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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

श्रीमद्भगवत् गीता

राज विद्या राज गुह्य योगः

नवमोऽध्यायः

Chapter 9

Volume 1

यं ब्रह्मा चरुणेन्द्र रुद्र मरुतः, स्तुन्वन्ति दिव्यैः स्तवैः
वेदैः साङ्गपदक्रमोपनिषदैः, गायन्ति यं सामगाः
ध्यानावस्थित तद्गतेन मनसा पश्यन्ति यं योगिनः
यस्यान्तं न विदुः, सुरासुरगणाः, देवाय तस्मै नमः
हरिः ॐ ॥

श्री भगवान् उवाच

इदं तु ते गुह्यतमं प्रवक्ष्यामि अनुसूयवे ।

ज्ञानं विज्ञान सहितं यत् ज्ञात्वा मोक्षयसे अशुभात् ॥

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राजविद्या राजगुह्यं पक्त्रिम् इदं उत्तमम् ।

प्रत्यक्ष अवगमम् धर्म्यम् सुसुखम् कर्तुम् अव्ययम् ॥

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अश्रद्धधानाः पुरुषाः धर्मस्य अस्य परंतप ।

अप्राप्य मां निवर्तन्ते मृत्यु संसारवर्त्मनि ॥

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Towards the end in the last chapter, Sri Krishna has been talking about people who are committed to various उपासनाs – modes of worship, संस्कारs – Vedic rituals, योगाभ्यासाs - yoga exercises, and also about people who are just कर्मीs meaning people spending their lifetime doing whatever worldly activities they want to do, or have to do, or are impelled to do, and also about शुक्ल गति, कृष्णगति, ब्रह्मलोक, चन्द्र लोक, क्रममुक्ति, पुनर्जन्म , etc., etc.

All this talk is not the main subject matter of भगवत् गीता. Sri Krishna was talking about such matters simply because Arjuna raised the question “What happens to people when they die?”, and that question required a direct and complete answer before Arjuna’s mind could be drawn out of such questions.



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What happens to people when they die is not the main subject matter of भगवत् गीता. What is it that is the best for people to do for their own sake, for their own good, while they are still alive and well, with all their faculties still functioning - that is the main subject matter of भगवत् गीता. That is the content of Arjuna's original question to Sri Krishna, namely यत् श्रेयः स्यात् (2 – 7)

There is Real Greatness in every person. In reality, every person is That Greatness Itself. That Greatness is ONE, and it is in everything, everywhere, at all times. To know the nature of That Greatness, and to recognize That Greatness in one's own self as Oneself Itself, in one's own lifetime is the very purpose of human existence. To give every human being the knowledge about That Greatness, and the practical means of gaining that knowledge, is the mission of the भगवत् गीता. Gaining that knowledge means reaching the innermost self in oneself, and at the same time, gaining absolute freedom, peace and joy, now itself, here itself, for ever.

As we already know, it is That Greatness which is indicated by words such as आत्मा, ब्रह्मन्, परमेश्वर, भगवान्, etc., or simply by the sound ॐ. The knowledge about That Greatness is ज्ञानं, indicated as आत्मज्ञानं, ब्रह्मज्ञानं, ईश्वर ज्ञानं etc. The result of gaining that knowledge is indicated as मोक्ष, श्रेयस्, शान्ति, आनन्द, etc.

From what was said in the last chapter, one should not get the impression that there are many ways by which one can gain मोक्ष - Total Fulfillment in life. There are not many ways; there is only one way to gain मोक्ष and that is by gaining ज्ञानं, ब्रह्मज्ञानं. Gaining ब्रह्मज्ञानं is the only means for gaining मोक्ष - Total Fulfillment in life. There is no other way.

How important is this ब्रह्मज्ञानं? As the बृहदारण्यक उपनिषत् says (3.8.10)

यः आत्मानं अविदित्वा (न ज्ञात्वा) अस्मात् लोकात् प्रैति, सः कृपणः - The one who departs from this world without gaining आत्मज्ञानं (ब्रह्मज्ञानं), is a कृपणः, a miser, meaning one who has wasted one's lifetime. Again, as the केनोपनिषत् says (2-5)

इह चेत् अवेदीत्, अथ सत्यं अस्ति, न चेत् इह अवेदीत्, महती विनष्टिः - Here in this world, while one is still living in this physical body, where alone it is possible to gain ब्रह्मज्ञानं, if one takes the steps necessary for gaining ब्रह्मज्ञानं, then there is wisdom, there is purpose in life for that person. On the other hand, if one does not take the necessary



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steps to gain ब्रह्मज्ञानं, in this life, if one chooses to dissipate one's life without taking the steps necessary to gain ब्रह्मज्ञानं, then there is a great loss for that person. It is a loss that one cannot make up for ages to come, which means that person has simply wasted life. That is how important ब्रह्मज्ञानं, is for every person.

