

Baghawat Geeta, Class 89, Chapter 6, Verses 18 and 19

Greetings All,

Continuing his teaching of the Gita, Swami Paramarthananda said, after discussing the general and specific preparations to be taken care of before meditation, now, Sri Krishna is talking about the actual process of meditation itself. The process of meditation includes dharana, dhyanam and samadhi. Dharana is focusing mind on object of meditation. This focusing happens only as a relevant thought modification. Thus, focusing on a tree means that tree is the object. In Sanskrit, we call it vriksha akara vritti; vriksha means tree; akara means the form of an object & vritti means a thought modification. So when I entertain vriksha akara vritti, my mind is focused on vrikshah; Ghatakara vritti is focusing on ghatah. Ishvara akara vritti is focusing on Ishvara and atmakara vritti is focusing on Atma

And after that, try to retain the flow of the same thought. Thus, vriksha akara vritti can stand for a moment alone, because every thought has got only a momentary life. No thought can exist continuously; it has only a momentary existence. Therefore, in Dhyanam, what I try, after entertaining vriksha akara vritti, is to have the next vritti also as vriksha akara vritti and continuing with the same thought. This repetition of same thought is technically called sajatiya prathyaya pravahah or the flow of similar thought with each thought dealing with the same object. This is called dhyanam. As a result of this attempt, which involves effort, which involves initiative, which involves deliberation, if a person follows naturally, after sometime, the mind gets into the groove of a similar thinking, by sheer habit, which you can also experience if you have attended akhanda nama bhajana.

In akhanda nama bhajan same name is repeated without a break. In this process the mind gets into a groove and thought gets deeply registered in subconscious mind. So, even after akhanda nama bhajan, that thought, such as Hare Rama or Om Namashivaya, keeps playing in our mind.

It is like an advertisement that keeps playing in our mind. The mind has a capacity to form Vasanas or impressions.

Samskara means vasanas and by the strength of that vasana that particular thought continues. It is like for pedaling the cycle for sometime, and thereafter you do not cycle, but because of the momentum of the initial effort, the cycle continues to run for sometime. The same thing happens to the thought cycle also; once that vritti continues, my willpower is not required; and any vritti which takes place without our effort is called sukshma vritti; any vritti that occurs in our mind, without deliberate effort is called sukshma vritti, the om namasivayah mantra which goes on in your head

throughout the day, is a sukshma vritti. Sukshma vritti means subtle thoughts. When the subtle thought is taking place in your mind you are not even aware of

it since your mind's focus is not on it. This is called absorption in a particular thought and in this state of absorption the subject object division is not felt.

It is exactly as in deep sleep state. In sleep state, the subject-object division is not felt; but still there is a thought modification taking place in sleep. It is not a deliberately entertained thought; but it happens in the sleep. How do you know that such a thought took place in sleep? Because, after waking up, we say I slept well.

To have that experience, we should have gone through a thought modification and that thought modification is called sukshma vritti. It is this sukshma vritti, subtle thought, which registers the experience in the dormant mind which we activate

in waking state.

(Note: See explanation of Vrithi given below as a postscript.)

After some time by sheer momentum the thought continues and that thought is called

sukshma vrrtti. In Sukshma Vrrti the subject-object division is not manifest. The subject-object division exists but it is not manifest at that time. This state of the sukshma vrrti continuation, this state of the subtle thought continuation, is called absorption or Samadhi. Since the division is not manifest in that state it is called nirvikalpaka samadhi. Nirvikalpa samadhi is a state of division-less-ness. What division are we talking about? It is about the subject-object-instrument division. When we say that it is a state of division-less-ness one, we do not mean the divisions are absent; rather it means divisions are in un-manifest form.

An Acharya has given the example of water in which salt is dissolved. I, myself, have added the salt to the water. However, since it has become one with the water, **visibly** the salt is not there, although you know salt is there. In the same way, in absorption, thoughts are there but the thoughts are like the dissolved salt. They are there and they are capable of doing their functions, but they are not dominantly experienced. Such a state is called Nirvikalpaka samadhi. And Sri Krishna wants to talk about dharana, dhyana and samadhi in the verses Shloka's 18 and 19 respectively.

Shloka # 18:

यदा ह्यसंयतामिन्द्रियं निरुद्धं प्रवृत्तं तदा
यदा ह्यसंयतामिन्द्रियं निरुद्धं प्रवृत्तं तदा 6.18

When the well-controlled mind abides solely in the Self, rid of cravings for objects of desires, one is said to be integrated in Yoga.

In the shloka Viniyatam chittam means withdrawing mind from object. It means thoughts are not entertained. Thus, if my mind is in the office, it means Officeakara Vrithi is maintained. So one has to withdraw mind from office. Here mind withdraws from Anatma or objective universe. **Now, Anatma has three parts. They are: Whole world, Body and Mind.** So do not entertain thoughts related to these three. This is called Chittam Viniyatam. This is possible only by forming detachment from Anatma. So, if you are attached to a person, that thought keeps coming up. **Our Ragaha and Dveshaha dominate our thoughts. Meditation, however, requires detachment.**

When the mind is rid of anatma akara vrtti then the mind becomes free. When the mind is pre-occupied with the objective world, how can that mind be available for atma dhyanam? Therefore, withdraw the mind from the world then the mind abides in atma or the mind dwells in atma.

Atma being all pervading, the mind also rests in it. Mind cannot go out of Atma. If so, what does it mean when we say mind dwelling in Atma? It only means that you have thoughts related to that object, Atma.

If my mind dwells on Badrinath, it means I have thoughts related to Badrinath; therefore if the mind has to abide in atma it means the mind should entertain the thought modification's of one's associated with atma. Vedantic meditation is not thoughtlessness. Yoga does have thoughtless meditation. This, however, is not approved by the Vedas. They feel thoughtless meditation is of no use. We give importance to thought centered on Atma. The " I am Consciousness" principle by which the mind, body and thought are known also knows the thoughtless state of mind. This awareness is the witness (sakshi) of thoughtful and thoughtless mind.

