



## श्रीमद्भगवत् गीता

अक्षर ब्रह्म योगः

### Chapter 8

Volume 6

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अष्टमोऽध्यायः ॥

In today's verses Sri Krishna concludes his response to Arjuna's 7<sup>th</sup> and last question at the beginning of this chapter.

- प्रयाणकाले च, कथं जेयः असि, नियतात्मभिः 8 – 2



Krishna, please tell me how do you become recognizable by नियतात्माभिः – by people whose अन्तःकरण mind and बुद्धि are well disciplined and kept under control at प्रयाणकाले च – even at the time they depart from their bodies?

While Arjuna was referring primarily to the जिज्ञासुs – devotees of परमेश्वर whose primary interest is in gaining ईश्वर ज्ञानं or मोक्ष – total fulfillment in life, the word नियतात्माभिः broadly includes all people because every body finds oneself as one is, because of one's पूर्व कर्मs, past actions in one's present life and all of one's past lives. Everybody wishes well for oneself, whatever be one's sense of well-being, and everybody has some discipline in oneself, in one's own terms. Therefore, in a broad sense, Arjuna's question is "What happens when they dies?"

As we may recall, कठोपनिषत् (5 – 7) answered this question briefly and pointedly by the expression

यथा कर्म यथा श्रुतं – Each in accordance with one's own past कर्मs and one's own cultivated cumulative thought life, which means, knowledge, awareness and mental disposition.

For the sake of completeness in response, Sri Krishna now answers Arjuna's question in some more detail. Broadly speaking, there are three kinds of people. Those who have already realized – recognized their identity with परमेश्वर through knowledge. They are ज्ञानीs. They are जीवन मुक्तः. They have already gained मोक्ष, even while living. For them, when the प्रारब्ध कर्मs are exhausted and the body falls naturally, there is no कर्म left, and hence, there is no सूक्ष्म शरीर – subtle body to go anywhere, or take further birth. They become ONE with परमेश्वर, wherever they happen to be at प्रयाणकाले – at the time of their departure from their bodies. This is the kind of people that everyone should strive to be. But such people are rare.

Aside from such ज्ञानीs, there are two other kinds of people. Those who are not yet ज्ञानीs, but who have been striving to become ज्ञानीs through Vedic studies, rituals, meditations, etc. These people have unqualified ईश्वर भक्ति alright, but in their vision, परमेश्वर is still ONE separate from themselves. They have difficulty in reaching the innermost self of oneself, and recognizing one's identity with परमेश्वर. Such people, according to our scriptures, may ultimately become qualified to go to ब्रह्मलोक when they depart from their bodies. While being in ब्रह्मलोक, with the blessings of Brahmaji



## ब्रह्मचिद्या **Brahma Vidya**

Himself, they gain ब्रह्मज्ञानं and ultimately मोक्ष – total identity with परमेश्वर. They do not return back to संसार for rebirth. This process of gaining मोक्ष is called क्रम मुक्ति – gradual progress in self-realization.

The third kind of people includes all the rest of us who have varying degrees of interest in ईश्वर ज्ञानं and मोक्ष, and whose main preoccupation in life is only one's own business of life involving पुण्य कर्मs and पाप कर्मs, and experiencing the ups and downs of daily life as they happen. Such people go through birth and death again and again, in the cycle of creation for an indefinite period.

Sri Krishna is now talking about the latter two kinds of people.

यत्र काले तु अनावृत्तिं आवृत्तिं चैव योगिनः ।  
प्रयाता यान्ति तं कालं वक्ष्यामि भरतर्षभ ॥

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Here the word योगिनः includes both the kinds of people. योग is both the means as well as the end. Everyone follows some means to some end. In that sense, everybody is a योगी. As one uplifts oneself ethically and spiritually, both the means and ends are also uplifted, and the meanings of the words योग and योगी are also upgraded.

The word काल here also has a special meaning. काल generally means time, but that is not the meaning here. Here काल means मार्ग – the path or the route followed by the departed soul to its ultimate destination. There are two paths involved here. They are

अनावृत्ति मार्ग – the path going through which there is no return, which means there is no पुनर्जन्म – no rebirth

आवृत्ति मार्ग – the path going through which one returns to rebirth in संसार again.  
भगवान् says:

भरतर्षभ – O! Arjuna

यत्र काले, प्रयाताः योगिनः, अनावृत्तिं यान्ति, – and also

यत्र काले, प्रयाताः योगिनः, आवृत्तिं यान्ति तं कालं वक्ष्यामि ॥

यत्र काले, यस्मिन् मार्गे – By which path

प्रयाताः योगिनः – the departed souls of ईश्वर भक्तः – devotees of परमेश्वर committed to various kinds of meditations and rituals



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अनावृत्तिं यान्ति - go to the destination from which they do not return to संसार for rebirth, and also