Sri Krishna has been teaching ब्रह्मज्ञानं from chapter 2 onwards, in different ways, from different points of view. In this 9th chapter of भगवत् गीता, Sri Krishna resumes His discourse on ब्रह्मज्ञानं, as भक्तियोग, continuing from where he left off in chapter 7.

In order to reset Arjuna's mind in the main stream of गीत-उपदेश, and to draw his undivided attention to what He is going to say in this chapter Sri Krishna begins this Chapter with a general statement on the extraordinary nature of ब्रह्मज्ञानं, which is the topic of His discourse in this chapter, भगवान् says

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इदं तु ते गुह्यतमं प्रवक्ष्यामि अनसूयवे ।
ज्ञानं विज्ञानसहितं यत् ज्ञात्वा मोक्षयसे अशुभात् ॥

राजविद्या राजगुह्यं पवित्रं इदं उत्तमं ।
प्रत्यक्ष अवगमम् धर्म्यम् सुसुखं कर्तुम् अव्ययं ॥

अश्रद्धधानाः पुरुषाः धर्मस्य अस्य परंतप ।
अप्राप्य मां निरन्ते मृत्युसंसारवर्त्मनि ॥

These three verses are meant to refocus Arjuna's attention, and also our attention, to the main subject matter of भगवत् गीता, namely ब्रह्मज्ञानं.

भगवान् tells Arjuna

इदं तु ते गुह्यतमं प्रवक्ष्यामि अनसूयवे
वक्ष्यामि – I will tell
प्रवक्ष्यामि – I will explain, in detail, clearly



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ते प्रवक्ष्यामि – I will explain to you in detail, clearly. Explain what? Whatever that is, whatever Sri Krishna is going to say, let us listen with devotion and attention, and try to understand the message completely and clearly.

इदं ते प्रवक्ष्यामि – I will explain to you, इदं – this. This means what? Keeping in view the subject of ब्रह्मज्ञानं He has been talking about since chapter 2, and which He is going to further explain in this chapter, Sri Krishna says इदं – This. Therefore इदं here means ब्रह्मज्ञानं. इदं ते प्रवक्ष्यामि means I will explain to you This ब्रह्मज्ञानं

इदं तु ते प्रवक्ष्यामि – भगवान् adds the word तु here to distinguish ब्रह्मज्ञानं, from what He has been talking about just prior to this chapter, namely क्रममुक्ति, पुनर्जन्म, etc. The distinction here is this: क्रममुक्ति, पुनर्जन्म, etc. are things which are meant to be gained after death, whereas

इदं ब्रह्मज्ञानं – This ब्रह्मज्ञानं, which is being unfolded through His teachings in the भगवत् गीता, is meant to be gained right now, here itself, when one is alive and well. That इदं ब्रह्मज्ञानं is संयक् ब्रह्मज्ञानं – clearly understood and self-realized ब्रह्मज्ञानं which is साक्षात् मोक्ष प्राप्ति साधनं – the knowledge which is the direct means for gaining मोक्ष, namely

वासुदेवः सर्वं इति- सम्यक् ब्रह्मज्ञानं – a clear realization, a clear recognition that वासुदेव, the प्रत्यग आत्मा, innermost self in oneself, is everything, परमेश्वर is everything

इशावास्यं इदं सर्वं – a clear direct recognition that the self in oneself, the self in every self is वासुदेव, is परमेश्वर Itself, and That Self, That परमेश्वर is all-inclusive and ever existent. That is सम्यक् ब्रह्मज्ञानं.

