

Bhagawat Gita, Class 88:

Chapter 6, Verses 18 & 19

Greetings All,

Continuing his teaching of the Gita, Swami Paramarthananda said, in the first 17 shlokas Sri Krishna dealt with Bahiranga and Antharanga sadhanani. Bahiranga sadhanani are general disciplines to be followed throughout life while Antharanga sadhanani are specific disciplines to be followed just before performing meditation. Both sadhanas contribute to meditation.

Now in the following verses, Sri Krishna talks about dhyana svarupam and phalam. Dhyana svarupam means actual process of meditation and dhyana phalam, is the culmination of the meditation process. Here, Sri Krishna is following Ashtanga Yoga of Patanjali. Patanjali is a great rishi, who has presented a beautiful system for the practice of meditation and for the integration of the personality, which is called yoga shastram. Yoga shastra has two parts. They are: 1) Practice of meditation and 2) Philosophy of meditation.

The philosophy part of meditation is not accepted by Vedic teachings. They consider it against Vedic teachings. Even though the philosophy is rejected, the practical aspects of meditation are accepted. The practice of meditation is heavily borrowed in puranas and Vyasa also brings it in Gita's chapter # 6.

Since it is heavily borrowed and useful, I will briefly talk about the yoga system of meditation and this system is popularly known as ashtanga yoga or meditation in eight steps. Anga means limb or step or stages; and this is a wonderful system for integrating the whole personality, because it takes care of our physical personality, annamaya kosha, it takes care of our pranamaya kosha, the energy personality and it

takes care of the mental, the manomaya kosha, and it also takes care of vijnanamaya kosha. It is a wonderful integrating system.

The Ashtanga Yoga talks about Yama and Niyama. They address our way of life or the Bahiranga Sadhanani. Our lifestyle's determines our mental makeup; if you are a highly reacting type of person, our mind is generally restless and therefore when we sit for mediation, we cannot calm down. And, therefore, Pathanjali also accepts that we have to tone and discipline our general lifestyles using a process called yama and niyama; yama emphasizes the things to be avoided in our day-to-day life to enjoy a calm mind. It determines our mental make up.

Yama: They are things one should avoid in life. They are the Do not's of life.

Niyama: These are things that are to be followed in life or the Do's.

Swamiji says, he calls them the ten commandments of Hinduism, the five do's and five don'ts.

The Yamas, Don'ts, are:

1. Give up violence. This is the practice of nonviolence both at the mental and physical level. When we are violent the environment gets disturbed. **The world is only an image. When you smile, the world smiles. The world is a mirror. If I do violence, I will get it back at some time in future.**
2. **Satyam:** Give up speaking of untruth, both in thought and speech.
3. **Asteyam:** Non-stealing: Do not possess anything that is not yours. An unfair deal is a stolen one, whether you recognize it or not. Nonpayment is stealing. Any benefit occurring via unfair means is stealing.
4. **Brahmacharya:** Give up inappropriate attitude towards

opposite sex. Both male and female should give up inappropriate relationships.

5. **Aparigraha:** Non-possessiveness. Possessing too much is not right. Even legitimately earned wealth should not be owned beyond a certain measure. Practice non-possession.

Niyamas or Do's:

6. **Saucha:** It is purity within and without. Physical cleanliness and inner mental purity.
7. **Santosha:** is contentment with whatever I have, earn etc. Don't compare with others.
8. **Svadyaya:** Study of scriptures.
9. **Tapaha:** Austerity. Simple living. Non-luxurious life. Ascetic living.
10. **Ishwara Pranidhanam:** Surrender to God. Surrender to the God means surrendering to the laws of karma. God means the laws of karma. These laws keep the Universe in harmony; it allows functioning of the universe according to the universal physical and moral law and order, which is God's.

Whatever we experience in life is what we legitimately deserve. Every experience that I go through, right from the happiest moment, up to the most torturing situation happens according to the moral order of the God and surrendering to the God is accepting the law of karma.

What do you mean by acceptance? I do not resist any experience. I do not criticize any experience; I do not criticize God for my experience; I accept whatever I receive as the will of God. We can try to improve the future; because future has not yet come; but whatever has already come is God's will; that acceptance of Ishwara's will is Ishwara Pranidhanam.

The last three Niyamas (Tapas, Svadyaya and Ishwara pranidhanam) are also known as Kriya Yoga or Karma Yoga.