यत्र काले, प्रयाताः योगिनः, आवृत्तिं यन्ति - by which path, the departed souls of people who are only कर्मिणः - those who are mainly preoccupied with पुण्य, पाप कर्म s of their every day life. By which path such people go to the destination from which they return to संसार by rebirth, again and again

तं कालं (मार्गं) वक्ष्यामि - will tell you what that मार्ग - that path is, (for each of the above two kinds of people). So saying, भगवान् continues

आग्नेज्योतिरहः शुक्लः षण्मासा उत्तरायणम् ।

तत्र प्रयाता गच्छन्ति ब्रह्म ब्रह्मविदो जनाः ॥

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धूमो रात्रः तथा कृष्णः षण्मासा दक्षिणायनम् ।

तत्र चान्द्रमसं ज्योतिः योगी प्रप्य निवर्तते ॥

8 - 25

There are words here apparently defining काल - TIME, such as अहः - day time, रात्रि - night time, शुक्लः - indicating शुक्ल पक्ष the fortnight of progressively increasing moon light, कृष्णः indicating कृष्ण पक्ष the fortnight of progressively decreasing moonlight, षण्मासा उत्तरायणम् the six months of the year when the path of the sun appears tilted towards north and षण्मासा दक्षिणायनम् the other six months of the year when the path of the sun appears tilted towards south.

It is important to understand that काल here has nothing to do with time. As such, here मार्ग is the path, the route. The words used here, such as अहः - day time, रात्रि - night time, etc., are again not time. They are काल देवताs or मार्ग देवताs. They are काल अभिमानिनी देवताs - the presiding deities of the paths enroute to ब्रह्म लोक or चन्द्र लोक as the case may be. Likewise, the words अग्नि fire, ज्योति light धूमः smoke also represent the corresponding देवताs in the मार्गs - the paths involved.

These देवताs lead and conduct the departed soul of an individual to its appropriate destination, either ब्रह्म लोक or one of the several देव लोकs, collectively called चन्द्र लोक. These काल अभिमानिनी देवताs are hence called अतिवाहक देवता. भगवान् says here:



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अग्निः ज्योतिः अहः शुक्लः षण्मासा उत्तरायणम् – In the मार्ग – in the path led successively by अग्निर्ज्योतिषी देवता, अहर्ज्योतिषी देवता, शुक्लपक्ष देवता and षण्मासा उत्तरायण देवता

तत्र तस्मिन् मार्गे – in that path

प्रयाताः ब्रह्मविदो जनाः – the departed souls of those people who are qualified to go to ब्रह्म लोक by virtue of their पुण्य कर्मs gained through proper performance of Vedic rituals, meditations, etc.

ब्रह्म गच्छन्ति – they go to ब्रह्म लोक – from where they ultimately gain क्रम मुक्ति after gaining पूर्ण ईश्वर through Brahmaji Himself.

This गति – this path leading to ब्रह्म लोक is called शुक्ल गति – the bright path, which means the path conducive to gaining ईश्वर ज्ञानं – knowledge about परमेश्वर, knowledge about the true nature of Oneself. Whereas

योगी तत्र धूमः रात्रिः तथा कृष्णः षण्मासा  
दक्षिणायनं चान्द्रमसं ज्योतिः प्राप्य निवर्तते

योगी – the योगी who is only a कर्मी – one who has been preoccupied exclusively with one's own पुण्य, पाप कर्मs throughout one's life, the departed soul of such a person

तत्र, धूमः रात्रिः : तथा, कृष्णः षण्मासा दक्षिणायनं

तस्मिन् मार्गे – traveling in the path led by धूम देवता, रात्रि देवता likewise कृष्णपक्ष देवता and षण्मासा दक्षिणायन देवता

चान्द्रमसं, ज्योतिः प्राप्य – reaching one of the चन्द्र लोकs, appropriate to its maturity with the help of the light of चन्द्रलोक

चान्द्रमसं ज्योतिः the light of चन्द्रलोक is reflected light, and hence it is relatively darker than अग्निर्ज्योतिः the bright self-effulgent light of अग्निर्ज्योति – the अग्नि मार्ग leading to ब्रह्म लोक. चन्द्र लोक here stands for various देव लोकs such as पितृलोक, गन्धर्व लोक, इन्द्र लोक etc., all of which are far less exalted than ब्रह्म लोक.

The departed soul of a कर्मी traveling with the aid of चान्द्रमसं ज्योतिः – the reflected light of चन्द्र लोक, reaches one of the many देव लोकs, appropriate to its maturity, and after being there until it is ready for rebirth



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निवर्तते - returns to संसार through rebirth. This path leading to चन्द्र लोक is called कृष्ण गति - the dark path, the path conducive to perpetuation in अज्ञानं - ignorance of ईश्वर ज्ञानं.