The " I am" thought arises in consciousness. This thought, however, cannot disturb consciousness.

It is like my hand moving in the light; but the hand does not disturb the light; the light illumines the hand. Similarly "I" the consciousness illumines the thought, witnesses the thought, but the thoughts themselves do not disturb me; this is called asangatvam. So aham asangh; is one form of thought; aham sakshi is another form of thought; and these thoughts arrive and depart, but "I" never arrive and depart. It is exactly like the people entering a hall, the light illumines the hall; all the people vacate the hall, the empty hall is also illumined by the light; people come and go; hall gets filled up and

vacated; but the light illumines the full hall, as well as vacated hall. Our mind is like the hall; the thoughts are like the people, and consciousness is like the light, however, "I" never come nor go.

While I have been talking ,you have been listening and even as you listen, your mind should have entertained relevant thoughts about Atma or Anatma. All the thoughts that you have been entertaining are dealing with Atma and this is called akhanda akara vrtti. Akhanda akara vrtti means any thought pattern connected with the consciousness or sakshi.

And entertaining this thought pattern, is called atmani avasthanam or it means dwelling in atma or abiding in atma. It is not thoughtlessness. I can have thoughts like aham ekahah; aham asangh; aham rupa rahitah; **I am formless, I illumine the formed body, but myself am formless, like the light illumines the formed hand, but the light itself is formless,** thus aham arupah, aham sakshi, aham asangh, aham nityah; aham

shuddhah; All these are called atma dhyanam.

And entertaining this thought pattern is called atmani avasthanam.

Therefore, Sri Krishna says, the mind abides in atma, entertaining the relevant thoughts and this state is called

yogah or samadhih or state of absorption.

And as I said in the last class, samadhi itself is divided into two types. When effort is involved it is called Savikalpa Samadhi. It is a state where ego is dominant and individual effort is pronounced. Once this effort is maintained for some time and then it becomes an effortless process, like pedaling the cycle for some time then cycle moves on its own momentum. This is the state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi. It is a state of absorption.

And what is this state of mind like? An example is given in the next shloka.

Shloka # 19:

यथा वायुः शून्यस्थाने स्थितो न च्युतः
तथा योगिनो मनो नियन्त्रितं योगयोगिनः॥6.19॥

As light in a windless spot stirs not, this is the simile of the Yogin whose mind is controlled and who applies himself to Yoga.

Suppose a lamp is lighted. When kept in an open place, the flame flickers due to breeze. The direction depends on the breeze. In meditation, thought is like a flame. When I think of an object, within moments some other thought comes up without any awareness. This is the flickering mind. Now, when the mind is protected, like the lamp in an enclosure, the flame remains steady. This steady flame is an example of Nirvikalpa Samadhi. My Atmakara Vrithi is not disturbed.

So, what can enclose the mind? What can protect it?

Mind is subtle and it requires Vairagyam and Bhakti as its enclosures. What is Bhakti and Vairagyam? I will just give a clue. Details of these two topics I will discuss later. Sri Krishna discusses this in shloka 6.35 as well.

All our worries are because we cannot face the future. There

are two types of future, the actual future and the imaginary future. The imaginary future threatens more than the actual. Questions come up like what will happen if I fall sick etc. Thus, the worry of future is a cause of disturbance. Only solution here is to surrender the future to God.

The second disturbance is due to attachment. If I do not worry about myself; I worry about my family members; what will happen to them; and how can I help them; etc. When such thought comes, you tell yourselves they will be better off, without me; they will be taken care of by God.

And what is that disciplined mind doing? It is practicing atma dhyanam. Yogam in shloka means dhyanam. So, the un-flickering flame is an example of the restrained mind. Such a mind that is engaged in atma dhyanam reaches a state called samadhi.

So far Dhyana swaroopam was discussed. Shlokas # 20-23 are the culmination of Dhyanam. It is all about Nirvikalpa Samadhi. This is the consequence of ashtanga yoga. Nirvikalpa Samadhi can be in any field. It is our natural faculty. We had this faculty in full measure when we were babies. Babies when they see an ant or cockroach they want to catch them with single-minded attention. You cannot distract a baby. It is a faculty we have lost in the name of growing up and now further eroded with our worries.

An absorbing book, a thrilling one-day cricket match all have moments of Nirvikalpa Samadhi. There is no mysticism in it. We use this faculty in Vedanta to direct our mind to Atma. Seven definitions of Nirvikalpa Samadhi are given now.

Take away:

Atma: I am formless, I illumine the formed body, but myself am formless, like the light illumines the formed hand, but the light itself is formless.

Anatma: Anatma has three parts. They are: Whole world, Body

and Mind.

How to keep mind steady in meditation? The mind is subtle and it requires Vairagyam and Bhakti to keep it steady.

With Best Wishes

Ram Ramaswamy

P.S: Explanation of Vriithi from the internet:

Between the two compartments of thinking and perceiving of mind, though it is easy to stop the thinking part, it is verily hard nut to crack so far as the perceiving mind is concerned. According to the Advaitic theory of perception it is the consciousness within us which makes perception possible by uniting the consciousness in the object. The Vedantic theory of perception is that the mind comes out through the eye and assumes the shape of the object outside. A ray of the mind actually goes out assumes the shape and form of the object and envelops the object. Mental image coupled with the external something is the object, for whatever objects we see outside have got their own images in the mind. When we pass through a mango garden, a ray of the mind comes out through the eye and envelops the mango. When it assumes the shape of mango, the ray is termed as impression or Vritti. The enveloping process is called Vritti Vyapti. The veil that envelops mango is removed by the mental ray. As there is chaitanya associated with the vritti which illuminates the object 'Mango', this is called Phala vyapti.