Following the Ten Commandments make me a moral, ethical, decent and cultured person. They are all Bahiranga Sadhanani.

Coming back to ashtanga yoga shastra, the next steps prescribed by Patanjali are:

5. Asana: Sitting in a posture for a long time. One must be able to sit for at least 20 minutes at a stretch. Asanas deal with annamaya kosha.
6. Pranayama: It deals with regulation of breath. It is like a bird captured in a cage, the breath captures the mind inside and holds it.
7. Prathyahara: Withdrawal of sense organs from external world. Prathyahara of Yoga shastra is same as Damaha of Vedanta. Sri Krishna also spoke about this in the last few shlokas.

Asana, Pranayama and Parthyahara are all antharanga sadhanani. They are disciplines to be followed just before meditation.

What is the nature of meditation? It consists of three stages; dharana, dhyana and samadhi, put together are called the dhyana svarupam or also known as atma samyamaha, a name given by Patanjali. Sri Krishna is talking about these three stages.

Dharana: means turning mind away from world and fixing mind on object of meditation. It is like the focusing of the camera before taking a picture. Object of meditation varies depending upon the level of the student. In Yoga shastra they also talk of various chakras as well. All Chakras are related to God. **Exercise in concentration is not meditation. Only focusing upon god is meditation.** Even removal of thought is not recommended. There has to be mental activity for it to be meditation.

Dhyanam: Retaining the mind on the focused object is dhyanam. Thus, dharana is focus while dhyanam is retaining the focus. When I try retaining, the mind tends to slip away and you need to bring it back. This tug of war is known as dhyanam.

Samadhi: is natural absorption in object of meditation. It is end of the tug of war. It is a state of constant flow of similar thoughts. Every thought should be associated with God. It is acceptable to only see the eyes or the nose or the mouth of God. It is still God. All thoughts should be converted to God.

Sajatiya pratyaya pravahah means thinking of similar thoughts, to the exclusion of dissimilar thoughts. Dissimilar thoughts are thoughts when we see god as well as other things. The state of Samadhi is like a continuous flow of ghee in unbroken stream.

The central aim of all three, Dharana, Dhyanam and Samadhi is to dwell the mind on God.

Suppose one has to go beyond Saguna Ishwara, for such a person, his meditation should be on “Aham Brahma Asmi” or it should be related to Atma Swaroopa meditation. This is called Vedantic meditation.

In the first meditation on Saguna Ishwara, God is outside as an object while in second meditation, on Nirguna Ishwara, God is non-different from me. Even though the object of meditation differs, the method is same.

If one follows all eight steps, where does it culminate?

It culminates in Samadhi. This is the eighth step. I still see me meditating on God. I see myself as a meditator and I see God as the object of meditation. This means there is effort involved. This also means there is a division between subject and object. This is Savikalpa Samadhi, the eighth step.

From Savikalpa now one moves to Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

Just as you get absorbed in watching a movie, you forget that you are in a theater at that time. “I” as an entity am forgotten. I have become one with the movie. How do I know it?

My reactions to the movie tell us that the subject-object division has been temporarily resolved. **This absorption where I forget the surroundings, or self-forgetfulness, is called Nirvikalpa Samadhi. Thought is there, meditator is there, but I am absorbed; this is Nirvikalpa Samadhi.** This is the phalam of the eight steps or destination.

It should be noted again that Savikalpa Samadhi is the eighth step while Nirvikalpa Samadhi is the destination or culmination of the eight steps. Nirvikapla is not identified as a ninth step as it is the final destination.

Here Sri Krishna is not talking about meditation on personal God; Krishna is talking about atma dhyanam or meditation on my own nature, which means I entertain only those thoughts, which reveal my nature. These are evident in the shloka “Chiddananda Roopam Shivoham, Shivoham.”

Sri Krishna cites example of a steady flame which, when protected, is not disturbed by the wind. Similarly in dhyanam, my mind continuously thinks I am asangaha; I am free from bondage; I am free from problems; all these things; this is the essence, which comes from shloka #18 onwards up to shloka #19; Shlokas 18 and 19 deal with dharana, dhyana, samadhi.

Take away:

1. Ahimsa: The world is only an image. When you smile, the world smiles. The world is a mirror. If I do violence, I will get it back at some time in future.
2. Exercise in concentration is not meditation. Only focusing upon god is meditation.
3. Try practicing the ten commandments of Hinduism in daily life.

With Best Wishes

Ram Ramaswamy