शुक्लकृष्णे गती ह्यते जगतः शाश्वते मते ।  
एकया याति अनावृत्तिम् अन्यया आवर्तते पुनः ॥

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हि - As it is well-known

जगतः for the entire world, for all people

एते शुक्लकृष्णे गती - these two paths, namely शुक्ल गति and कृष्ण गति - the bright path and the dark path, the path conducive to gaining ईश्वर ज्ञानं and the path which tends to perpetuate ईश्वर अज्ञानं - ignorance on the nature of ईश्वर, these two paths

शाश्वते मते - they obviously continue to exist for ever, because

संसार प्रवाह नित्यत्वात् , संसार - this ever-changing world continues to exist perennially since the cycle of creation is a continuous phenomenon. Of these two paths,

एकया - by one

शुक्ल गति - by the bright path

याति अनावृत्तिम् - one goes to a place of no return, namely ब्रह्म लोक. What for? Only to gain मोक्ष - total fulfillment in life

अन्यया आवर्तते पुनः - by another path, namely कृष्ण गति - the dark path, one returns back to संसार for rebirth. What for? Again only to gain मोक्ष, which means, by whichever path one goes, whether one knows it or not, the ultimate destination for every person is only मोक्ष - total fulfillment in life, and मोक्ष can be gained only by आत्म ज्ञानं - self knowledge, which means पूर्ण ईश्वर ज्ञानं - the totality of knowledge about परमेश्वर about oneself.

For gaining such ईश्वर ज्ञानं, one need not have to go anywhere, through any path. One can gain that आत्म ज्ञानं, ईश्वर ज्ञानं, here itself, in this very birth itself, through भक्ति योग. Therefore, भगवान् tells Arjuna:

नैते सृती पार्थ जानन् योगी मुह्यति कश्चन ।  
तस्मात् सर्वेषु कालेषु योगयुक्तो भवार्जुन ॥



पार्थ O! Arjuna

एते सृती जानन् means एते मार्गौ knowing these two paths very well, ie knowing the limitations of these two paths very well, namely , these two paths, by themselves, do not and cannot take you to मोक्ष,

योगी न मुह्यति कश्चन - a योगी like you, never gets deluded, because what you want is श्रेयस्. For one who seeks श्रेयस्, मोक्ष and nothing less, there can be no attraction at all either to क्रम मुक्ति or पुनर्जन्म, either to ब्रह्म लोक or repeated births in this संसार. Only ईश्वर ज्ञानं can give you श्रेयस्. That ईश्वर ज्ञानं you can gain here and now through भक्ति योग. A wise man never gets tempted by lesser things in life.

तस्मात् Therefore,

सर्वेषु कालेषु योगयुक्तः भव - at all times, be steadfast in भक्ति योग, which means be totally absorbed in परमेश्वर एक भक्ति, अनन्य ईश्वर भक्ति, परम प्रेम स्वरूप ईश्वर भक्ति,

ब्रह्मानन्द स्वरूप ईश्वर भक्ति, ज्ञान लक्षण ईश्वर भक्ति, पूर्ण ईश्वर भक्ति - Uncontaminated, undisturbed, absolute enlightened total love and devotion to परमेश्वर at all times. Be steadfast in such भक्ति योग at all times. That is the means open to every person for gaining श्रेयस्, मोक्ष - total fulfillment in life. This concludes Sri Krishna's complete response to all 7 questions Arjuna asked at the beginning of this chapter.

Sri Krishna is now going to resume his discourse on भक्ति योग in the next chapter. As an introduction to his next discourse in this last verse of this chapter, Sri Krishna sings the glory of भक्ति योग as the means for gaining श्रेयस्, as the means for recognizing one's identity with परमेश्वर, as the natural means for recognizing परमेश्वर in oneself as oneself itself.

वेदेषु यज्ञेषु तपःसु चैव दानेषु यत्पुण्यफलं प्रदिष्टम् ।

अत्येति तत्सर्वमिदं विदित्वा योगी परं स्थानं उपैति चाद्यम् ॥

8—28

वेदेषु यज्ञेषु तपः सु चैव, दानेषु यत्पुण्यफलं प्रदिष्टम्

यत् पुण्यफलं प्रदिष्टम् - whatever पुण्यफलs - fruits of meritorious actions have been declared in the scriptures as obtainable for one's experience and enjoyment

वेदेषु, सम्यक् अधीतेषु - through diligent study of the Vedas

यज्ञेषु, साद्गुण्येन अनुष्ठितेषु - through proper performance of Vedic rituals in all details





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तपः सु , सुतत्पेषु – through well-observed disciplines of various kinds

दानेषु, सम्यक् दत्तेषु through gifts given with proper attitude to deserving people at right time

एतेषु यत् पुण्यफलं प्रदिष्टं – through all such पुण्य कर्मs, whatever कर्मफलs are obtainable for one's experiences and enjoyments, as declared in the scriptures

अत्येति तत् सर्वम् – transcending all of them, far exceeding all such experiences and enjoyments

इदं चिदित्वा – knowing this - “this” means what? Clearly understanding and reflecting on all that is Sri Krishna has said in response to Arjuna's 7 questions in this chapter, namely, What is indicated by the words ब्रह्म, अध्यात्मं, कर्म, अधिभूतं अधिदैवं, अधियज्ञं and how any person can recognize oneself as परमेश्वर itself even at the time of death.

