

free from cravings, owning nothing, the Yogin ought to apply himself to Yoga incessantly.

One should practice meditation regularly. It should not be a sporadic practice. Sitting in a secluded place, at a Satvika time, all alone, keeping the body and mind in control, apply mind in meditation.

Even in Patanjali's Yoga shastra, meditation is only the seventh step. Thus, he talks about the following eight stages: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, prathyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi.

Yama and Niyama are code of conduct and regulations to be followed in life. Asana's are meant to keep the body fit. Only then can one forget the body during meditation. Think of it like a shoe that does not fit and see how uncomfortable one feels wearing it. However, the moment your shoe fits you do not even think about it, anymore.

Pranayama helps one with control of the mind. One's desires should not create anxieties in the mind. Desires that are legitimate such as, a parents concern for the welfare of their children are fine. However, this concern should not result in anxiety. Only way to get over anxiety is through Sharanagathi or surrender to the Lord. " I am not the controller of my family. I do my best for the family and leave the rest to God", should be the approach taken. Nonbinding desires are good while binding desires can disturb the mind.

Simple living and high thinking should be practiced. High living requires a lot of materials and they need to be maintained. Vedas refer to this condition as Yoga Kshema. Yoga means accomplishments and Kshema means maintenance. Now, Nirashi, non-binding desires reduce Yoga while Aparigraha (non-possession) reduces Kshema. Parigraha means possession. Shankaracharya has defined Aparigraha to mean Sanyasa as well.

Even a Sanyasi has possessions like a rudraksha, paduka etc.

So, offer all possessions to God. Feel you are a trustee of Lord's property. Feel you are without ownership during meditation. Even one's children, consider them as children of God, not as mine. Remember children are not of you; they only have come through you. So, reduce possessions and give up ownership and have the idea of trusteeship. All these are preparations for meditation.

Shloka # 11:

शुद्धं शुद्धं शुद्धशुद्धशुद्धं शुद्धशुद्धशुद्धशुद्धं
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Setting one's firm seat in a clean spot, neither too high nor too low, covered with a cloth, or hide, and kusa grass, one over the other.

Sri Krishna gives another condition for the place of meditation. He says the place should be clean physically and spiritually. Spiritually means it is a place that helps us with spiritual thoughts. Thus, lighting a lamp, keeping God's picture etc., can make the place of meditation sacred. A spiritual place can even be a temple or an ashram.

Discussing asana or the seat, Sri Krishna says, it must have three layers. Bottom most layer must be Kusha grass, on top of it must be Adhinam or deer skin and the top most layer should be a piece of cloth called Chailam. Kusha grass is supposed to help with concentration, deer skin is supposed to protect us from negative forces and the piece of cloth is meant for making the seat comfortable for meditation. The deerskin is also used in the sacred thread ceremony.

In today's world we have to take the spirit behind this teaching. So long as the seat is not too hard or too soft it is acceptable. The asana also should not be too high or too low. The asana should be a firm place to sit down upon for meditation.

Shloka # 12:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ 6.12 ॥

Sitting on it, making the mind one-pointed, controlling the activities of the mind and senses, let the practitioner apply himself to Uoga for self-purification.

After fixing the asana one should sit on it. One should then withdraw from all activities of the karmendriyas and Gyanenindriyas within the mind. Having withdrawn the mind, direct the mind to the chosen object. In this process I stop all wasteful flow of mental energy and direct it. It is like building a dam to stop the river water from being wasted by flowing into the ocean. So, when I build a dam, the water is conserved and that stored water is channelized for irrigation purposes. Otherwise the water will go waste.

Another analogy would be like the sun's rays concentrated by a lens resulting in an energy that can burn objects. One Vedic fire lighting ritual is through such a lens.

Purpose of meditation is atma shudhi or purification of mind. Meditation is not for knowledge or self-realization. That can come only through study of scriptures. Purpose of meditation is to remove impurities of the mind called malam and vikshepa (extrovertedness of mind).

Malam means unhealthy ways of thinking. Thus, ragah- dveshah; kamah, krodhah; lobhah, mohah; madah, matsaryah etc., are all called malam. Uncultured, unrefined, indecent thoughts are called malam.

Vikshepah is the second impurity and it means extrovertedness of the mind or restlessness of the mind.

After purifying the mind one has to study scriptures for Gyanam. Thus:

Meditation before study of scriptures is called Upana and meant to remove mala and vikshepa.

Meditation after scriptural study is for nidhidhyasanam. Here one is purifying oneself from habitual vasana's of body identification, which is called deha vasana or deha abhimana vasana or also called viparitha bhavana. These are all our deeply entrenched habits to which we continue to fall back upon. Therefore, in meditation, I have to train my mind to think, " I am not this body", and the removal of this deha vasana is called atma vishuddhaye.

Shloka # 13:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ 6.13 ॥

Holding the body, head and neck evenly and steadily, the resolute Yogin fixes his gaze on the tip of his nose, not looking around.

Here Sri Krishna talks about posture during meditation. Sitting on ground with folded legs is best method to obtain steadiness and balance. This, however, is not compulsory. Nowadays many people have knee problems and other such problems. In this context one can sit anywhere or even lie down. Meditation is a job of the mind. All other ideas are suggestions only.

Upper part of the body should be erect and straight. Kaya means the body from hip to neck, then griva, means the neck, shirah, means the head, these three must be in one straight line, perpendicular to the ground.

They say even musicians need to sit straight to allow full flow of sound. So be firm and erect.

Withdraw sense organs from sensory field. It means withdrawing the mind from sense organs especially, the eyes, as they are

the most active of all organs. Keep eyes focused on tip of one's nose. Keep eyes partially closed.

Sri Krishna does not talk about breath regulation here. He did discuss it in chapter five. Make sure eyes do not distract you. You can even close the eyes. Make sure breathing is slow and even.

In fact, they say prana vikshanam, is a very good discipline; as different from prana ayama; pranayama is regulation of breathing; prana vikshanam is observation of the breath; and when I observe, I am aware of the breathing process, the very awareness of the breathing process, makes it smooth and even; so that is called prana vikshanam.

Take away:

Purpose of meditation is atma shudhi or purification of mind. Meditation is not for self-realization.

With Best Wishes

Ram Ramaswamy

Taitreya Upanishad, Class 17

Chapter 17

Lecture On Sept, 3. 2017

Swamiji observed that we completed 10 sections of Upanishad covering— Preparatory Disciplines to get Brahma Vidya— Also

discussed, Karma Yoga , varieties of Upasanas, values (Deiviha Sampath) and two Japas (Gnana yogyadha Prapthi and Gnana Prapthi).

All previously discussed Sadhanas were reminded.

Now on to Auvaha 11.

Upanishad is condensing Dharma Sasthram – contained in Veda Purva Baha. It is nothing but a religious way of life and get purified mind and become Gnana Yogadha—and enter Veda Antha Baha. –Start with religion and transcend religion–

Sanyasa Asrama reflects this.

Dharma Sastra (Veda Purva) as elaborated by Jaimini Maharishi in Purva Mimamsa. It consists of:

1) Rituals

2) Attitude towards life (family, creation, health, wealth, strength etc)

3) Values—ethics and morals

the above three are condensed Dharma Sasthra. When you learn and practice then you are fit for Veda study.

Upanishad condenses Dharma Sasthra in Anuvaka 11. When should one begin to study? It should start at a very young age, in schools or colleges—during Brahmacharya Asrama—when there is no responsibilities—no relationship—and with a relaxed mind.

It starts with 1) Veda Adhyayana (learning to chant words without meaning)—young minds absorb very quickly and next step 2) Veda Mimamsa –learning the meaning of Vedas (only Veda Purva Mimamsa) and 3) study of Dharma sasthra

After entering Grihastha Asrama, one should practice Dharma Sasthra in day to day life (Anushta Prayanam). This leads to Sadhana Chathushtaya Sampathi—when you achieve this, Grihastha

Asrama is not relevant and it is only an intermediate stage—relationships and associations come

and go—gradually withdraw from responsibilities and handover to the next generation— and take to Sanyasa Asram—with a relaxed mind you are fit to study Veda Antha under the guidance of a Guru.