When this vritti chaitanya illumines the object, then only does perception of mango take place. At this point, mind comes to function and does sankalpa – vikalpa by asking as to whether this is mango or not? Budhi (intellect) comes as a prop and determines from previous experience that this is mango. Chitta then makes enquiry "how can I get the mango?","may I ask the gardener?"Ego asserts:"I must get the mango anyhow, as I want it."Then senses of actions are

commanded by mind for execution. When we see a mango tree it is external to us as far as our body is concerned, for we know the existence of the tree through the mind only so also our body is as much external to us as the yonder mango tree for it is also a mental percept. They are mere appearances that float in the one absolute Reality. Now as the tree is external to body and body is also external to us, the idea of externality of this universe is blown up. There is internality with reference to externality and when externality goes away where does internality arise? They are mere illusions and creations of mind. There is only the solid existence ,The real infinite ' I' That is our own self. Om Tat Sat.

Bhagawat Gita, Class 87: Chapter 6, Verses 14 to 17

Greetings All,

Continuing his teaching of the Gita, Swami Paramarthananda said, Sri Krishna is now dealing with antaranga sadhanani including preparations before meditation. We see him mention the role of the place (desha), time (kala), asanam, posture of body (sharira sthiti), indriyanigraha (withdrawal of sense organs from external world, especially the eyes should be partially or fully closed) and Prana samyam (dealing with prana and apana discussed in fifth chapter). We have thus seen these six stages and now we are coming to Manonigraha.

Shloka # 14:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ 6.14 ॥

With the inner sense tranquillized, fear gone, established in vow of chastity, controlling the mind, thoughts anchored in Me, the integrated Yogin should sit, intent on Me.

What should be the condition of the mind during meditation? Mind is disturbed by two sources.

First of all past experiences can come up during meditation. The subconscious mind throws up past experiences such as regrets of the past. Sri Krishna says one should not allow the past to control you. One has to control the past. Surrender all experiences such as insults, pain etc., at Lord's feet. Say, " O God, you have given me all these experiences only for my inner growth. I do not have anger or hatred towards anyone. I surrender everything at your divine feet." Past is good, if we can learn from it, however, it can be a burden if it causes inferiority complex, hatred etc. Then, the past is a bad experience. **Remember, in hatred it is the hater who is suffering and not the hated. Hatred is an obstacle to the hating person; hatred is never an obstacle to the hated person.** The hated may not even be aware of the hate. So, forgive everyone.

Call up all people you don't like in your mind and forgive them.

Every pain we go through is for polishing us. Then, I enjoy a prashanta atma, an atma relieved of a ton of regrets.

The second disturbance of the mind is worry about the future. Surrender future to God. "Whatever the future is, it is due to my own karmas. I cannot escape the future. Rather, I welcome my future." The future here includes family and friends. After all, I cannot determine the future of my children. I also pray to god that, " God, give me the strength to face and learn from experiences". It requires a peculiar mind to learn from adversity. Like the Hamsa bird that separates milk from water. Like, when we eat the sugar cane,

we take in the juice and leave the fiber behind. Similarly, from every experience I should take the essence; that is learning and forget the experience itself. With such an attitude, welcome the future. This will result in a relaxed mind. **Thinking of future brings anxiety to the mind.**

The word Vigata, means both past and future are given up. In this state the present is fully available to me for my use in meditation. Normally the present is not available to me because it is affected by past and future. Now, when I have taken care of the past and future, the present time is available for meditation.

Brahmacharya means student of scriptures. Brahma means scriptures and Chari means leading a way of life. Scriptures prescribe several disciplines to a Brahmachari to get maximum benefit from his studies and it is called Brahmacharyam. One of the disciplines imposed by the scriptures says a brahmachari should have only three relationships. They are with:

- 1) God;
- 2) Guru; and
- 3) Shatstram.

He should not have any other relationships.

That is the reason that during initiation into Sanyasa they remove the tuft signifying all these three relationships are also broken. When the Sanyasi discovers advaitam there is no more relationships. All relations require at least two people or Dvaitam. In a Brahmachari there is no worldly relationship. It is the same in a Sanyasi as well.

At least at the time of meditation, I should cut all the relationship. Tell yourselves, I am not a father now; I am not a mother; I am not a husband; I am not a wife; I am not a son;

I am not a daughter; I am not a son-in-law, and a daughter. Whatever the relationship especially the disturbing relationship, cut them all off and **temporarily at least become a mental sanyasi.**

And that is why Sri Krishna said at the end of the 5th chapter, temporarily renouncing all the worldly relationships become a mental sanyasi.

Kailvalya Upanishad says “ Even a Grihastha should not have any relationship during meditation.” This is known as Brahmacharya Vrattam. It is a temporary mental state of Sanyasa during meditation.

Invoke relationship with God and fix the mind on God. This is the only relationship that continues in every life one takes. In our temporary relationships we lose sight of this one permanent relationship with God. It is like the river that is related to the ocean. So, also it is with God and me. So, with an integrated mind may you sit in meditation.

And what is the goal of the meditation; matparaha; **keep Me** not only as an object of meditation; but also as the destination of the life; therefore mumukṣu (seeker) may you practice meditation.

Shloka # 15:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ६.१५ ॥

Thus applying himself unintermittently, with a disciplined mind, the Yogin wins peace, which is abidance in Me, and whose climax is emancipation.