That वासुदेवः सर्वम्-परमेश्वर is All, is not a belief. It is knowledge to be gained by direct experience and immediate recognition. Such इदं ब्रह्मज्ञानं is तु – distinct from the knowledge about ब्रह्मलोक, क्रम मुक्ति etc. that Sri Krishna talked about in the last chapter. Therefore

इदं तु ते प्रवक्ष्यामि means I will explain to you clearly in detail This ब्रह्मज्ञानं which is different from knowledge about ब्रह्मलोक, क्रम मुक्ति, पुनर्जन्म, etc. I will explain to you this knowledge, this ब्रह्मज्ञानं, because you are fit to receive this knowledge.



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There are two essential requirements for one's fitness to receive this knowledge, and they are: श्रद्धा and अनसूय. श्रद्धा is enlightened faith and interest in ब्रह्मविद्या, and अनसूय is total absence of असूय – any tendency to find some fault in the virtues of others. Sri Krishna has told several times before, and will tell again and again the importance of the above two qualifications, and also the other related qualifications for gaining ब्रह्मज्ञानं. We may recall here Sri Krishna's earlier declarations such as:

श्रद्धावान् लभते ज्ञानं 4 – 39

The one who has श्रद्धा gains ब्रह्मज्ञानं

श्रद्धावन्तः अनसूयन्तः मुच्यन्ते तेऽपि कर्मभिः 3 – 31

Even simply through the practice of कर्मयोग with श्रद्धा and अनसूय, one can gain release from the bondages of कर्म, and ultimately gain ब्रह्मज्ञानं. Here, in the opening verse of this chapter, Sri Krishna calls particular attention to अनसूय – absence of असूय, as a necessary qualification for gaining ब्रह्मज्ञानं, because if one cannot appreciate the virtue in others, one cannot also appreciate the virtue in oneself. Further, for one who has a mental disposition of असूय, gaining ब्रह्मज्ञानं is just impossible. Therefore,

इदं तु ते प्रवक्ष्यामि अनसूयवे means “To you who is free from असूय, I will explain clearly in detail, इदं – This ब्रह्मज्ञानं, which is distinctly different from our earlier topic of discussion.

So saying, भगवान् says something more about इदं-ब्रह्मज्ञानं. It is

गुह्यतमं – The greatest secret. This knowledge is considered to be the greatest secret for at least three reasons:

- Even though it is taught openly, It is seldom understood, appreciated and assimilated, essentially because of one's own internal difficulties
- ब्रह्मज्ञानं is outside the scope of all available means of objective knowledge. Vedanta is the only means for gaining ब्रह्मज्ञानं
- It is the most precious and the most valuable of all fields of knowledge. Anything that is the most precious, or valuable or rare, is naturally kept safely hidden as a secret.



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Therefore, ब्रह्मज्ञानं is गुह्यतमं – the greatest secret, which simply means that it is the most precious and the most valuable knowledge.

ज्ञानं विज्ञान सहितं – This ज्ञानं, this ब्रह्मज्ञानं that I am going to give you now is विज्ञान सहितं ज्ञानं, which means it is अनुभव युक्तं ज्ञानं, it is अपरोक्ष ज्ञानं, it is knowledge which can be experienced by you directly and immediately. The moment you recognize yourself as ब्रह्मन् Itself, through knowledge, you gain श्रेयस्, you gain मोक्ष, directly and immediately. As we may recall, this is exactly what Sri Krishna said in the beginning of chapter 7 also:

ज्ञानं तेऽहं सविज्ञानं इदं वक्ष्यामि अशेषतः (7 – 2)

Therefore, what is going to be said in this chapter is just a continuation of what Sri Krishna said in chapter 7, which means this discourse on ब्रह्मज्ञानं, is in continuation of भक्ति योग.

यत् ज्ञात्वा मोक्ष्यसे अशुभात् – By knowing this ज्ञानं, by understanding, appreciating and absorbing this knowledge, you will be free from every kind of अशुभः - you will be free from everything that is inauspicious for you, anything that is an obstruction for your happiness, anything that is an obstruction for your gaining श्रेयस् – मोक्ष – Total Fulfillment in life. You will be freed from every kind of sorrow, distress, and notions of inadequacy, smallness, bondage and doubts about your own identity. This ब्रह्मज्ञानं is all शुभं – auspiciousness itself. So saying, भगवान् continues in the next verse:

राजविद्या राजगुह्यं पवित्रं इदं उत्तमं ।

प्रत्यक्ष अवगमं धर्म्यं सुसुखं कर्तुम् अव्ययम् ॥

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भगवान् says something more about इदं. This ब्रह्मज्ञानं, It is राजविद्या, राजगुह्यं, उत्तमं पवित्रं, प्रत्यक्ष अवगमं, धर्म्यं, सुसुखं कर्तुं, अव्ययं.

