

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 prapti. 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 nivrithi. 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 shravanam 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