Upanishad says Guru during Bramacharya Asram:

Teach to chant Veda—

Collects Sasthras and structure lessons for each student depending on profession they take up later

Teaches religion, ethics and attitudes

Persuade students to follow Sastras

Guru practices what is taught and is a role model.

Upanishad stresses salient features of Dharma Sasthra:

Satyam Vadha—Harmony between thoughts and word and integrated personality

Dharmam Chara—Implement all Karmas and Discipline commanded by scriptures—do not neglect scriptural study

For implementing Dharma Sastra, materials are required—Grihastha Asrama provides the infra-structure

After completing study, under Guru—your knowledge can be exhibited to a King or rich persons—get rewarded —and handover the same to Guru as Dakshina—for propogating the Guru Sishya Parambara

Then become A grihastha—and maintain the Kula Parampara—teach your children a religious way of life and faith in Veda.

Namasthe

Bhawat Geeta, Class 84: Chapter 6, Verses 7 & 8

Greetings All,

सर्वज्ञः सर्वभूतहिते रतः
सर्वभूतहिते रतः सर्वज्ञः 6.7

The supreme Self is concentrated for one who has subdued the self and is quiescent, in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain, and in honor and disgrace.

Continuing his teaching of the Gita Swami Paramarthananda said, in chapter six Sri Krishna is talking about general preparations to be followed by a meditator. He prescribes four disciplines called Samanya sadhanani and they are:

1. First Bahirange Sadhana: Is maintaining a balanced mind while conducting day-to-day transactions. Violent agitations of mind will register and later come up during meditation. One should avoid such violent agitations of mind. This state is called Samatvam. To achieve this Samatvam one has to follow Karma Yoga as described in Chapter # 3.
2. The Second Bahiranga Sadhana is having Self Confidence. One without self-confidence cannot be helped by anybody including God, Guru or the Shastras. Self-Grace is paramount. This Self Grace is Self-confidence and it is also called Atma Kripa.
3. The Third Bahiranga Sadhana is Self Effort. Fate or destiny oriented person will always fall back upon fate. He will say, " If God wants me to get liberated, this effort is not required. If God has decided I should not get liberated, then my efforts are in vain." This is

fatalistic thinking. Sri Krishna does not accept this approach. He says individual effort is required. In fact, individual effort alone will help in tapping the grace of the Lord, therefore, the third value is self-effort.

4. The Fourth Bahiranga Sadhana is Self-mastery or Self Management.

Every organ that is given to me is an instrument gifted by the Lord to me. The physical body is an instrument; the sense organs of knowledge and action are instruments; my mind is a wonderful instrument, and above all my intellect is the most powerful instrument. By using these instruments I can accomplish anything in life. Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, all the four purusharthas are accessible to me, if only I am willing to put these organs to proper use. This requires above all that the organs remain healthy. An unhealthy body, an unhealthy mind and intellect cannot accomplish anything. Therefore, every organ should be healthy. They also must function in coordination as well. Citing an example, if intellect says, "attend Gita class" and you attend. But in the class, if the mind wanders off then the mind and intellect are not integrated. All organs should function in harmony. The healthy and harmonious function of the organs is self-mastery.

Sri Krishna says if these four attributes, that is, Equanimity, Self effort, Self confidence and Self mastery are in place one can attain spiritual success. His mind is relaxed and free from turmoil and extroverted-ness. For such a person recognizing the Self is very easy. He can make use of scriptures to know his own Atma. By following scriptures one can get Atma easily. Why is it so? Because, scriptures say the Atma is available to us all the time. It is not as if it is only available at certain times. Some objects such as higher Lokas, Devatas etc. can be accessed only by meditation. However, the Atma is always available to me, in all the different states of waking, sleep, dream and turiya. In what

form is it available to us? It is available to us in the form of Consciousness. Every word I utter is creating thoughts in the person hearing me. Through out them all, there is one non-variable principle called Consciousness. It is the one aware of each thought rising in mind.

It is like the light that is pervading the hall. The people are coming and going; but in and through the arrival and departure of the people the one common factor is the light because of which I am aware of the arrival of people, as well as their departure. In fact, if there is one principle, which is ever available, that is consciousness.

Consciousness is ever available in the most ordinary state. We just need to turn our mind to it.

If we look at the hand, we will see lines in the palm, the nails etc. but we never say there is a light on the hand. In doing this we are turning our attention to this light, which is always there. We are looking at the ever-present light principle.

Similarly, Vedanta is not revealing a new Atma rather Vedanta is turning my attention to the already and ever- evident consciousness. And why should I turn my attention? At present moment my attention is in the thoughts that are occurring in the mind. Either I am worried about kama, krodhah, greed and so on. So instead of turning my attention to a particular thought in the mind I am turning my attention to the consciousness because of which I am aware of every thought.

This turning of attention can be done only if the mind is calm and without turbulence. Therefore, a lot of effort is required to enjoy a calm mind. An extrovert cannot listen. Self is Consciousness. Kenopanishad beautifully says that Atma is evident all the time. You do not have to go to a special meditation to experience the Atma. Just as I do not have to perform a special meditation to recognize the light, because

the light is experienced in and through every experience, similarly, the Consciousness does not require any special state of mind, or any special meditation; it is available to us all the time.

If you ask a man with a relaxed mind, when is Consciousness evident, he will ask you back when is it not evident? This recognition has to occur in two stages.

First stage is turn attention from thought to Consciousness. It is like turning the attention from hand to the light. Thus, we turn from changing thought to the changeless witness.

Second stage occurs when I recognize Consciousness, then my tendency will be to say, "I am the body, mind complex and I have consciousness that illumines my thought." Now Vedanta says that you have to train your mind and reverse the approach. Vedanta wants us to say:

" I am the Consciousness principle and the body mind complex is an incidental instrument used by me". This is the biggest shift and most important shift. Meditation is meant to make this shift.

Please remember the five points I have said regarding consciousness in the past:

- Consciousness is not a part, product or property of the body.
- Consciousness is an entity distinctive from the body, which pervades the body.
- The dimensions of the body do not bind consciousness.
- Consciousness survives even after the body goes; and the surviving consciousness cannot transact, not because it is absent but because the medium of transaction is not there, anymore.

This is the description of consciousness and that consciousness is my nature. We also know this from our day-to-day experiences. The end of transactions is not the end of my existence. If end of transaction is the end of existence; what will happen? During sleep, I am dead; but I know during sleep I am not dead; I am very much alive; even though I do not do any transaction. Extend this to death also. After death also, I do not transact but non-transaction is not non-existence. And therefore I exist all the time. I exist with and without transaction. End of transaction is not end of existence. Transacting instruments come and go, but I exist. This is discovering the real "I". So this is called Atma gyanam. This is called discovering the real I. This is called owning up to the real "I". And when I own up to this real "I", what is the benefit I get? Sri Krishna says such a wise person is unaffected by all the pairs of opposites happening in his life; like heat and cold; favorable condition and unfavorable condition; none of them shake him. Manam and apamanam is a very big issue for human beings; we are very worried about our social status and respect. Even Manam and Apamanam do not shake the wise person. Gyanam gives us immunity from all this.

Shloka # 8:

योगिनोऽपि कश्चिदपि ज्ञानं विदुः
यस्यैव तस्यैव तस्यैव तस्यैव तस्यैव 6.8

That yogin is said to be integrated whose self is content with knowledge and experience, who is immutable, and who has subdued his senses and to whom clod, stone and gold are all alike.

This disciplined person goes through stages of knowledge. First he goes to Gyanam also called Paroksha Gyanam and then he goes to Vigyanam. Both Gyanam and Vigyanam have different meanings. When I say, " I am the body" it is Gyanam. Consciousness is considered a part of the body. At least I know there is consciousness, hence it is called Gyanam.

Vigyanam is when I say, " I am the consciousness principle and I have the instrument called body mind complex". When I have body mind complex I can transact. When I don't have body mind complex I cannot transact. The body mind complex is like a spectacle.

