

Reading from Notes on the Bhagavad Gita, Ch 8

[p 145:] The Eighth Chapter is entitled “Devotion to the Omnipresent Spirit named as Om.” This title is a key to what follows in the chapter, as well as a summation of what is contained therein.

The Western mind may find a difficulty in grasping the idea of devotion to that which is everywhere, for the common acceptance of the term implies an object to which one may devote himself; here, however, devotion is shown to be a quality inherent in the one who perceives and not in any object seen and is therefore, applicable universally as well as in particular.

The deepest thinkers, ancient and modern, hold that That which reasons is higher than reason; and similarly, That which perceives forms and acquires knowledge, is beyond all form, and is not limited to, or by, any degree of knowledge. These sages declare, and show, that all limitations are *self-imposed* and impermanent; hence they speak of the manifested universe as the “Great Illusion” produced by a general and temporary sense of separateness on the part of the beings involved. Their efforts at all times have been directed towards aiding the advancing intelligence of mankind to a truer realization of the essential nature of all beings, from which alone can come perfection in knowledge and hence the highest happiness.

“The Omnipresent Spirit named as Om,” refers to the One Spirit which animates all worlds and beings. Another expression for the same idea is “The Self of all creatures”, and in the present chapter Krishna begins his reply to Arjuna by saying “Braman the Supreme is the exhaustless”. These terms, and many others used, are but different ways of conveying the same idea. An aid to comprehension may be had if it is realized that ‘the power, or ability to perceive is common to all creatures’, and that it includes all that the abstract terms Spirit, Life and Consciousness imply. In fact, the Bhagavad-Gita cannot be understood unless it is studied upon the basis that “That which lives and thinks in Man is the Eternal Pilgrim”, and that “he is wise indeed who sees and knows that all spiritual beings are the same in kind, and differ only in degree.”

As has been before stated, Krishna stands for the Higher Self of all beings; therefore all the discourses under his name are to be taken as addressed to all men and not merely as from one personage to another. It will then be understood that when He speaks of “my being manifesting as the Individual Self”, “Purusha, the Spiritual Person” or “myself in this body”, He refers to the constituents of each human being.

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[p 150:] “This Supreme, O son of Pritha, within whom all creatures are included, and by whom all this is pervaded, may be attained by a devotion which is intent on him alone”. To “act for and as the Self” in every state, under all conditions and in every circumstance is the highest path and leads to the highest goal; it is the path of duty in its highest aspect.

“I will now declare to thee, O best of the Bharatas, at what time yogis dying obtain freedom from or subjection to rebirth”. Yogis are those who strive for union with the Higher Self. All do not succeed in any one life, so some are subject to rebirth. Krishna indicates the conditions of planets and seasons in the several cases of departure. It would appear from the specific statement above quoted that the indications mentioned do not apply to those whose thoughts are based upon material existence, and that in such cases other indications apply. It may be of interest to consider in this relation the declaration of the ancient sages that all Souls do not depart from the body in the same way. They hold that there are seven great plexi governing other minor ones, these represent channels through which influences are received or given. Each of these channels has its own direct relation to one of the seven divisions of the system, thus showing Man to have the possibility of conscious relation with all the divisions. From this it would follow that the predominating idea of any one life would necessitate departure through some particular channel leading to its own appropriate realm of freedom or bondage. Thus Man binds himself or frees himself by reason of his spiritual power — and his connection with every department and division of great Nature. Krishna concludes the chapter by saying, “The man of meditation who knoweth all this, reaches beyond what ever rewards are promised in the Vedas, or that result from sacrifices, or austerities, or from gifts of charity, and goeth to the supreme, the highest place”. This highest place is sometimes called “All-knowingness,” the perfection of knowledge, the possession of which confers power of action upon any or all departments of manifested Nature. To reach this “highest place” the highest motive must prevail in all thought and action, perhaps through many lives. The idea of this highest motive may be best conveyed by considering the following ancient pledge:—

“NEVER WILL I SEEK NOR RECEIVE PRIVATE INDIVIDUAL SALVATION.
NEVER WILL I ENTER INTO FINAL PEACE ALONE; BUT FOREVER AND
EVERYWHERE WILL I LIVE AND STRIVE FOR THE REDEMPTION OF EVERY
CREATURE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.”