

Baghawat Geeta, Class 117:

Chapter 8 Summary

Swamiji provided a summary of the chapter today. He said this chapter is in the middle section of the Gita. The middle section is from Chapter 7 through chapter 12. Here one of the sadhanas highlighted is Upasana. Upasana is discussed all the way up to chapter 12. It is an important sadhana. It is Saguna Brahma Upasana. It is defined as Saguna Brahma Vishaya Manasa Vyaparah. It is a mental activity. Puja is not Upasana. Puja is a physical activity as such it is a part of Karma Yoga. Japa and Parayana are also part of Karma Yoga. Upasana, however, is a Manasa Vyapara. Upasana is not a mental activity such as say worry. It is a Saguna Brahma Vishaya; or mental activity associated with a God with attributes. This upasana is one of the important topics of Madhyama Shatakam. Two types of upasanas were discussed.

1. Sakama Upasana performed for Material benefits in this world or other worlds. Going to a higher Loka is also a material benefit. It includes miracles. Miracles are not considered spiritual.
2. Nishkama Upasana is where one practices meditation without hankering for material benefits. This nishkama upasana is the topic of the middle section. It is meant for inner and spiritual growth. Nishkama upasana is of two types.

First one one is **sakama upasana**, in which a person practices this for material benefits; either material benefits belonging to this world or the material benefits belonging to the other world. And remember going to higher lokas, also will come under material benefits only because, higher lokas means superior material pleasures. This includes miraculous powers; powers to do miracles; they also will come under material benefits; remember; miracles have nothing to do with

spirituality. All this a person can accomplish by practicing sakama upasana.

And there is another form of upasana, which is **nishkama upasana**, in which a person practices the same meditation, saguna Brahma vishaya manasa vyaparaha; but without hankering for material benefit. So without seeking material benefits, a person can practice nishkama upasana. And this nishkama upasana is the primary topic of the middle section. Sri Krishna is not keeping in mind sakama upasana at all in the Gita, he deals with the topic of nishkama upasana primarily. That is an upasana, which is meant for the inner growth of a person; which is meant for the spiritual progress of a person. A person who values spiritual growth more than material accomplishments practises Nishkama upasana; and this Nishkama upasana is divided into two types.

Nishkama Upasana First Type:

In one, a person practices nishkama upasana for a length of time, which will give sufficient spiritual maturity or inner growth or spiritual qualification. The qualifications which are required for Gyana yoga abhyasah; and if a person has acquired those qualifications, known as sadhana cathushtaya sampathi, technically Then he withdraws from nishkama upasana and turns his attention towards Gyana yogaha or Vedanta vichara. Gyana Yoga does not come under upasana.

In what way is Gyana yoga different from upasana? Upasana concentrates on saguna Ishvara; whereas Gyana yoga concentrates upon nirguna Ishvara, the attribute less Brahman; and this nirguna Ishvara is persuaded not by meditation; but through Vedanta sravana manana nidhidhyasana; Gyana yoga means learning from an acharya. Gyana yoga involves Vedanta sravana consistently for a length of time under the guidance of a competent acharya. And this will give the knowledge of nirgunam Brahma or nirguna Ishvara and then by practising mananam, this knowledge is consolidated, made free from all

the doubts in the intellect; and by nidhidhyasanam; this nirguna Ishvara Gyanam is assimilated; all these are done in this life itself.

So thus practice nishkama upasana; acquire qualifications, withdraw from nishkama upasana; apply yourselves in vedanta vichara or shravana manana nidhidhyasana and attain nirguna brahma Gyana nishta; and by acquiring Gyana Nishta; a person gets liberation; here and now, which is called sadyomukthihi; or jivan mukthih;

And having attained jivan mukthi and enjoyed the benefit of jivan mukthi, throughout the life, at the end of prarabdha, this Gyani dies and after the death, the Gyani does not have any travel at all; there is no shukla gati; there is no krishna gati; there is no gati at all; Gyani is one with the Lord; here and now. This is one route of nishkama upasana; it is also known as sadyomukthi route or jivan mukthi route.

And this is the nishkama upasana topic, which Krishna wants to highlight in the Gita; because he wants all of us to get liberation; here and now; not postponing; for Posthumous benefit. Sri Krishna dwells upon that; and therefore nishkama upasana as a means of jivan mukthi is the primary sadhana, Sri Krishna deals with in the 7th chapter, in the 9th chapter, in the 10th, in the 11th and in the 12th also. Whereas in the 8th chapter alone, in the odd man out chapter, the unique and peculiar chapter, Sri Krishna deals with nishkama upasana of another type.

Nishkama Upasana, Second type:

Here a person practices nishkama Ishvara upasana or meditation; he does not want any material benefit other than moksha; and the difference is he continues nishkama upasana throughout the life. Whereas the other person practices nishkama upasana and changes the direction and comes Gyana yoga; whereas in the second type, a person does not come to

nirguna Ishvara Gyanam at all; he does not come to Vedanta sravanam manana etc.; Why, whatever be the reason; either he feels he has not qualified enough to think of nirgunam or he does not get an acharya for nirguna Ishvara vichara or for some other problem; a person continues nishkama upasana throughout the life; and because of that his mind is imbued with Ishvara chintna in the form Rama, Krishna or Devi and naturally at the time of death also, his mind thinks of only God; because what you value most in life is the one remembered at the time of death.