How long does one practice meditation? Sri Krishna says it should be practiced consistently, regularly and for a long time. In the shloka Atma means the mind, Yunjan means meditator and Evam means dwelling upon God. When we say fixing

the mind on God, what type of God is meant here? Now Scriptures present God in three different ways depending upon the level of the Student as mandah, madhyama, and uttama; Mandah: (Mild) at the mandah level, first stage, God is a personal God, with a particular form like Rama rupam, Krishna rupam, Devi rupam and it is called eka rupam dhyanam. This also signifies Dvaita. Madhyam: (Medium): when a person is advanced, then the very same Lord becomes vishva rupah; aneka rupa, which means I see the lord as the very creation itself. So for a madhyama adhikari it is aneka rupa dhyanam. This also signifies dvaita. Uttama: (Ideal): A person who is still more advanced and one who has studied the Upanishads or Vedanta for him is prescribed arupa dhyanam; transcending both one form and many forms, we come to the formless Ishvara; and when one comes to formless God; the meditator meditated division disappears; the dvaitam gets converted to advaitam. Bheda upasanam or dhyanam gets transformed into abheda dhyanam. In eka rupa dhyanam bheda is there; in aneka rupa dhyanam also there is bheda. However, in arupa dhyanam this division is not there anymore. So, according to our level, the way we perceive God also differs. This arupa dhyanam signifies Advaita. So meditation can vary depending upon approach taken. Sri Krishna is clearly talking about Arupa dhyanam. So meditate on Me. Perform the meditation without distractions. The more you meditate the greater is your inner peace. This peace comes from God. Peace from set up can be up set. Peace dependent on relationships such as job, family etc., can change. The peace from God cannot change.

Katho Upanishad says, only they get permanent peace, others don't. Real peace comes from within Me alone. This peace results in Jivan Mukti and then finally culminates in Videha mukti or freedom from Punar janma or freedom from rebirth.

Shloka # 16:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ 6.16 ॥

He has no Yoga who eats too much or who eats not at all; who habitually sleeps too much or who keeps always awake, O Arjuna!

With the previous shloka Sri Krishna has completed antaranga sadhanani, for now. Budhi nischaya is also discussed later.

In shlokas # 16 and 17 respectively, Bahiranga sadhanani was discussed. Here, again, Sri Krishna brings up Bahiranga sadhanani. The ideas for Bahiranga sadhanani are not presented in an organized manner in this chapter.

Bahiranga sadhanani are general disciplines to be followed before meditation. Here the concept of moderation is emphasized. Sri Krishna says do not get addicted to anything. It is important for a seeker to follow the golden mean. Moderation with respect to eating, activity, sleep etc., is now discussed.

One who overeats cannot succeed in meditation. Overeating is considered a papam. The Aghamarshana suktam is supposed to be chanted at time of bathing to wash away all impurities. Agha means papam and Marshana means washing.

People tend to snack in between meals. It is bad. Don't over eat. What is over eating? Stomach should only be half full after eating. A quarter should be for water and or liquids such as buttermilk. The last quarter should be empty to provide room for air. How to know if you are half full? When you feel you can eat some more, stop it. After eating you should not feel any discomfort.

Don't fast too much either. Such a person also cannot meditate. Our system cannot handle it. Once in a while fasting is acceptable. Even with fasting one is supposed to eat palaharam (tamil), which means Phalaharam or eating fruits.

Sleeping too much is also bad for meditation. One who does not sleep is also not good for meditation. These requirements will

vary with age and constitution.

Shloka # 17:

यथाशक्तं भोजयेत् स्वस्वकं तत्र नृणां
यथाशक्तं निद्रयेत् तत्र नृणां यथाशक्तं 6.17

One who in proper measure eats and plays, applies himself to works, sleeps and keeps awake, achieves Yoga that destroys all pains.

Moderation in eating, resting, and entertainment is recommended for a meditator. It should be like having pickle with curd rice. We should know when to stop. Moderation should also be practiced in activity. A workaholic is also not a good meditator. He needs to spend time with family as well.

In an age where everybody is trying for corporate success Shastras are not always followed. Sri Krishna is reminding us of our life goals. So, meditation comes to one who practices moderation in life. So, moderation is very important.

Take away:

To succeed in meditation:

2. Get over your past regrets. In your mind, invoke all people you don't like and forgive them.
3. Don't dwell on your or families' future as it can bring anxieties. They are not conducive for meditation. Place the future in God's hands.
4. At least at the time of meditation, I should cut all the relationship. At least during meditation become a mental sanyasi.
5. Practice moderation in eating, sleeping and work.

With Best Wishes

Ram Ramaswamy

Taitreya Upanishad, Class 18

Greetings All,

Chapter # 1, Anuvakaha # 11, Shloka # 1:

Having taught the Vedas the preceptor enjoins the pupils, “ Speak the truth, do your duty, never swerve from study of the Vedas, do not cut off the line of descendants in your family, after giving the preceptor the fee he desires. Never err from truth, never fall from duty, never overlook your own welfare, never neglect your prosperity and never neglect the study and the propagation of the Vedas.”

We are in Anuvaka # 11. It talks about Brahmacharya Ashrama. This ashrama has two steps in it.

First step: In Vedic times chanting of Vedas was not written down. It was handed from the mouth to the head in the Karna Parampara. In effect the mantras were chanted and committed to memory. This chanting is called Svadhyaya Yagna and this sadhana is used to purify the mind of the chanter as well as the people listening to the chant. In this process, even the society and nation also benefited. Veda Ghosha, Vedic chanting loudly by a big group, was also performed for benefit of others. This chant is supposed to purify even the environment. Even plants grow better after this chant. This process of Vedic chanting is also called Adhyayanam.

Second step: Study of Veda Mimasa consisting of understanding the meaning of Vedas in context of Karma Kanda. Here the

purpose was not to understand Vedanta rather it was to understand Dharma Shastra also called Veda Poorva Mimasa. The Dharma shastra is condensed in Anuvakaha # 11.

(Note: The differences were that the Mimamsa school developed and emphasized *karmakaṇḍa*, or the study of ritual actions, using the four early Vedas, while the Vedanta schools developed and emphasized *jnanakaṇḍa*, the study of knowledge and spirituality, using the later parts of Vedas like the Upanishads.)

