What is अध्यात्मं, Sri Krishna says:

स्वभावः अध्यात्मं उच्यते – The स्वभाव of That ब्रह्मन् – the innate Nature, the inherent Nature of That ब्रह्मन्. That ब्रह्मन् in all Its essential Nature, abiding in every physical body as प्रत्यग आत्मा – as one's Innermost Self, is called अध्यात्मं. अधि means "overlordship". The अन्तर्यामी अमृत आत्मा – The Immortal SELF in oneself, has overlordship over everything that is transient in this physical body. अध्यात्मं is the ultimate sense of the word अहं – "I", the आत्मा of अहं – the True Nature of the SELF in oneself is अध्यात्मं . Thus ब्रह्मन् and आत्मा are identical.

With reference to the entire creation, the SELF is ब्रह्मन्, and, with reference to an individual person in the creation, the SELF is आत्मा. What is That आत्मा doing in one's body? That आत्मा remains as अवस्थात्रय साक्षी – as a Witness to all that happens in oneself in all the 3 states of existence – the waking, the dreaming and the deep-sleep states of existence.

By unfolding अध्यात्मं – one's Innermost Self as ब्रह्म-स्वभाव – as ब्रह्मन् Itself, भगवान् makes clear what He said earlier, namely those who have purity of mind and clarity of vision, recognize ब्रह्मन् – not as an object, but as themselves, even at the time of death.

Now, regarding the third question, किं कर्म – what is कर्म, भगवान् says:

भूतभाव उद्धवकरः विसर्गः कर्मसंज्ञितः – In our scriptures the word कर्म generally refers to यज्ञ कर्म – Vedic rituals of various kinds. What is said of यज्ञ कर्म is also true for all कर्म. In a यज्ञ कर्म, such as a Havan कर्म, one offers an oblation to some particular Devata. For example, one offers an oblation to अग्नि देवता by saying अग्नेः स्वाहा. That is a कर्म – an action, but that is not the कर्म we are talking about here.

Immediately after offering the oblation, one says: अग्नये इदं न मम – This is for अग्नि देवता, It is not mine any more. By saying न मम – It is not mine, one totally dissociates oneself from what was offered as the oblation. Such dissociation, such giving up, is called विसर्गः.

भगवान् says that that विसर्ग is the कर्म, we are talking about; that विसर्ग कर्म is



singular. Once one dissociates oneself totally from the object of oblation, that विसर्ग कर्म becomes a pointer to परमेश्वर. Therefore, भगवान् says, विसर्गः कर्म संज्ञितः – such विसर्ग is to be understood and appreciated as कर्म.

विसर्ग कर्म is ईश्वर अर्पित कर्म, and such ईश्वर अर्पणं has ब्रह्मलक्षणं : – What does that विसर्ग कर्म do?

भूत भाव उद्भव करः – It becomes the cause and the means for the birth of दृष्ट फल and अदृष्ट फल – results seen and unseen, conducive to gaining ब्रह्मज्ञानं.

This concept of कर्म is applicable to all कर्मs, whatever कर्म one does, if it is totally dedicated to परमेश्वर. Such कर्म has the power to uplift oneself and direct one's बुद्धि towards परमेश्वर.

Now, regarding the fourth question, अधिभूतं च किं प्रोक्तं – what is said to be अधिभूतं ? भगवान् says:

अधिभूतं क्षरो भावः – All the Five Great Elements – The पञ्चमहाभूताs namely आकाश, वायु, अग्नि, आपः and पृथिवी and all beings born of those Five Great Elements, each of them is called अधिभूतं, and all of them are क्षरो भावः, ever subject to change. The entire creation, born of the पञ्चमहाभूताs, is born and exists in time, and it is ever subject to decay and change.

Sri Krishna says: such ever changing creation, including everything in creation, is also Myself, because, even though something changes, it is not destroyed, it reappears in some other form, in some other name, at some other time. Wherever there is a change, such change always depends on something that is relatively changeless. The Ultimate Changeless ONE is Myself. Therefore अधिभूतं is also परमेश्वर; recognize परमेश्वर in everything in this ever changing creation.

Regarding the 5th question अधिदैवं किं उच्यते – What is called अधिदैवं – भगवान् – says:

पुरुषः च अधिदैवतं – What is called अधिदैवतं is only परम पुरुष – The Supreme Being, which means सर्वं अनेन पूर्णं – The ONE by whom everything is filled. The ONE by whom the अन्नमय, प्राणमय, मनोमय, विज्ञानमय and आनन्दमय in every शरीर – in



Hindu Temple of Ottawa-Carleton Inc.
4835 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1X 1G6

ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

every physical body, is filled. The ONE by whom all our इन्द्रियाs and मनस्, बुद्धि are blessed to function as they do. The ONE who is the Abode of all the अधिष्ठान देवताs– The Presiding Deities like चरुण, चायु, अग्नि etc. in this Universe.

The ONE WHO FILLS THIS ENTIRE हिरण्गर्भ – THIS MANIFEST CREATION. That is परम पुरुष, called अधिदैवतं, and That is Myself – The परमेश्वर – The आत्मा in one's own self, The SELF of every self. Those who have अन्तःकरण शुद्धि and विवेक बुद्धि recognize That परम पुरुष in one's own self – as ONESELF Itself, at all times.

We will talk about Sri Krishna's answers to Arjuna's 6th and 7th questions next time.