Spectacles have got two glasses; when I put them on I am able to see and transact with the world. When I remove the spectacle, I do not transact, but remember, I continue to exist. In the same way, our body and mind are like the two glasses of this spectacle and when I use the body and mind, I have the waking state experience, or dream state experience; when the body and mind are relaxed and resolved, I do not have waking and dream state. Therefore I do not have any transaction; but even without transaction; I continue to exist; and therefore body and mind are more an instrument than myself. And this attitudinal change, the change of identification, is called Vigyanam.

Only when this shift takes place, only when I shift my "I" identification from the body to atma, then alone my sense of limitation will go.

People may ask why should I know the Atma? Why develop a new identification with Atma? If you are comfortable with the body identity, Vedanta says good luck. Reality is, with body identity, I have fear of mortality, disease etc. It becomes a constant companion. We are also afraid of the death of our near and dear ones. Samsara is fear of death or old age or of disease. If I am OK with these fears then it is OK to identify with the body.

If not, change. There is no medicine to cure all these (death, disease and old age). Even gerontologists are old and many are dead. There is no medicine to provide immortality. Otherwise, go to Vedanta and find out that you are a higher being, ever free, ever beautiful etc. You have to discover the Atma. With that life becomes relaxed. There is no more fear of death,

disease etc. They don't belong to "Me".

Who can get this knowledge? Only one who has mastered himself. He is unshaken by anything that happens in life. We can't predict our future. Some things are predictable but uncontrollable. Future is either unpredictable or uncontrollable. So any event can come as a shock. Sri Krishna says Gyanam is our Kavacham. The wise man is not affected by such incidents.

Marriage ceremony has a ritual that says, " May your mind be strong enough to face all types of situations". The Girl is leaving her house and going to an unknown house. Unless one is strong it can be traumatic. Wiseman is able to withstand such traumas and is called a Yogi (man of wisdom). He enjoys an equanimous mind towards: a) Mud (of no value); b) Stone, of some value; c) gold, of great value. He has samatvam towards all the three. Does he see them all the same way? He sees them the same way because he is free from Raga and Dvesha (attachment and aversion). Why does he not have Raga or Dvesha? When does one get attached? When one gets happiness, fullness or it improves your situation it causes Raga. And when does hatred come in? When object reduces my security and happiness. For a Gyani, his fulfillment is not from objects, money, status etc. He is full by nature. If he is full, nothing can increase or decrease his fullness. It is just like the ocean. If things come it is good, if things go, that too is OK. We are happy when our children are dependent on us. When they are independent, we are unhappy that they are not dependent on us. So make your self psychologically independent.

Take away:

Teaching us a practical technique to reach the divine within us, Swamiji tells us the following:

My normal tendency is to say, "I am the body, mind complex and I have consciousness that illumines my thought."

Vedanta wants us to say:

“ I am the Consciousness principle and the body mind complex is an incidental instrument used by me”.

This shift in perspective has to be practiced by all of us.

With Best Wishes

Ram Ramaswamy

Tatireya Upanishad, Class 15

Greetings All,

Chapter # 1, Anuvakaha # 9, Shloka # 1:

The practice of what is right and proper, as fixed by the scriptural texts, is to be done along with reading the texts oneself and propagating the truths of the same. “Truth”, meaning practicing in life what is to be understood to be right and proper, is to be pursued along with regular studies and preaching. Penance, study, and preaching; control of the senses, study and preaching; tranquility, study and preaching; the “maintenance of fire”, study and preaching; offering oblations in fire sacrifice, study and preaching of the Vedas; serving the guests, study and preaching; the performance of duties towards man, study and preaching; duties towards children, study and preaching of the Vedas; procreation, study and preaching; propagation of the race, study and preaching; all these are things to be practiced sincerely. Satyavaca, son

of Rathitara, holds that truth alone is to be strictly practiced. Taponitya, a son of Purusista declares that penance alone is to be practiced. Naka, son of Modgala, holds the view that the study and preaching of the Vedas alone is to be practiced; that verily, is penance; aye that is penance.

Continuing his teaching of the Upanishad, Swami Paramarthananda said, after talking about the five Upasanas, now in anuvakaha # 9 Karma yoga is being discussed. Karma Yoga is an integral part of spiritual sadhanas. One can drop Karma Yoga only at death or at time of Sanyasa. Until then, in all three ashramas, one has to perform Karma. In Brahmacharya and Vanaprastha there are fewer Karmas while Grihasthashrama is dominated by Karmas. A Grihastha can get away without performing any Upasanas but he cannot escape performing Karmas. Karmas, performed as a means of spiritual sadhana, are known as Karma Yoga. One of the important spiritual Karma's is Pancha Maha Yagna. Both Pancha maha yagna and Daivika Sampathi are Karma's that are required to be performed.

In Pancha Maha Yagna, in different contexts, different Yagnas are highlighted. Study and teaching of scriptures is highlighted. The word Pravachanam, in the shloka, has a second meaning. It also means performing Brahma Yagna as a ritual. Brahma Yagna as a ritual used to be performed in the past. It is still performed as a part of Avani Avittam (upakarma) samskara. In this ceremony thanks are given to scriptures and their authors. Vyasa is honored as Krishna Dvaipanya as are the various authors' wives. This part of the Samskara takes about seven minutes of the overall ritual. As per the requirements of Brahma Yagna one has to study scriptures every day. Five items are mentioned in Brahma Yagna. They are:

1. Svasakha: The branch to which one belongs is to be worshipped.
2. Gita: Entire Gita is to be studied.
3. Vishnu Sahasranamam: Has to be chanted.
4. Rudrum: has to be chanted.

5. Purushasuktam: Has to be chanted.

Smaller versions of these mantras are also accepted. Thus, for Svasakha one can chant the Gayathri. All these five mantras are to be regularly chanted. This is considered ritualistic pravachanam.

A part of Brahma Yagna includes sharing the knowledge of scriptures with another person, everyday.

The ninth Anuvakaha highlights Brahma yagna as very important.

Ritum: is understanding the purpose of life according to the Vedas. Primary purpose of life is moksha. Dharma, artha, kama etc., are just stepping stones towards moksha.

Satyam: Knowing is not enough. One also has to practice the teachings daily with sincerity. An ounce of practice is worth a pound of theory. Practice of aacharas and anushtanas is satyam.

Tapaha: means practicing austerity or discipline of willful self-denial to master my sense organs i.e., the five gyanendriyas, the five karmendriyas and the pancha pranas. How to know if I am in control of my sense organs? Once in a while say no to something you do every day. If by doing so your mind is disturbed, it means you are being enslaved by your senses. This willful self-denial is very important. Enforced discipline from outside is suppression. Self-denial is Tapas. All Vratams fall under Tapas. Upavasa and Maunam are two great examples of Tapas. Managing the tongue is very important. If tongue is mastered other Indriyas will also come under control. Many Upasanas are prescribed under Tapas and they include Krichram and Chandrayanam. Chadrayanam upavasa description includes: From Shukla paksha onwards take one handful of rice and increase it daily by one handful. Thus, on full moon day you are taking 15 handful of rice. On Krishna paksha day take 14 handful of rice reducing one handful everyday. On new moon day it is upavasam or no food day.

Damaha: Sensory discipline. We have discussed this topic in Tatva bodha. It is also called Indriya Nigraha. Suppression of senses is not recommended. If so, what directions should senses take? For example, what to see and what not to see? Scriptures say, anything that activates Asuri Sampathi should not be seen or performed. Anything that activates one's Daiviha Sampathi can be seen. Going down is easy and natural. Going up is difficult.

Kshama: Thought discipline. Watch your thought. They become actions. Thus: Thought>action>habit>character>destiny (destination).

God does not determine destiny. It is determined as seen from the flow shown above finally by thought. Your thoughts determine your destiny. Since nobody can see them, we take our thoughts for granted. It is like in a house one tends to keep the drawing room very neat and tidy while basement is left dirty. We do this as nobody comes to the basement. So, we should be more aware of our thoughts. So, thought discipline is important.