राजविद्या – ज्ञानं and विद्या have the same meaning, namely, knowledge. ब्रह्मज्ञानं is ब्रह्मविद्या. This ब्रह्मविद्या is राजविद्या – King among all disciplines of knowledge, because of several reasons, such as:

ब्रह्मविद्या liberates one from संसार – all limitations of worldly life, and hence It is naturally above all other forms of knowledge. All other forms of knowledge divide the knower and the known, which only confirms the notion of division, which makes us experience



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ourselves as limited and divided. Once I say “things are divided”, I become one among the divided, which immediately limits me in terms of a variety of attributes.

ब्रह्मविद्या does not divide people. It is only ignorance of ब्रह्मविद्या that divides people. The intelligentsia in our society must understand this clearly, with all its consequences. In ब्रह्मविद्या there is no division. Even though there is an apparent knower-known pursuit, there is no division between the knower and the known. The Knower is Myself and The Known also is Myself only – there is no division – That is Self-Knowledge – आत्मज्ञानं.

ब्रह्मज्ञानं is आत्मज्ञानं, and It is आत्मा – The SELF Itself; It is Self-shining, All-inclusive, and Total – पूर्णम्, with nothing left out or left behind. It is partless whole; It is Limitless Awareness – all of which make ब्रह्मज्ञानं unique among disciplines of Knowledge; hence ब्रह्मविद्या is राजविद्या – King among Disciplines of Knowledge.

ब्रह्मविद्या is राजविद्या in terms of personal satisfaction, fulfillment in life as well. In every other विद्या, there is always some dissatisfaction with respect to one’s extent of knowledge. Every dissatisfaction implies an “ego I” – अहंकार. ब्रह्मविद्या totally eliminates अहंकार, and confers Total Fulfillment in Life.

For all these reasons, ब्रह्मविद्या is राजविद्या. राजविद्या also means Public Knowledge. Contrary to popular notions, ब्रह्मज्ञानं is open to everybody who seeks That Knowledge. Everybody who gains That Knowledge is at home, being themselves, experiencing Joy and peace in oneself. Thus ब्रह्मज्ञानं is indeed राजविद्या. Further,

राजगुह्यं – As pointed out already, this ब्रह्मज्ञानं is गुह्यतमं – The Greatest Secret, which naturally makes It राजगुह्यं – The King among all secrets. ब्रह्मज्ञानं is राजगुह्यं, because of its inscrutability and sanctity. Every one is conscious of so many things all the time, but That, because of which, consciousness of anything and everything is possible, remains ever inscrutable. Such inscrutability of ब्रह्मज्ञानं makes It राजगुह्यं .

ब्रह्मज्ञानं is the most precious and the most sacred knowledge, because It has the inexplicable power to uplift everyone to the state of ब्रह्मानन्द – Exalted Happiness, forever; such inexplicable power of ब्रह्मज्ञानं makes It राजगुह्यं. Therefore, the discourse on ब्रह्मज्ञानं in this Chapter, is appropriately named as राजविद्या राजगुह्य योग . Further,



पवित्रं इदं उत्तमं

इदं - ब्रह्मज्ञानं - उत्तमं पवित्रं - पवित्रं means "one that purifies". This ब्रह्मज्ञानं is the most exalted purifier. There are many purifiers - the most well known one is अग्नि - Fire, which is also called पाचकः - the purifier. But The ज्ञानाग्नि - The Fire of ब्रह्मज्ञानं is the most exalted among purifiers, because It instantly burns to ashes the residues of countless births, along with their पुण्य-पाप कर्मs and कर्मफलs, as Sri Krishna said in Chapter 4:

ज्ञानाग्निः सर्वकर्माणि भस्मसात् कुरुते तथा ॥

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ब्रह्मज्ञानं reveals oneself as अकर्ता - It completely eliminates the notions of doership and enjoyership. All actions arise from परमेश्वर only. Every कर्म is चिसर्ग कर्म, ईश्वर अर्पित कर्म - कर्म totally dedicated to परमेश्वर. Every कर्म is itself Worship of परमेश्वर only.