So, technically he is an Agyani but nevertheless a nishkama Upasaka. So, remembering God at time of death, is the topic of chapter 8. He does not get liberation here. He travels through shukla gathi to Brahma Loka. There he changes track to Nirguna Ishwara Upasana. Brahmaji himself teaches him. He gets liberation there. This route is called Krama Mukti and it is the topic of chapter 8. Sri Krishna is not suggesting this path to us. He prefers following the jivan mukti route. Therefore chapter 8 can also be called Krama Mukti Chapter. With this background we have to study this chapter.

Shlokas 1-4: Sri Krishna answers questions of Arjuna. Arjuna asked seven questions in Chapter 7. The questions were:

1. What is Brahman?
2. What is Adhyatmam?
3. What is Karma? While dictionary meaning of word is action, what does it mean here?
4. What is adhibhutam?
5. What is adhidaivam?
6. Who or what is Adhiyagna?

6.b. How does Adhiyagna reside in the body; a side question.

7.a. What is significance of remembering god at time of death?

7.b. How can one remember god at time of death?

The seven questions are described in chapter 7, shlokas 7.29 and 7.30.

First six questions were answered in brief answers in shlokas 1 and 2.

Adhyatmam and Brahman are one and same that is the consciousness principle. Two names come from different angles of observation; just like a person is a father, brother, husband etc depending on the relationship. Person is same, however, he is called by different titles.

Thus one consciousness from an individual level is adhyatmam. Same consciousness from macro level is called Brahman.

Adhibhutam is the material universe made of the five elements or the pancha bhutas.

Then adhi daivam; is the hiranyagarbha tatvam or the total mind, governing the material universe. Just as the individual body is governed by the individual mind, and it is your mind that is driving this body; Similarly the total adibhutham is governed by the total mind; which is called hiranyagarba tatvam; which is called adhidaivam.

Adhiyagnam is Ishwara Tatvam that is above Hiranyagarbha Tatvam. He is the Karma Phala Data and the one who presides over laws of Karma. He is seated in my own body noting every action of mine.

Karma is responsible for creation and thus also responsible for punyam and papam. One's sukham and dukham exhaust our punyams and papams. It requires a body to exhaust punyam and papam. Since there are innumerable jivas with their respective and many punyams and papams, is the reason God has created this law of Karma.

Shloka 5-14:

Six topics were addressed in shlokas 1 and 2. Seventh question

was then addressed from shloka # 5 to Shloka # 14. This dealt with the significance of remembering god at time of death. Whatever is remembered at time of death shows the personality of the individual. As we grow older our will power gets weaker and weaker. We are dominated by our vasanas and less by our will. Even addiction, the first time you will be strong and you can say no; but once you don't say no, a vasana forms in form of samskara and you will become weaker. This goes on and on and you will become weaker and weaker with addiction. In AAA they say surrender to God.

As we grow older our habits become stronger than our will power. Our final thoughts are determined by our lifestyle. The last thought is an indication of my lifestyle. Significantly it also determines my next janma as well. Since our will is weak and Vasanas strong; we need to develop good vasanas starting now. **So, therefore what you read; what you utter, what you see, and the people that you move with; should all be noble and good, so that they will generate shubha vasanas.**

Only then our subconscious mind will be saturated with mangala samaskaras. This way, even in a comatose mind, there will be Shubha Vasana. This will lead to Ishwara prapthi.

Let everything you do including your satsang help you. Choose even the company you keep carefully. Initially this will be an effort but gradually it will become a habit.

You can use any symbol or Devata (alambanam). One can even use Omkara. The symbol is used to remember god through out life. In such a person, at time of death, his mind withdraws and he thinks of God and then dies. Nishkama Upasaka remembers god effortlessly. This we saw till shloka # 14.

Shlokas # 15-22:

Human beings have two types of goals. First goal is God himself; and the second goal is the world that is other than god. God symbolizes immortality, security, peace and

happiness. Hence we say Achytayanamaha that means one who does not slip from immortality. If I chose any other goal than god keep in mind that it is risky. The object of your goal may leave me or I may leave it, at any time.

All the 14 lokas and the higher positions will also come under time and space and therefore there is nothing wrong in using them; nothing wrong in handling them; but don't depend on them. For security and peace depend upon Ishwara. These two goals known as Shreyas and Preyas were discussed in shlokas # 15 through 22.

Shlokas 23-27:

Two types of paths leading to two types of goals were discussed.

Krishna Gathi: leads to finite goals; it will provide you with enjoyment but you will have to return from some higher loka than Brahma loka.

Shukla Gathi: takes one to Brahma Loka, where he gets Gyanam which in turn leads one to Krama mukti.

One who goes through Krishna gathi is a Karmi or a ritualist. These rituals can include Pancha Maha Yagna, social service and all such activities.

One who travels the Shukla gathi meanwhile is a Nishkama upasaka and he attains god in the form of Krama mukti.

In all this we are only discussing a Karmi or Upasaka. We have not included Gyani in this discussion. So, we are talking about an Agyani Karmi or an Agyani Upasaka. Gyani has been excluded from chapter 8.

Shloka # 28: concludes the chapter. Between karma and upasana, Sri Krishna says, upasana is better as it gives Krama mukti after death. A Karmi, however will not get any mukti. So, Arjuna! choose Upasana, says Sri Krishna.

Sri Krishna then glorifies the Nishkama Upasaka Yogi. This chapter is called Akshara Brahma Yoga.

Take away:

What you read; what you utter, what you see, and the people that you move with; should all be noble and good, so that they will generate shubha vasanas.

Ram Ramaswamy