Suryanamaskara mantra has thought discipline in it. If one does not have this discipline one tends to blurt out without awareness. Every word should be uttered thoughtfully. Seeing even one termite means a great portion of your house has been already been infested. Be aware of your thoughts.

Agnyaha: means fires. It symbolizes fire ritual or Deva Yagna. Why are rituals called Agni? Before starting a ritual the householder has to kindle the fire ritualistically. This fire is called Garbhapathya Agni. The Grihasta is required to maintain this fire at all times including for its use in cremation.

Ahavani Agni and Dakshina Agni's are kindled out of Garbhapathya Agni and used for other rituals and later placed back at their place of origin. For a Grihasta, 26 rituals are

mentioned such as seven homa yagnas, seven havir yagnas, seven soma yagnas and pancha maha yagnas. Agnihotram is a fundamental Vedic ritual.

Atithya: means entertaining guests, housing them and feeding them. It is also called anna danam yagna. It is all part of manusha Yagna.

Manusham: means to fulfill societal obligations. One gets many benefits by being a part of society such as the gas, phone, bank etc. Relatives and friends come to your assistance during times of trouble. So, one has to contribute back to society. In Sanyasa ashrama all such social obligations end. Manusham is also a Manushya yagna.

Praja, Prajna, and Prajati: All three are part of Pitr Yagna. It is a duty to our forefathers. It is our duty to perpetuate including marrying and having children.

Praja: means beget children. Why is it a duty? Why are scriptures interested in children? Our scriptures consider even natural activities are to be converted to worship. Citing two examples: 1) Breathing is a natural and essential phenomenon. Vedas point out breathing can be pranayama sadhana. Gita, chapter 14, discusses this sadhana in detail. Pranayama is to be performed with a proper attitude, at a particular time, place and duration.

2) Feeding: Baby goes to mother for food. For feeding the sadhana is Prana-agnihotra sadhana. Hunger is Pranagni. Eating is an offering to God. The time, place, amount and attitude towards eating are important.

Begetting children also is a Yagna. Marriage is a ritual. The rituals' purpose is to increase dharma. Garbadhana samskara is an important ritual. Naming a child is also a ritual. Thus, many natural processes are converted to samskaras by the Vedas. Vivaha and Garbadhana rituals are related to marriage.

Prajati: means getting grand children. This, in turn, means your children have to be married. Let children know marriage is for spiritual growth, while material growth may be its byproduct. Even in marriage Dharma predominates. Spouse is chosen with this in mind. So, one has to make sure children have a proper attitude towards marriage.

If a child does not want to get married, it should have a higher purpose in life. Thus, one can be a Grihasta or a Sanyasi.

Bhuta Yagna has not been mentioned but should be performed.

It is the worship of plants and animals. Let all your actions be environmentally friendly. Respect ecological harmony. Even an earthworm is a very important creation of God.

So, follow Pancha maha Yagna.

Last section of anuvakaha # 9 emphasizes study and propagation of Vedas as important part of Brahma Yagna.

Take Away:

1. Karmas, performed as a means of spiritual sadhana, are known as Karma Yoga.
2. Pancha Maha Yagna should be performed by all of us every day.

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Bhagawat Geeta, Class 83: Chapter 6, Verses 5 – 7

Shloka # 5:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ 6.5 ॥

Elevate the self by the self; do not weaken the self. Self is indeed the friend of the self. Self-alone is self's foe.

Continuing his teaching of Gita Swami Paramarthananda said, in the beginning of chapter six, Sri Krishna is dealing with the general disciplines to be observed throughout his transactions so that he will enjoy a mind, which is conducive to meditation. These disciplines are called samanya sadhanani or bahiranga sadhanam.

The first Bahiranga sadhana is maintenance of Samatvam of mind even when we go through many experiences. I have no control over the experience itself, which is a product of the external world. I don't even know how my family will react at any point in time. Even after fifty years of marriage a wife is not sure of her husbands reaction to situations. I can only control my response to experiences of life. This control is a Karma Yoga mind. So, having a poised mind is a first discipline. Such a mind is free of violent emotions and it does not get out of control. This capacity to recover from emotional trauma is called Samatvam. If we have that, we are reasonably healthy, psychologically. Psychological health is Samatvam. It is brought about by karma yoga in which the Lord himself plays the primary help or role. So Lord is the backup. We talked of this samatvam up to the 4th shloka of this chapter.

In shloka # 5 Sri Krishna introduces another Bahiranga Sadhana called self-effort. Scriptures say human beings have free

will. Plants don't have free will. Animals also don't have choice; as such they also don't have punya and papam. Many people however are fatalistic and don't accept concept of free will. They consider everything as pre-determined. It is difficult to argue with them. To them we say everything is destiny or Prarabhdam. Now, there are two types of prarabhdams, one is punya and other is papam.

If a person has got punya prarabdham meaning if he has a good destiny, that good destiny will influence the mind in such a way that he will accept the concept of freewill. And when the destiny is negative meaning papa prarabdham, the very destiny will influence the mind in such a way that he will not accept freewill. Therefore, we say, those who have got punya destiny will accept freewill. Those who have papa destiny, they will not accept freewill and Sri Krishna is addressing those people who have got punya and accept the concept of freewill. Shastra's want us to accept freewill as well.

Once you accept free will do you also accept destiny or do you think it is free will alone that functions at all times? Shastra's say both free will and destiny play a role in our lives. Fate is the result of our own past actions while freewill is the course of action that we choose to take because of our thinking or because of our buddhi. Between these two, which is more powerful, is it Vidhiya (fate) or Madiya (free will)? We cannot answer this question as we do not know when fate comes in and when free will actuates, as their relative strengths vary. Fate is determined by a particular action of ours and the intensity of this action will vary.

Thus, prarabhdha can occur as prabala (strong), madhyama (middling) or as durbala (weak). So also it is with free will, the intensity of free will varies, as does the result.

Prabal Prarabhdha: Free will is helpless. It can only ask for inner strength to face such a powerful fate.

Madhyama prarabhda: Free will can manage the prarabhda. It can reduce the impact of fate.

Durbala Prarabhda: Prayaschitam (as free will) can wipe out the Prarabhda karma.

So, fate can be changed depending upon its intensity. Citing an example, it is like going to a doctor. The doctor will never say, "I can or I cannot." He will desire to examine you first then pronounce his diagnosis. In some cases he will say it is curable, in some cases he will say it can be controlled and in other cases he may say medicine may not be able to help you. Thus, our future is neither controlled by fate or free will. Rather it is controlled by a resultant of the intensities of fate and free will respectively.

Therefore, freewill has got a contributory role in determining our future; and since the freewill has got a contributory role, an asthika purushah, one who follows vedic teaching, he always has an attitude that I can take charge of my life. This is the reason why our goals are called purushartah. Purushartah means goals, which are sought after by human beings; and the goals, which are accomplished by human beings.

Moksha is such a purushartah and it is to be chosen and accomplished by me.

Sri Krishna says, "And Arjuna, I expect you to be the chooser of your future; and once you believe in free will and you have decided to choose your future, I am ready to help you".

God can help only those who are willing to put forth the necessary effort. A guru can help only those students who believe in themselves. Therefore, first, you should have faith and confidence in yourself.

Swami Vivekananda said that " I believe in a man who believes in himself". Such a man is an Astika.

So take charge. For whatever goal you have to accomplish, you

The Self is the friend of that self by which the self has been subdued. The Self alone operates as the foe of one unsubdued by the self.

In previous shloka we noted that this mind body complex is our best friend. If so, how can I be my own friend as well as enemy? How can opposite attributes remain in one person in life? Sri Krishna says any instrument can be a friend or an enemy. An instrument is a friend if I know how to operate it. Atomic energy and electricity are good examples of this. On the other hand, if I don't know how to use the instrument, it can be deadly. Thus, wrong use of atomic energy or electricity can kill. Thus, a managed body mind complex is a friend while an unmanaged one is an enemy. It is like a militant within one's own country. So real victory is self-victory. Therefore, Self- Management is most important.