That being so, anything that eliminates अहंकार, and the consequent notions of doership and enjoyership is उत्तमं - the most exalted Purifier, because, by such purification, one recognizes, one realizes, one's total identity with परमेश्वर. One gains मोक्ष. Therefore, ब्रह्मज्ञानं is उत्तमं पवित्रं . Further,

प्रत्यक्ष अवगमं - This ब्रह्मज्ञानं is available for direct and immediate Self-Realization. How? This ब्रह्मज्ञानं produces a वृत्ति - अन्तःकरण वृत्ति - a thought process in the mind, leading to clarity and certainty of Knowledge in the बुद्धि, which immediately destroys ignorance about the true nature of oneself, thus unfolding direct and immediate recognition of ONESELF as ब्रह्मैवाऽहं अस्मि - I am indeed ब्रह्मन्. Such recognition is प्रत्यक्ष अवगमं - प्रत्यक्ष अवगमं ज्ञानं is विज्ञानं . Further,

धर्म्यम् - धर्मात् अनपेतं ज्ञानं is धर्म्यम् - This ब्रह्मज्ञानं never deviates from धर्म. It is always in-keeping with धर्म, because धर्म is प्रत्यक्ष ब्रह्मन् - direct manifestation of ब्रह्मन्. धर्म at the highest level is ब्रह्मन् Itself. Therefore, ब्रह्मज्ञानं is always in keeping with धर्म - That which is ever proper. Further,

सुसुखं कर्तुम् - Gaining ब्रह्मज्ञानं is both easy and enjoyable, if one is ready for such Knowledge. Because भगवान् described ब्रह्मज्ञानं as राजविद्या, राजगुह्यं, पवित्रं etc., one



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may think that gaining ब्रह्मज्ञानं is too difficult an accomplishment, even to try. भगवान् says – No, It is not difficult; ब्रह्मज्ञानं is सुसुखं कर्तुम् – It is very enjoyable to pursue, and easy to gain. ब्रह्मन् being Yourself, there is no particular effort needed just to recognize yourself as You are; You simply have to recognize, beyond doubt, that You are ब्रह्मन्, that is all.

For such recognition, you need a Means of Knowledge – प्रमाण. For ब्रह्मज्ञानं, the प्रमाण is already there in the form of The भगवत् गीता and The Upanishads. All you have to do is to expose your बुद्धि to This Knowledge; That Knowledge Itself eliminates your अहंकार, purifies your अन्तःकरण – mind and बुद्धि, and you soon see yourself, recognize yourself, as you really are. It is that easy. ब्रह्मन् being आनन्द, pursuit of ब्रह्मज्ञानं is also आनन्द – enjoyable. For any Knowledge to be easy and enjoyable, the person must have adequate prior preparation – अधिकारित्वं – for that Knowledge.

The अधिकारित्वं – the prior preparation for the pursuit of ब्रह्मज्ञानं is विवेक बुद्धि, चैराग्यं, शम-दमादि – six-fold discipline, and a yearning for श्रेयस् – मोक्ष. For one who has cultivated these qualifications, gaining ब्रह्मज्ञानं is easy and enjoyable.

अव्ययम् – ब्रह्मज्ञानं is आत्मज्ञानं – the true Nature of one's own self, which is अव्ययं, meaning अक्षरं, नित्यं – Unchanging and Unchangeable, Imperishable and Eternal. So is ब्रह्मज्ञानं Itself. It is about Myself, and I can never lose sight of myself. Even if my perishable physical faculties fail for any reason, ब्रह्मज्ञानं in Myself continues to remain अव्ययं – Unchanging and Eternal. Such is the Extraordinary Nature of ब्रह्मज्ञानं.

- It is गुह्यतमं
- It is विज्ञानसहितं ज्ञानं
- It is all शुभं
- It is राजविद्या, राजगुह्यं, उत्तमं पवित्रं, प्रत्यक्ष अवगमं, धर्म्यम्, सुसुखं कर्तुम् and अव्ययम्

Sri Krishna says something more about this ब्रह्मज्ञानं is the next verse:



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ब्रह्मविद्या **Brahma Vidya**

अश्रद्धधानाः पुरुषाः धर्मस्य अस्य परंतप ।
अप्राप्य मां निवर्तन्ते मृत्युसंसारवर्त्मनि ॥

9-3

We will see this verse in detail, next time.