The Anuvakaha # 11 consists of:

Satyam vada: In various religions God is considered divine while world is considered secular. Thus, there is a division. Vedas do not create division between God and the world. They say the universe has born out of the divine. So Vedas see everything as divine. There is no division between divine and secular. So, one has to cultivate the bhavana of seeing the divine in everything. This is a lifelong effort. This bhavana is called Satyam.

Dharmam chara:

Do not criticize rituals. They are important. Values are important as well. There should be a balance between rituals and ethics. Both are important.

Svadhyaya: We listen to scriptures and then forget their teachings. Hence continuous learning of scriptures is important to be reminded of the teachings. Do not neglect scriptural studies.

Guru Dakshina: You have to give the guru his dakshina. A Guru, however, should not insist upon it. Even without asking the shishya should give dakshina. Teaching obtained without dakshina has negative consequences. It is called Adakshina. It is also called Runam (debt). A mind with Runam is considered an impure mind. So, give dakshina.

Be a part of an ashrama: After leaving the Gurulkula, a man still has to be a part of one of the four ashramas. Without an ashrama your duty cannot be identified. One can become a permanent Brahmachari so long as he is initiated as a Naishtika Brahmachari. Such a Brahmachari has to serve his teacher. One can also choose Grihasthashrama, Vanaprashta or Sanyasa. If he chooses Sanyasa he has to go back to ashrama and study Vedanta. Generally, most people opt for Grihasthashrama. Only grihasthashrama has the infrastructure for Karma Yoga. Other three ashramas cannot have money. Only Grihastha has money. In Grihasthashrama one can perform the Pancha Maha Yagna as well as fulfill worldly desires, in a legitimate manner.

Do not neglect commitment to values. Satyam in Dharma shastra means speaking the truth. In Vedanta, satyam means the ultimate reality or truth.

Do not neglect religious way of life. Thus getting up early before sunrise to pray to the Sun god. The day starts with prayer. Applying religious marks on forehead is important. Namaskara with both hands is also important.

May you not neglect your own well being. Do not neglect your personal interests. Take care of the body. Make sure it is fed and rested. Serving society is part of your own growth. It is for Chitta Shuddhi. Only after moksha can one neglect the body. Being selfish in this context is not wrong. It is your duty.

Do not neglect acquisition of wealth. It is very important. Only through Laxmi can one reach Saraswathi. More earning is not enough. One should also give a proportionate share to the deserving. One should keep in mind that the other three ashramas depend on the Grihastha. The Ahavanti Homam is performed for acquisition of wealth. Money is meant for noble service through Pancha Maha Yagna. Through this one obtains Chitta Shuddhi that in turn leads to Gyanam and then Moksha.

Bhutyaha in shloka means Prosperity.

Study of scriptures is very important. Anything that stagnates can be sickening. Even money, if it stagnates, can create problems. Scriptures encourage giving.

Chapter # 1, Anuvakaha # 11, Shloka # 2:

Never swerve from your duties towards gods and towards the departed "souls" (manes). May the mother be, to thee, a god. May the father be, to thee, a god. May the preceptor be to thee, a god. May the guest be, to thee, a god.

Worship of God is important. Just as you nourish a tree by pouring water at its root, similarly the whole universe is a tree with many needy people. The reality is you cannot help every needy individual. Therefore, Vedas prescribe that one contributes to the root of the universe. This root is Ishwara. Therefore perform puja to God and ask his blessing for the welfare of all people. This blessing will go to all people including needy ones. Unfortunately we cannot see the blessing reaching the deserving. So, Deva Yagya helps many. It is also a two fold Karma as it benefits the deserving as well as it purifies your own mind.

Pitr Yagya: is worship of ancestors. This worship reaches even if they are re-born. My general offering goes to all ancestors, not just mine. This also purifies my mind. Keep in mind this offering is for my growth not God's. So, Pancha Maha Yagna is mentioned. Ethics via Satyam also has been mentioned. Now attitude is discussed.

Attitude towards one's mother: Treat your mother as goddess herself. While a mother is not a goddess, irrespective of the character of the mother, she deserves worship. Hence, namaskara is performed to her. The namaskara is to the Goddess within the mother.

Develop reverence towards father: Despite his limitations one

should worship the father. Don't judge him. Often a father's problem is one of Parampara, that is habits transferred from his father to son. Never find fault with parents.

Consider the Acharya a God. In our early years our first contact is with mother and then with father. Then comes the teacher. The teacher contributes to the psychological growth of the child. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says if mother, father and teacher are good the child will have a healthy attitude in life. In our society kula, gothra etc. are very important for a marriage. Katho Upanishad says a mature human being is one who has good relationship with all the three. So, look upon teacher as a God.

Atithi Devo Bhava: Look upon a visitor as a God. This was an important value in Vedic times. It is not important anymore. In Vedic society, when people travelled, they had to stay somewhere. In that society food was not sold. There were no restaurants. So one took shelter in some house in a village. That family usually gave food and shelter. Being a pilgrim he was not known to the family. He also arrived without prior notice. When things happen, unplanned, like arrival of such a pilgrim, it was considered God's will. So, God has sent the Athiti, so we have to feed him, was the thinking. He also did not stay more than a night. So, he was treated like a God. Nowadays with con artists and such, this approach is difficult to practice.

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Bhawat Geeta, Class 86: Chapter 6, Verses 10 to 13

Greetings All,

Continuing his teaching of the Gita, Swami Paramarthananda said, in the first nine shlokas of chapter six Sri Krishna dealt with some important general disciplines called Bahiranga Sadhanani. They have to be followed by an individual who wants to practice meditation. These disciplines include: equanimity of mind, self-confidence, self-effort and self-integration. These disciplines are to be observed through out the daily transactions, every day in life. Now, Sri Krishna enters another area called antaranga sadhanani. This topic is discussed in shlokas # 10-15.