A body-mind-complex that is under my control is my friend. The body-mind-complex that is beyond my control becomes my own enemy. I do not know what to do? Whatever the body wants I give; whatever sense organs want I give; whatever the emotions want

I give. I consider it my friend; but I do not realize that my own organs are enslaving me and a time comes when I cannot even proceed further nor withdraw. It is like an addiction. If I continue the addiction, the addiction destroys me. If I withdraw from the addiction the withdrawal systems create problems for me.

Who has created this condition? I alone have created this condition.

Shloka # 7:

सर्वशक्तिं प्राप्नुयान्मनुष्यः सर्वशक्तिं प्राप्नुयान्मनुष्यः
सर्वशक्तिं प्राप्नुयान्मनुष्यः सर्वशक्तिं प्राप्नुयान्मनुष्यः 6.7

The supreme Self is concentrated for one who has subdued the

self and is quiescent, in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain, and in honor and disgrace.

Let us assume there is such an integrated person, a jitaatma (one who has learned sense discipline). The more I win myself over, the calmer I become. Jitatma is a Prashanta purusha. He is gyana yogyaha. He is not liberated yet. He is, however, ready for Gyana yoga or Vedantic enquiry.

How do I know that I am master of myself? What is the sign? Sri Krishna says prashantah; the more I win a victory over myself the more my life is calm. This calmness (prashantaha) of mind is the acid test. Otherwise, my mind will be turbulent and I am not able to control this turbulence. Therefore, a jitatma is a prashantah purushah and Sri Krishna calls such a person yogarudhah. He is a sadhana chatushtaya sampannah person or a Gyana yogyaha person. He is not yet liberated though. He will have to take Gyana Yoga to obtain moksha.

Only a person who reaches this stage will find Vedanta appealing. The different types of intellects (budhi) are described below.

Karpura Budhi: It catches fire immediately.

Kari (coal) Budhi: It will catch fire slowly.

Plantain Budhi: It won't catch fire rather it will put out the fire.

Vedanta also classifies students as: Manda, Madhyama and Uttama. An uttama budhi student gets knowledge very easily. He will get Mukti as well.

And, therefore Arjuna, first develop self-belief in free will and develop the confidence that the future is in my hands. Then, with self-confidence, put forth self-effort. The first stage of self-effort is attunement of my own instruments (body mind complex). If you do this, rest will be taken care of.

Take away: Scriptures believe in free will and so should you.

With Best Wishes

Ram Ramaswamy

Omkara Upasana

In the 13th Class of Taitreya Upanishad, Swamiji discusses Omkara Upasana. This upasana is presented in the form of a chart. Please click on the link for a chart form of this Upasana.

omkara upasana

Taitreya Upanishad, Class 13

Greetings All,

Chapter # 1, Anuvakaha # 8, Shloka # 1:

The sacred sound Om is Brahman. All this is the syllable OM.

Chapter # 1, Anuvakaha # 8, Shloka # 2:

It is widely known that Om is uttered to indicate consent. The priest officiating at the sacrifice encourages his assistants with the words "O Sravya". With the chanting of Om they start

singing the Sama verses; and with "Om Som" they recite the shastras; Adhvaryu answers with the syllable "Om".

With Om the chief priest, Brahma expresses his assent. One permits the offering of oblation to the fire with "OM". May I obtain with Brahman; with this determination, the Brahmana says "Om" before he begins to recite the Veda; and he does obtain the Brahman.

Continuing his teaching of the Upanishad, Swami Paramarthananda said we have completed the first four upasanas of chapter # 1. They are Samshito Upasana, Vyahriti Upasana, Hiranyagrabha upasana and Pankta Upasana. Now in anuvaka # 8, the fifth and final upasana of this chapter known as Omkara upasana is introduced.

In this upasana the word OM is introduced as a symbol or Alambanam and upon it Ishwara is invoked. Omkara can represent Virat (Samashti Prapancha), Hiranyagarbha (Sukshma prapancha) and Ishwara (Karana Prapancha). Omkara can thus represent the macro or Samashti. " May you practice upasana of Brahman on Omkara" It is a Saguna Brahman. Nirguna Brahman cannot be an object of Upasana. If it is an object it cannot be nirguna. Thus, if an object is meditated upon such an object cannot be nirguna. In such an instance the meditator alone is the Nirguna Brahman.

Therefore, Brahma upasana connotes Saguna Brahman. It can represent the Virat (Samashti Guna), Hiranyagarbha (Sukshma guna) and Ishwara (Karana Guna).

When there are so many sacred words in Scriptures why choose Omkara? Omkara is a most sacred and unique mantra. We have seen before in Shikshavalli's anuvaka # 5 that Brahmaji extracted Omkara from Vedas. Therefore, Omkara chanting is equal to chanting all Vedic mantras. Thus, we get the Omkara mahima. Any word in scripture can refer to a particular object. Thus, when we say chair it means only "chair" and not

a table. So it is also with the name Rama or Krishna. Thus, words have limitations. They don't represent the totality of Brahman. To describe God, a word describing all objects in cosmos should be used. One word should represent all objects of creation. OM is such a word. Om encompasses all objects of creation Thus:

A: All Sthula objects

U: All Sukshma objects.

M: All Karana objects.

A is the beginning of sound. Last sound produced is M. U represents all intermediate alphabets. Thus, AUM represents all characters. They also represent all words of the language. Thus: OM represents alphabets. Alphabets represent words or padam. Padam represents objects. Therefore, OM represents all objects of the world. All objects put together represent the Lord. Hence Om is his best description. Lord is one and OM is also one. Therefore, Om is Pranavaha or the ideal name for God. Hence it is used in the upasana.

Omkara is very important in upasana. It is also very important in meditation. Omkara is also very important in Karma Kanda. Everywhere Om is important.

How is it important in rituals?

Omkara is a versatile mantra. Thus, Omkara is used as:

Anukriti or acceptance. Omkara conveys acceptance. Hasma-vai-api means well known. In olden times different priests were involved in rituals. There are special invitation mantras for specific devatas. The concerned priest had to be ready with oblations. Then the main priest asks his assistants to invoke the God.

O Sravya, he says to his assistants. Then, the assistant starts the Vedas with Omkara.

OM iti samani gayanti. Each priest of the ritual handles one mantra. Thus Rg, Yajus and Sama are chanted.

The Rg Veda priest is called Hota. His assistants are called Hotraganaha. Usually there is a main priest with three assistants or a total of four.

The Yajur Veda head priest is called Adhvaryuhu. His assistants are called Adhvarganaha. Here also there is a head priest with three assistants.

The Sama Veda priest is called Udgata and his assistants are called Udgataganaha. They also total four.

The Atharavana Veda has no direct application in Vedic rituals. The priest does not play a direct role. Therefore, he becomes the supervisor of the entire ritual. He is called Brahma. He too has three assistants known as Brahmaganaha.

Thus, a total of 16 priests are involved including the husband and wife (Yajamana and Yajamani). They all add up to 18 people for a yagna.

The Brahma (atharvanavedi) supervises to ensure all priests are performing their rituals properly. If mistakes happen there are built in prayaschittas in every ritual. The prayaschita can vary depending upon the mistake made in the ritual. Thus, prayaschita can include from donating one's property to chanting gayathri japa. Thus, a Brahma must be very knowledgeable and must be very alert. He has to be a Chaturvedi, one who knows all four Vedas. All four ganas use Omkara in rituals. Thus, OM iti Samani gayanti.

Rg veda mantras are called Shastrani and they can be chanted with or without swaras. They also start the mantras with Om.

Swamji said nowadays there are not many Chaturvedi's available for such Yagnas. Therefore, a seat is assigned for one in a yaga, although it is empty. It is assumed a Brahma is sitting

there.

Adhvaryuhu, the Yajur Veda priest, gives permission using OM. Agni Hotra is a basic Srauta karma performed twice every day. It is a fire ritual. Aupasana is also a fire ritual performed every day after one's marriage.

In these daily pujas OM is the beginning of all mantras. For spiritual cleansing of house too water is sanctified in front of God and then used with chanting of OM and sprinkling in many parts of a house.

A Brahmachari starting to learn Vedic chanting also begins his chant with Om. Through the chanting he grasps the Vedas.