In answer to all 7 questions, Sri Krishna has pointed out that

ब्रह्म, अध्यात्मं , कर्म, अधिभूतं, अधिदैवं and अधियज्ञं

- all these words indicate the same one अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमं, the परमेश्वर, प्रत्यग आत्मा the self in every self including oneself, which is Sri Krishna itself, and the means that is open to every person
- to recognize that ब्रह्मन्, that परमेश्वर, that प्रत्यग आत्मा – That Sri Krishna in oneself as oneself itself. The means for such recognition is भक्ति योग
- भक्ति योग means what ? What should I do? भक्ति योग means

सर्वेषु कालेषु मां अनुस्मर युध्य च 8 – 7

अनन्यचेताः सततं यो मां स्मरति नित्यशः 8 - 14

तस्मात् सवे षु कालेषु योगयुक्तो भवाजुन 8 – 27

These are the command words of Sri Krishna, the command words of परमेश्वर, not only for every ईश्वर भक्त – devotee of परमेश्वर, but also to every person who really cares about oneself, and who cares to listen.

Let us note here that Sri Krishna repeats the same message three times, so that you and I do not miss the message.

सर्वेषु कालेषु मां अनुस्मर युध्य च – Recognizing Me as अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमं, as परमेश्वर itself in yourself, be conscious of Me, the परमेश्वर, सर्वेषु कालेषु **at all times and at the same time do whatever** कर्म you have to do under your immediate personal





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circumstances of life, always doing that कर्म as कर्म योग and यज्ञ कर्म, कर्म as total dedication to परमेश्वर. There is never any conflict between doing one's worldly duties and being in God-consciousness at all times, because, as pointed out earlier, कर्म योग is योगः कर्मसु कौशलं (2 – 50) Overriding excellence in action. Such कर्म योग itself is being God-consciousness at all times. That is भक्ति योग. Again

अनन्यचेताः सततं यो मां स्मरति नित्यशः - If it is not possible for you to appreciate at this time what is indicated by the expression अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमं, then, whatever be your vision of परमेश्वर at this time, never isolating that परमेश्वर from yourself, identify yourself with that परमेश्वर

सततं - Always, at all times, under all circumstances, during all your waking hours, throughout your life time. That is भक्ति योग. Again,

तस्मात् सर्वेषु कालेषु योगयुक्तः भव - you must clearly understand the fact that for gaining total fulfillment in life, gaining ईश्वर ज्ञानं – knowledge about परमेश्वर is the only means, there is no other means. Recognizing that fact, whatever be your vision of परमेश्वर at this time, cultivate an uncontaminated, undistracted, enlightened total love and devotion to that परमेश्वर at all times (सर्वेषु कालेषु) throughout your life. That is भक्ति योग.

इदं विदित्वा - Here “इदं ” means this refers to all that is said above. Therefore इदं विदित्वा means knowing all this

योगी - the योगी, the one who thus remains steadfast, remains absorbed in भक्ति योग at all times, that योगी

परम् स्थानं उपैति

परम् स्थानं, प्रकृष्टं ऐश्वर्यं स्थानं

ईश्वर स्वरूप भावं, उपैति प्रतिपद्यते - reaches the exalted abode of परमेश्वर - gaining the very nature of परमेश्वर

आद्यं च उपैति

आदौ भावं , सर्वस्य कारणं अक्षरं ब्रह्म उपैति - That योगी in भक्ति योग becomes ONE with अक्षरं ब्रह्म – the primordial cause for all existence. Such a योगी, being in भक्ति योग, naturally becomes ब्रह्मचित्त, enjoying ब्रह्मानन्द.



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## ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

ब्रह्मवित् आप्नोति परं - Such a ब्रह्मवित् naturally gains श्रेयस्, gains मोक्ष while still living in this very life, and forever thereafter. Such is the glory of भक्ति योग.

Thus ends the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of भगवत् गीता entitled अक्षर ब्रह्म योग. In this chapter we have seen how Sri Krishna transforms Arjuna's mundane questions into a penetrating discourse on भक्ति योग - That is the glory of this chapter. We will go to chapter 9 next time.