Here Sri Krishna is prescribing eight steps towards meditation. The steps are:

- Right Place for meditation
- Right time
- Right seat
- Right posture
- Right breathing or evenness of breath
- Indriya Nigraha or withdrawal from external world
- Manonigraha, withdrawal of mind from worldly roles
- Budhi Nischaya, meaning intellectual conviction regarding the role of meditation in spiritual sadhana.

The eight topics are not discussed in an organized manner, so we will have to organize them.

Shloka # 10:

योगी योगशास्त्रे योगशास्त्रे योगशास्त्रे योगशास्त्रे
योगशास्त्रे योगशास्त्रे योगशास्त्रे योगशास्त्रे 6.10

Living in solitude, alone, with controlled mind and self, 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 परिसुशुद्धं परिसुशुद्धं
परिसुशुद्धं परिसुशुद्धं परिसुशुद्धं परिसुशुद्धं 6.11

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:

सुखं प्राप्नुयान्मनसं एकं चित्तं तदा योगी
सुखं प्राप्नुयान्मनसं एकं चित्तं तदा योगी 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 Upsana 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 Yogyaadha–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 Sathra 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

Taitreya Upanishad, Class 16

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, we are now in the last portion of Anuvakaha # 9. Here the teacher is emphasizing Karma Yoga and Values. Karma Yoga primarily consists of Pancha Maha Yagna. It

includes Brahma Yagna, Pitr Yagna, Deva Yagna, Manusha Yagna and Bhuta Yagna. Of these five Bhuta Yaga has not been mentioned by the Upanishad, so we have to fill that gap ourselves. Values such as Ritum, Satyam, Tapas, Dama, Sama, Agni and Sacred fires are mentioned. Anuvakaha # 9 is concluding by emphasizing one specific Sadhana. All Sadhana's are important and required like nutrition for a body. Similarly, all values are important for our spirit as well. Different people will require different Sadhanas. In scriptures, in a particular context, a particular value is highlighted. Sometimes some values are even criticized for glorifying a particular value. All values in fact are important. Mundako Upanishad emphasizes "Satyam Eva Jayate as follows:

*satyameva jayate nānṛtaṁ
satyena panthā vitato devayānaḥ
yenākramantyrṣayo hyāptakāmā
yatra tat satyasya paramaṁ nidhānam^[4]*

Here Satyam is considered a most important Value. In Chapter 3 of Taittiriya Upanishad Tapas is highlighted. It says Tapas is Brahman himself. Similarly Svadhyaya Pravachanam also has been highlighted in this Anuvakaha # 9 by its repeated mention. In the end of the shloka the Upanishad imagines three different Rishis and asks them for their important values. The Upanishad gives its verdict on the choice of the Rishi's as well. We will now hear from the Rishi's as well as hear the verdict of the Upanishads.

The first Rishi named Satyavacha specializes in the value of Satyam. He was son of Rathitara. Satyavacha meant one who speaks the truth. He says truthfulness is the highest value. The word Satyam has two meanings. One related to ethics and morality; and another related to philosophy.

Shikshavalli is a dharma and shastra related chapter as such Satyam here means the verbal discipline of truth. Satyam also

occurs in the next chapter of this Upanishad known as Brahmananda-valli. In this chapter Satyam means "Reality is pure existence". So the meaning of Satyam can vary depending upon context.

Then comes another Rishi who says Tapas is most important value. His name is Taponitya. He was son of Purushishta. He led a life of austerity and self-denial. He felt penance was the highest Sadhana.

The third Rishi was Naka son of Mudgala. He said Svadhyaya i.e., the study and sharing of scriptures was the highest Sadhana.

The Upanishad giving its verdict says that Svadhyaya Pravachanam is the highest Sadhana. The first two instructions coming out of the Vedas are:

- Study the scriptures, then
- Through the knowledge of scriptures provide instructions to all. It can also be stated as use Vedas for Life instructions.

Even Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga says, one should take up meditation only after a study of scriptures. Meditation is only prescribed in the seventh stage of Ashtanga Yoga. First three stages are Svadhyaya. Thus, Svadhyaya teaches us the theory before the practice.

With this Anuvakaha # 9 is over.

Chapter # 1, Anuvakaha # 10, Shloka # 1:

I am the stimulator in the tree of universe. My fame (glory) is high as the peaks of the mountains. High and pure am I like the essence in the sun; I am the power and wealth, effulgent with intuition. Intelligent, imperishable and undecaying am I, this is the scared recitation of Trishanku after he realized the Truth.

This is a small Anuvakaha. In previous Anuvakaha the Upanishad talked about Karma and Upasana. Karma deals with body's actions and Upasana deals with mental actions. All Karmas and Upasanas have two fold benefits. They are:

They are often practiced for material prosperity in Ihaloka as well as Paraloka. Thus, Sakama Karmas are performed to obtain these material blessings. Karmas practiced for spiritual punyam is another category. These help one with becoming Sadhana Chatushtaya Sampana. One can also ask for Guru prapthi. A Guru is required to obtain the knowledge for Gyanam. One can also ask for the blessing of Sravanam of scriptures.

Suppose a man is interested in moksha alone, what does he do? For a mumukshu the Upanishad gives us a special shloka for Gyana Prapthi. It is a Japaha meant for atmagyanartham. Previous shlokas were all for Gyana Yogyata prapthi. Trishanku Rishi gave this mantra. He gave this shloka after gaining Atma Gyanam. In this shloka the word Veda means Atma Gyanam.

What is Trishanku's declaration? He says, whatever be the glory of Brahman they are all my glories alone. He says, "Aham Brahma Asmi". I am Satyam jnanam anantam brahma. I am jagat karanam. In Gita, chapter # 10, it says, all glories belong to Ishwara. Here, Trishanku says, all glories belong to me. By repeating the Rishi's declaration I am practicing this statement, as I still do not have the Gyanam.