A Sanyasi does not have gayathri mantra. They only have Omkara mantra to chant.

Since a Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra, all chant Omkara mantra, it is a very important mantra for all castes as well.

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Bhagawat Geeta, Class 82, Chapter 6, Verses 2 to 5

Shloka # 2:

॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ 6.2 ॥

That which they call renunciation, know to be yoga, O Pandava Prince! None indeed who has not discarded mental constructions can become a yogin.

Continuing his teaching of Gita Swami Paramarthananda said, I had pointed out in the last class that in the 6th chapter of the Gita, Sri Krishna deals with five important topics with regard to the dhyanam or meditation and those five topics are:

1. Bahiranga sadhanani or general disciplines to be observed throughout one's transactions, so that one can practice meditation successfully.
2. Antaranga sadhanani or specific disciplines to be observed just before the starting of the meditation;
3. Dhyana svarupam, the actual process of meditation;
4. Dhyana phalam, the benefit of meditation;
5. Dhyana pratibhanda pariharau; obstacles to meditation, and their remedy.

Bahiranga sadhanani: are preparations before taking up dhyanam. If we don't have discipline during a transaction mind can be disturbed. Such disturbances, also known as Samskara's, can scar the mind. This Samskara will bubble up later when the mind is quiet. They are a like piece of wood held down under water that pops up the moment you release it. Our subconscious mind has many such Samskaras that can come up at any time the conscious mind is resting. During meditation the conscious mind withdraws then the subconscious impressions come up. Violent disturbances during the day can come up as well.

How to stop such disturbances from occurring in the mind?

Training the mind for Samatvam can stop this. Citing an example, a philosopher and businessman was told, "you have lost everything." He said in agitation, "What"? Calming down,

later, he said, "So what?" This change from "what" to "so what" requires great training of the mind to maintain Samatvam. In Samatvam, the mind does not get too high or too low. Practice of Karma Yoga helps with Samatvam. Sri Krishna thus glorifies a Karma Yogi or a Grihasta. Chapter six begins with glorification of householder, and through this glorification God is glorifying Karma Yoga as well and thus Samatvam too.

We can say: Grihasthashrama=Karma Yoga=Samatvam.

How does Sri Krishna glorify? He says the householder is the real Sanyasi. He says regular Sanyasis are not the real Sanyasi's. Then, again, Sri Krishna points out that a conventional meditator is not a real meditator. Who is a conventional meditator? It is one who has withdrawn from all the activities; taken to a quiet place, taken the proper posture; closing his eyes and keeping the body straight; such a person is a conventional meditator. Krishna says that conventional meditator is not true a meditator. Then who is a true meditator? Sri Krishna says, it is the karma yogi, the grihasta, who is a true meditator.

Shankaracharya, a champion of Sanyasis is disturbed by this criticism of Sri Krishna. He says, Sri Krishna does not want to criticize a Sanyasi rather he wants to glorify the Grihasta. He is using "Nahi Ninda Nyayaha", a process where you criticize something to glorify something else. So, the focus is on glorification. Sri Krishna is glorifying Karma Yoga.

In the second shloka he justifies why he calls a Grihasta a real Sanyasi. The Grihasta has after all not renounced anything. He has all kinds of possessions (house, money, land..), family etc. How can such a person be a Sanyasi? What makes him a Sanyasi?

Sri Krishna clarifies that Sanyasa means renunciation. The

college; his argument is after all finally I have to come out, so why even enter?

Sri Krishna says, use Karma yoga then transcend and get liberation.

So, initially follow Karma yoga. In the shloka Yogam means Dhyana Yogam. No scripture prescribes meditation in the beginning. Sri Krishna recommends meditation only after five chapters. Patanjali recommends meditation only after sixth stage of Yoga. There are eight stages of his Yoga.

Without studying scriptures the only meditation recommended is Nama japam.

Yama and Niyama of Patanjali, the Do's and Don't of Yoga, are the same as Karma Yoga. If one has to purify the mind he should perform Karma Yoga. Therefore, Vedas begin with Karma kandam. How long do you perform Karma Yoga? Once you have the necessary mental preparation then you grow out of it. It is like the life of a fetus in a womb, after nine months, nature will throw the baby out. So withdrawing from Karma Yoga can be done in two ways:

1. Taking to Sanyasashrama or Sanyasavidhi, a formal process. Just as the sacred thread ceremony is used for initiation, this process is used for withdrawal from life. Sanyasavidhi's goal is to get out of rituals and start the process of self-enquiry.
2. There is another form of withdrawal in which a person reduces the amount of activity remaining in grihastha ashrama itself. So, if he was doing rituals for many hours he now reduces the duration. Even mundane activities, he reduces, handing them over to someone else. This requires detachment. Thus, this is also a kind of a vanaprastha ash

Therefore, either by becoming a sanyasi or by taking to

vanaprastha one withdraws. Both of them involve reduction of extrovert activities. Now, I spend my time in sravanam, mananam and nidhidhyasanam.

Shloka # 4:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ 6.4 ॥,

When the sage is no longer attached to sense objects and works; he discards all mental constructions; then he is said to have scaled the peak of Yoga.

In previous shloka we learn that one should follow karma yoga also known as Pravriti marga and then follow up with Gyana Yoga or Nivriti marga. How do I know when to switch to Gyana Yoga? Swamiji said, for going to a college we have pass examinations that tell us our next step. Similarly nature also tells us the next step when it expels a baby from the womb after nine months. Unfortunately, the rate of inner spiritual maturity is not uniform for all. The rate of acquiring inner maturity is also not uniform for all. Some people become mature within short while other people even after 95 years of life experiences don't mature. Citing an example, a child asked its grandfather, are you ready to marry? He answered, who will give me a girl?

Sri Krishna says **a mature mind is free from obsession of sense pleasures**. Here the emphasis is on obsession. Artha and Kama are allowed but obsession with them is wrong. Until mind is preoccupied with money and entertainment, you are not ready for Vedanta. The key is obsession. **If you don't get what you want, you should not be upset**. Preference is acceptable but not need. Craving after sense pleasures should not overwhelm me. Hating sense objects is also not good. This too can be an obsession.

Dayananda Swamiji said, when you are a child and play with marbles, one tends to be possessive of the marbles. Now, when

reduce the intensity of fate. Thus:

Powerful fate: Cannot be stopped by free will

Medium fate: Can be controlled by free will.

Feeble fate: Can be stopped by free will.

Take Away:

1. Sri Krishna says we have our own free will. Fate, in reality, is only one of the factors. The other factor is our own free will or self-effort.
2. A mature mind is free from obsession of sense pleasures. Here the emphasis is on obsession. If you don't get what you want, you should not be
3. One who drops worry of the future is a Sankalpa Sanyasi. Worry is not deliberate. It is a reaction or obsession that happens at any time.

With Best Wishes

Ram Ramaswamy

Baghawat Geeta, Class 81, Chapter 6, Verses 1 & 2

Greetings All,

Continuing his teaching of Gita and the introduction to

chapter 6, Swami Paramarthananda said, in last class we talked about the role of meditation for a Vedantic seeker. It is purely from point of seeking liberation. There are meditations meant for extraordinary powers as well. A Vedantic seeker is not interested in such powers. Extraordinary powers place one in bondage or in samsara. Such powers can lead to fights and jealousy. So, here we are only interested in Self-Knowledge and liberation. This does not require extraordinary powers. Thus, there are Gyani's without such extraordinary powers, while there are Agyani's with such powers. Rakshasas are a good example of Agyani's with extraordinary powers. Our interest is only in purity of mind and assimilation of knowledge.

Thus, meditation has two roles. The roles are:

- Meditation before study of scriptures is called Upasana
- Meditation after study of scriptures is called Nidhidhyasanam.

The study process itself is called shravana mananam or gyana yoga. Study of scriptures itself is called sravanam. And therefore the entire spiritual journey can be presented in three stages: Upasana, Gyana yoga and Nidhidhyasanam.

Upasana: This upasana is saguna ishvara upasana. It is performed for Gyana yogyata prapthihi or for purification of mind.

Gyana Yoga: is consistent and systematic study of the scriptures for a length of time, under the guidance of a competent acharya and this study alone gives self-knowledge. If one does not get knowledge through scriptures there is no other way to obtain this knowledge. Scriptural study is the only means of knowledge.

Nidhidhyasanam meditation is meant for assimilation of knowledge. I would like to add a few more ideas with regard to the assimilation, because doubts do come up in this area.

After gaining knowledge one contemplates on the knowledge received that "That I am not the Body. I am not the mind. I am not the senses. However, I am the awareness which is aware of all of them ". This contemplation is not meant for converting knowledge into Brahman. Rather this meditation after scriptural study is for experiencing the Gyana phalam.

Scriptures point out that we experience Brahman all the time as consciousness. No special effort is required to experience the light in the hall. So also it is with consciousness. Everything else is evident to us because of consciousness. Every word I hear now is due to consciousness. Consciousness is self evident and ever evident. It is Brahman. So, Brahman anubhavam is not an issue. Therefore meditation after scriptural studies is only for Gyana Phalam. The benefit that knowledge brings is shanti, tripthi and abhayam. This experience of peace, fullness, contentment, fearlessness and security is called assimilation or jivan mukti.

Sri Krishna will tell us how to meditate in this chapter. However an overview is as follows:

- Upasana Meditation is to purify the mind.
- Study of scriptures is to attain knowledge
- Meditate to experience benefit of knowledge, which is peace and fullness.

The first meditation is called upasanam. The second meditation is called nidhidhyasanam. The sixth chapter of the Gita is focusing on nidhidhyasanam, which I translate as Vedantic meditation. The sixth chapter is nidhidhyasana yoga or Vedantic meditation. This chapter can be divided into five main topics. They are:

1. General preparation for meditation or called Bahiranga sadhana. These are disciplines that have to be observed throughout the transaction. These are meant for day-to-day transactions or Samanya sadhanani.

2. Specific disciplines: Vishesha Sadhanani are disciplines to be observed just before meditation. They are also known as antaranga or vishesha sadhanani.
3. Dhyana swaroopam: What is meditation? The process of meditation? Is it concentrating on something or is it remaining thoughtless? Is it destruction of the mind or is it transcending the mind? All these points are clarified here.
4. Benefit of Vedantic meditation: Is it reading other peoples mind or predicting the future? All these points are clarified.
5. Obstacles to meditation: What are the obstacles and how to remedy them are discussed. Dhyana pratibhanda parihara, here pratibhanda means obstacles and parihara means remedy, are discussed. One such obstacle is sleeping during meditation. Sri Krishna describes such obstacles and how to overcome them.

A sixth topic is also discussed which Swamiji preferred to bring up later.

General preparation for meditation:

Why have this preparation? We have only one mind for our day-to-day transactions and meditation. In our daily transactions we go through all kinds of experiences. Before meditation one must free one self from all these experiences and meditate with a fresh mind. The daily transactions leave strong impressions on us that affect meditation. Violent emotional disturbances adversely impact meditation. Both the winner and loser of Wimbledon cannot get sleep. One should learn the art of keeping a balanced mind. This does not mean an emotionless mind. An emotionless mind is like a wall. Rather it is a mind without violent upheavals. So, one has to keep a balanced mind or Samatvam and not get carried away by joys and sorrows. I should have mental mastery. It is one of the pre-conditions of meditation.

- Enjoy life, eat well etc., that are artha kama pradhana.
- Perform spiritual activities like pancha maha yagna that contribute to inner growth and Chitta shuddhi. Through these activities more people are benefitted by selfless activities. These are nishkama karmas or selfless activities. The selfless actions are performed only for spiritual growth. Spiritual growth is often subtle and not visible while material growth is often visible. Spiritual growth will change how you look at yourself.

Sri Krishna says such a karma yogi is as good as a sanyasi. Why? He is considered a sanyasi because he has renounced concerns for material growth. What can come out of such renunciation? Such renunciation may result in failure in the material world, nevertheless, inner growth will occur. Sri Krishna says for a karma yogi there is never a failure because he is growing inwardly, whatever be the external outcome of his actions. As such he has no anxiety. He accepts whatever is going to come as Ishvara prasadam or God's will. Each experience is considered a lesson, good or bad. Sri Krishna says such a person can also be considered a meditator.

After all meditation is mind dwelling on a field. A karma Yogi is not agitated about past or worried about future. He is fully available to the present.

He is not worried about result. He has a focused mind. He is practicing open-eyed meditation. He offers all his actions to god (see ch.3, shloka # 30 and ch.5 shloka #10). Every action is an offering to god. This is nothing but meditation. He is a karma yogi.

A sanyasi in ocher robe, while in meditation, is thinking about his foreign trip, number of disciples etc., he is only an external sanyasi. He is not a karma yogi. However, a householder who is active is a karma yogi, if his activity is focused.

Shloka # 2:

ॐ ऋषिर्गणेशाय नमः ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ ऋषिर्गणेशाय नमः ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ 6.2 ॥

That which they call renunciation, know to be yoga, O Pandava Prince! None indeed who has not discarded mental constructions can become a yogin.

In previous shloka we learnt that a Karma yogi is the real sanyasi and not the person in ochre robe. Here Sri Krishna justifies it.

What is renunciation? Sri Krishna wants to say that external renunciation can never be considered a real renunciation; because self-knowledge is not connected with the external body rather self-knowledge is connected with the mind or intellect. So by making a few external changes if the mind continues to be the same what is the use? External renunciation is not real renunciation. Many take sanyasa and regret the decision, as it is a one-way traffic, one cannot go back to grihasthashrama again. For real renunciation, one needs to be free from concerns about future. What will happen to me? What will my wife do? If wife dies, what will I do? Most of our time is spent in planning for the future. Until one gives up thought of the future, you cannot have meditation. This is true for Sanyasi as well as Grihasta. Renunciation of the worry regarding future is true renunciation. Such a person is a karma yogi and a sankalpa sanyasi (one who has given up worry about future).

Now worrying about future is different from planning for future. Planning is a deliberate action. Worrying, however, is impulsive and can happen at any time. While planning is acceptable worrying is an obstacle. Worrying makes one inefficient. **One who does not worry is a Sanyasi.**

Take Away:

1. Meditation is mind dwelling on a field. Thus, anybody, performing any activity, totally immersed in it, is in meditation and as such a karma yogi.
2. A Karma Yogi is not agitated about past or worried about future. He is fully available to the present. One who does not worry is a Sanyasi.

With Best Wishes

Ram Ramaswamy

Bhagawat Geeta, Class 80, Chapter 6

Greetings All,

Continuing his teaching of Gita and having completed chapter 5, Swami Paramarthananda started chapter 6 today. This chapter is titled Dhyana yoga or Gyana Samyama yoga. This chapter will deal with dhyanam, a very important spiritual sadhana.

Before going into the text proper let us get some basic ideas regarding meditation as given in the Upanishads. We should remember that the Bhagavat Gita is based upon the Upanishads alone; it is not an independent text. Therefore, we should clearly understand the role of meditation in spiritual sadhana. Before knowing the role or purpose of meditation we need to understand what meditation is not meant for. There are many ideas and misconceptions regarding the role of meditation. Therefore, let us first see what it is not meant

for.

There are three things meditation is not meant for. They are:

1. It is not a means for liberation. According to Upanishads, liberation is not a goal rather Liberation is our own intrinsic nature. It is a siddha vasthu. It is however, not a sadhyam. It is just a matter of us owning up to it. Knowledge alone can liberate. Knowledge reveals that liberation is already an accomplished truth. Nowhere is it said that meditation is a means of liberation.
2. Meditation is not prescribed for knowledge as well. It is not a means of knowledge. In scriptures six means of knowledge have been discussed and they are known as Shat pramanas. They are: Pratyaksha, anumana, upamana, arthapatti, aupalabdhi, and shastram. Meditation is not mentioned as a pramanam. It is not a means for material or spiritual knowledge.