How long do you want to be in bondage, asks Trishanku? Slavery or bondage is Samsara. From Ishwara Dasa one has to become Ishwara Aikyam. This is the conversion from Dvaitam to Advaitam. Aham Brahma Asmi is the ultimate truth.

Trishanku says:

Aham Reriva: I am the activator, life giver of the Samsara tree.

Brahman is the nourishing root of universe. Without my support the world cannot exist. Dream cannot exist without the Waker. I support the universe, as the universe does not have an existence of its own. Dream world exists due to the witness consciousness. I lend Sat and Chit to the Universe. Consciousness of body is reflected consciousness (RC). I am OC (original consciousness) lending RC to the body. I am Vishwadharam. My glory (of god) is glory of creation. It is as high as the peak of a mountain (Prashtam Gireriva).

I am purest of pure. I am absolutely pure. Explaining purity, through Prayaschita karma one gets relative purity. Gyanam, however, makes me absolutely pure. By relative purity, it means I can become impure again. Gyanam gives me a purity that is permanent. The word Urddhvam means absolute.

Thus, I am also immortal or eternal, like the light of the Sun, which is also eternal. The word Vaaji means the Sun. He, the sun, nourishes annum (rice). How did I get all this name and fame?

I have the greatest wealth called brilliant Atma Gyanam. Why is Atma Gyanam brilliant? It is brilliant because it removes darkness. Atma Gyanam is a wealth that cannot be destroyed by giving it to others as such I have real wealth. Sumedha means I have the best knowledge that " I am Brahman." It illumines everything. Minds are many but "I" the consciousness is one and it illumines all of them. I am eternal and immortal. I am free from decay (Akshaya). The word " I am " has another meaning. It also means I am soaked in syrup of immortal wisdom. So, the essence of this shloka is " Aham Brahma Asmi". Trishanku declared this.

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Footnote on Satyam Eva Jayate:

*satyameva jayate nāṅṛtaṁ
satyena panthā vitato devayānaḥ
yenākramantyṛṣayo hyāptakāmā
yatra tat satyasya paramaṁ nidhānam^[4]*

In English

Truth alone triumphs; not falsehood.

Through truth the divine path is spread out

by which the sages whose desires have been completely fulfilled,

reach to where is that supreme treasure of Truth.^[5]

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

Greetings All,

सत्यमेव जयते नानृतां सत्येन पन्थां वितातो देवयानाह
येनाक्रमन्त्यर्षयो ह्यप्यतकामा यत्र तत् सत्यस्य परमं निधानम्^[4]

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:

योगिनो यो यो ग्यानमपि पारोक्ष्यग्यानमपि
विज्ञानमपि तदात्मैक्यमपि 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.

Agnya: 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

Taitreya Upanishads, Class14

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 this shloka is a glorification of Omkara. It is a mantra used in Gyana Kandam, as analysis of Omkara, in Upasana Kandam where Omkara is used as a symbol for saguna Brahma Upasana and in Karma Kandam where it is used in rituals. Priests of Rg, Yajur, and Sama Vedas also use Omkara extensively. Even a beginning Brahmachari starts his chanting or Veda Adhyayana through Omkara chanting. In Veda Adhyayanam one only learns how to chant, as such it is Shabda Pradhana. Later the Brahmachari moves on to Veda-mimasa where he learns the meaning of the chant. Typically, he learns his branch of Veda that is Rg, Yajur or Sama. Some may also learn more than one Veda. In our tradition memorizing and chanting alone existed in the past and not reading and chanting.

In this Shloka Brahma means Yoga. Thus the Brahmachari starts his chanting with Om. Uttering Om is mangalam. As a result of this prayer he certainly completes Veda Adhyayanam.

Some clarifications were provided on Omkara.

How should one utter or pronounce the word Om?

In English Om is often written as AUM, however the pronunciation is not Aum. In Sanskrit A +U= O, due to a sandhi. Thus, in English, AUM should change to OM. OM is the correct pronunciation.

How long does one chant Om?

In the beginning of a Vedic chanting O must be three matras long or as O3M. At end of a Vedic chanting O should be four matras long or as O4M.

Omkara Japa is prescribed only for Sanyasis. People in other ashramas such as Brahmacharya and Grihasta are not allowed to chant Omkara alone as a kevala mantra. For a Sanyasi it is a

compulsory mantra. Sanyasi chants Omkara instead of Gayathri. A Sanyasi can prolong the Om mantra chant as much as he wants such as 000M.

Dayananda Saraswathi used to say that the mere Omkara chanting creates Tivra Vairagyaha (extreme sense of detachment) and because of it a Grihasta may wish to take up Sanyasa after such a chanting. This, of course, can create problems in society. Therefore Omkara is always mixed with other mantras for Grihasta's. Now, concluding the anuvakaha #8 with shloka # 1, it says, May the seeker practice Omkara.

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.

With previous shloka the five Upasanas of Samshito Upasana, Vyahriti Upasana, Hiranyagarbha Upasana, Pankta Upasana and Omkara Upasana have all been completed. These Upasanas are meant to purify, concentrate and expand one's mind. These

Upasanas will make the mind ready for Gyanam. We should keep in mind that these Upasanas will not give us Moksha. For that one has to go through Gyana yoga of sravanam, mananam and nidhidhyasanam of Vedanta scriptures under a qualified Guru.

There are many types of Upasanas. Chandogyo Upanishad has countless Upasanas. Puranas and Itihasas also have many Upasanas. Bhagawatham also has many Upasanas. It is not compulsory to practice a Vedic Upasana. Nowadays, Vedic Upasanas are not preached or practiced anymore. Rather, Ganesha, Rama, Krishna and other such Upasanas are more common and as good for purification of the mind. In today's context Vedic Upasanas are only of academic interest.