For a spiritual seeker meditation is also not prescribed for mystic or extraordinary experiences. All experiences ordinary, extraordinary and mystic all deal with the finite realms of time with a beginning and an end. They deal with the objective universe. Ordinary experiences deal with ordinary objective experience while mystic experiences deal with mystic-objective experiences. However, the Experiencer, the subject of the experience can never be an object of any experience. Swamiji added that he is not questioning the possibility of mystic or extraordinary experiences. They, however, cannot deal with the Subject, the experiencer. Thus, they all fall under objective knowledge and are not under Self- Knowledge. Thus, they are incapable of giving liberation. Therefore, the seeker should not run after mystical experiences. In those experiences he will only continue to be in the objective world or in anatma or remain a Samsari.

For a spiritual seeker meditation is not prescribed for mystic

experiences. Gaudapada, Shankaracharya's guru's guru, says one should reject them even if they come to you. Gaudapadacharya says, ask the question: is this an object or is this a subject? And the very fact that the experience arrived, you had the experience and the experience departed, indicates that it belongs to the objective field. The Experiencer does not arrive or depart. Self is the subject behind all experiences. So, seeker should be interested in the Self.

If meditation is not meant for above three then what is it meant for? Meditation has two roles.

The preparation of mind for spiritual knowledge or Gyanayogyata praptihi. It is like preparation of land for sowing the seed. This is preparatory meditation. There are other preparatory exercises for the mind as well. Preparatory meditation is called upasana dhyanam for knowledge. It can be compared to washing the plate, washing one's hands etc., in preparation for eating.

Following that we still have to gain spiritual knowledge through pramanam. My eyes can see everything but they can't see themselves. The Seer can't be seen. For this one needs a mirror. Thus, when the knower has to be known, the scriptures prescribe mirrors of Upadesha pramanam, Shabda pramanam and Shastra pramanam. However, they need to be available and need to be used appropriately. How to use the mirror? To learn to use the mirror properly, one has to go through sravanam and mananam also known as Vedanta vichara.

Sravanam: It is the systematic and consistent study of vedantic scriptures for a length of time under a competent acharya. This will produce Self-knowledge. Now, through sravanam, as I obtain this knowledge, doubts will arise. Vedanta's teachings, when not fully understood, are very difficult to believe for a layperson. Vedanta says: You are the Seeker you are seeking. It says, You alone are the truth. Thus, per Vedanta, the Seer is the truth and not the Seen.

These unbelievable declarations of Vedanta raise doubts in our mind.

So when many questions come up, the instruction is not to ask the question immediately. One should listen to the teaching completely, receive all the important features of the teaching and until then keep your doubts aside or in modern parlance place them in a parking lot.

Listening is the most difficult task in the world, says Swamiji. Furthermore, Knowledge received is weakened by ongoing doubts. Why should I believe this knowledge, is a question that can come up? It is called Samshayasahita Gyanam or knowledge with doubts. Doubtful knowledge is not knowledge, it is still ignorance. Citing an example, imagine a live electric wire. Just as you are about to touch it, someone says I am 99% sure it is not live. Will you still touch it? Probably not, as the 1% that you do not know can be fatal. Hence, it cannot be considered as knowledge.

Mananam: This second stage is meant to remove doubts or samshaya nivriti. During mananam, I try to answer my own questions. I ask other co-students to clarify my doubts. Thus, discussions may remove some doubts. Lastly, the Guru is always available to answer any questions. Vedantic books may also remove some of our doubts. Thus, mananam converts the knowledge into conviction or makes it Dridha Gyanam. Now, knowledge is the job of intellect. Upanishads say Intellect alone can get knowledge. The word Chetaha means intellect. The knowledge " I am the sub-stratum of this creation" must come into me.

In this context Swami Chinmayananda told us a story. A man felt he was a worm. He had a phobia. As a treatment, he was shown a mirror and a worm. When he was a worm, he used to be scared about birds. So he kept away from birds. After treatment, he came out, saw a bird and ran. When asked why he was running away, he asked, does the bird know I am a human

being now? My conviction should not be dependent on what others think of me. "I am that Brahman from which the whole world arises; and in whom the whole world rests and to whom the whole world resolves; that Brahman I am." This is called Self-knowledge. And how do you obtain it? You obtain Self-knowledge through shravanam and mananam. What do you obtain from this process? One gets dridha gyanam or nis-samshaya gyanam.

Starting with upsana meditation, then through sravanam and mananam we obtain clear knowledge. This knowledge alone can give liberation. It is a total transformation of life. Liberation is freedom from ragah, dveshah; kamah, krodhah; lobhah, mohah; and madah, matsaryah. It is also freedom from all internal problems, irrespective of external situations.

The mind is freed from problems and this transformation can be called jivan mukthih or it can be called saintliness. The person attains sainthood.

How to define saintliness? He is one who is incapable of getting hurt by external situations. He is also incapable of hurting other people. Simply stated, he does not hurt others and he is not hurt by external situations. This is jivan mukti.

This knowledge has to produce jivan mukti. In the normal course, this conviction should give me liberation but often in spite of the conviction my mind does not enjoy the benefit of knowledge. I seem to continue to be as bitter as before; as jealous as before; as frustrated as before; as afraid as before and as samsari as before. Why is this so? Why has the transformation not taken place in me? What is the obstacle?

Citing an example, there is water in a tank. The tap is open but water does not flow. Why? The reason is there is an obstruction in the tap. So, one has to remove the obstacle. This happens with knowledge as well. We need to remove

obstacle (s) to knowledge. So, pay attention to psychological personality, examine your mind. Mind has habitual notions, strongly ingrained called Viparit Bhavana. They are in our deep subconscious mind. Different people have different problems. Citing an example, in a family there are two children. One gets good grades while other does not. The child with good grades is always praised. Even if nothing was said to the other child, he feels neglected and his feelings will likely reappear in future as well. This will cause anger and frustration. Therefore, Viparit Bhavana has to be removed. Removal of Viparit Bhavana is called Nidhidhyasanam. Here the transformation occurs.

The first type of meditation was called upasana dhyanam; which comes before shraavanam and mananam; then we have to get into the second type of exercise called nidhidhyasanam in which alone, the transformation of the personality has to take place; and nidhidhyasanam consists of two exercises. They are:

Alert Living:

It requires an alert living. One should lead a Vedanta friendly life. All my transactions are Vedanta friendly as well. Vedanta friendly living means I live the Vedantic teachings. Whenever I don't have peace of mind that is Vedanta unfriendly. Vedanta tells peace is not something far away for you to go and acquire. Peace is your own nature. In fact, if peace is not here, it is never in any place else. Therefore, I change the way I live to ensure no thought or transaction is against vedantic teaching. This is called alert living.

Meditation:

Second part of nidhidhyasanam is meditation in which I exclusively spend some time for revising my opinion about myself. Until I came to Vedanta, my opinion about myself was very poor. I felt: I am mortal; I am useless; etc. Even my family reminded me constantly of this. Society too made me feel small.

This state of low self-esteem is samsara

Now, I revise my opinion about myself. " I" am the consciousness, blessing the mortal body; and "I" the consciousness, am immortal. Similarly, when I feel I need the world to be happy and complete; I meditate on the fact that I do not need the world; rather it is the world that depends on me.

Thus, for every unhealthy self-opinion, I neutralize it with the opposite. This is called atma dhyanam or self-meditation. It should go deep into my sub-conscious that even in dream; I should see myself as a wonderful free beautiful and healthy being. This is meditation No.2.

Take Away:

1. "I am that Brahman from which the whole world arises; and in whom the whole world rests and to whom the whole world resolves; that Brahman I am." This is called self-knowledge.
 2. How to define saintliness? He is one who is incapable of getting hurt by external situations. He is also incapable of hurting other people. Simply stated, he does not hurt others and he is not hurt by external situations.
 3. Nidhidhyasanam has two parts they are:
 - I change the way I live to ensure no thought or transaction is against Vedantic teaching. This is called alert living.
 - For every unhealthy self-opinion, I neutralize it with the opposite. This is called atma dhyanam or self-meditation.
- With Best Wishes
Ram Ramaswamy