Now, the Upanishad talks about karma as well. Karmas can be Kayika or Vachika karmas. Thus, in the beginning stages, Brahmacharya stage, one starts with Karma yoga. Later, Karma decreases and Upasana increases during Vanaprastha stage. So, one should not neglect Karma. Karma Yoga has been discussed extensively in the Gita. Karma Yoga involves actions that contribute to the spiritual growth. Thus we have:

Para Upakara Karmani: This involves work that helps more people as such leads to spiritual growth.

Para Udasana Karmani: Here my work helps me. I don't care about others. He does not do any good or harm to others. In this state one is in a stage of spiritual stagnation.

Para Apakara Karmani: These are actions harmful to others. It brings one down spiritually.

Swami Chinmayananda used to say:

Godman: Para Upakara

Man man: Para Udasana

Animal man: Para Apakara

So, one should strive to increase Para Upakara or Satvika Karmani. One should bring Tamasika Karmani to a minimum. The word Suna means "necessary evil". If one performs Suna, one should also perform prayaschita. Vedas have Prayaschita built into it so that any errors are corrected immediately. Sandhya Vandanam has Prayschita mantras built into it.

All prayers and Pancha Maha Yagna, all contribute to spiritual growth. Pancha Maha Yagna is a Prayaschita as well as a Shodhaka karmani.

Refreshing our memories on Pancha Maha Yagna, they are:

1. Deva Yagna: Puja or Sandhya vandana are examples
2. Pitr Yagna: Prayers and puja to ancestors. One should not forget one's living parents as well.
3. Rishi or Brahma Yagna: Study of scriptures and teaching others about our scriptures.
4. Manushya Yagna: Social Service
5. Bhuta Yagna: Service to lower beings such as animals and plants. Daily placing of Kolam (rangoli) using rice powder, Tulasi puja are all examples of this.

The Upanishad says, of the five-maha yagna's, while all are important, Brahma Yagna foremost. People are naturally more rituals oriented. However, Taittiriya Upanishad recommends a systematic study of scriptures. Many people consider such a study as of academic interest only. However, recognizing that knowledge is power and that spiritual knowledge is very powerful, study of scriptures should not be just for academic interest. Furthermore, spiritual knowledge helps with our Prarabhda Karmas as well. It is a Kavacha against Prarabhda karmas.

This Upanishad also emphasizes values or Daiviha Sampati. Daiviha Sampati means discovering God in my heart. To obtain this sampati one has to acquire Godly character. Therefore values are important.

Discussing the shloka, following words were explained:

Svadyaya: Study of scriptures. In Brahmacharya ashrama Dharma shastra is studied in addition to learning professional skills such as warfare, business etc. Dharma shastra, in poorva bhaga, was a common subject for all students. Thus, in Brahmacharya ashrama one studies Dharma while in Grihastha and Vanaprastha ashramas one lives the Dharma, hence the saying Dharmam Chara. The idea was to learn Dharma in Brahmacharya, then follow Dharma in practice and then learn about Brahman or go to Gyana Yoga.

Pravachanam: Means sharing knowledge. Only a competent Guru can teach you the Vedas. Self-study can be dangerous. This also gives me the responsibility of teaching future generations as well as a part of the Anadi Guru Shishya Parampara.

In the Vedic society everyone had to share by talking and living the teachings of the Vedas. Vedas also ask a segment of society to make the study and spread of scriptural knowledge their only profession. This segment of society is known as Karma Brahmana. Their livelihood is teaching and sharing information and for this they accept as dakshina whatever is given voluntarily. Thus, they had to lead a simple life. Since they were not rich, they were also not burdened with problems and this allowed them more time to study scriptures. Their only job was to learn and share. This is known as Pravachanam. One segment of society was dedicated for this.

Ritum: It means knowledge about life in line with scriptures. Life beyond Pratyaksha Gyanam was also to be studied. Thus, one was required to learn about Aupursheya Gyanam as well. Generally, materialistic (Artha kama pradhana) societies' goals are entertainment and enjoyment. Here, however, a Dharma Moksha Pradhana life (a spiritual life) is important and it is known as Ritum.

Satyam: It means to live life according to scriptures. One should not be a hypocrite. What I know and what I do must have minimum gap. Leading a Vaidica life or a life of Anushtana's (religious life) is Satyam.

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

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

Shloka # 5:

उत्थेनैवैवात्मनोऽत्मानं योगी विजयते ।
उत्थेनैवैवात्मनोऽत्मानं योगी विजयते ॥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 punyam 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 punyam 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, prarabhda 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 Prarabhda: 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 have the same set of instruments i.e., body, mind and intellect complex. In shloka # 5, this instrument is called Atma. Success depends upon your instrument. If they are in decent shape, you can accomplish your goals. It is like a car, if it is in good shape, it will take you far. Katho Upanishad compares our body to a chariot. Just as musicians fine-tune their instruments before a concert so too should we fine-tune this body mind instrument. This is the instrument given to us for this life.

Many people spend a lifetime without knowing what they want in life. Our body and mind must function in coordination. Many organizations fail despite having great people. This happens often due to poor coordination. So, to succeed in life, our body and mind must be in coordination. This is called integration or Gyana Yogyatha prapthihi.

Question comes how do I fine tune my body mind complex? Sri Krishna says one has to use your own body mind complex to perform this fine-tuning.

So, integrate your instruments with your own instruments. Do not weaken your instruments. The most weakening attitude is " I cannot accomplish this". Get over such self-diffidence. Get

over the inferiority complex. Be optimistic. This is called self-confidence and self-effort.

Your own Atma is your true friend. Scriptures and God can only contribute indirectly to your assistance. You alone can contribute directly. You alone are also your own enemy.

When you are a friend, the whole world is a friend.

When you are an enemy, the whole world is inimical.

Shloka # 6:

आत्मैव मित्रं तन्मित्रेणैव ह्यनुत्तमं
आत्मैव शत्रुं तन्मित्रेणैव ह्यनुत्तमं 6.6

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:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ 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