

Taitreya Upanishad, Class 20

Greetings All,

Chapter # 1, Anuvakaha # 11, Shloka # 1 through 4:

Summarizing last class Swamiji said Anuvakaha 11 summarizes the dharma shastras covering topics of values, ethics, puja and developing a proper attitude. Our teachings are scriptures oriented, not person oriented. In person oriented it tends to become a cult while in scripture oriented it becomes a tradition. Until I understand scriptures, the Guru is important, but once I have access to the scriptures, the Guru is supposed to recede to the background. Our scriptures and traditions don't allow creation of a cult. The Vedic Acharya says, I have taught you now on give more validity to scriptures. At all times scriptures alone rule and nothing else does.

Whenever you have great people available make use of their presence to learn. Make them talk more to learn from them.

Chapter # 1, Anuvakaha # 11, Shloka # 5:

Gifts should be given with faith; they should never be given without faith; they should be given in plenty; with modesty and with sympathy. Let there also be agreement in opinion (or friendly feelings) when gifts are offered.

Our scriptures talk of numerous disciplines and sadhanas. They have also condensed them for us into three basic sadhanas as well. **The three fundamental sadhanas are:**

1. **Yagya**
2. **Dana**
3. **Tapaha**

These are three fundamental religious disciplines. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad and the Gita's Chapter # 18, both

mention these sadhanas.

Yagya: It is leading a life style of worship or leading a prayerful life. From the moment one gets up in the morning until one goes to sleep every activity performed is converted into worship.

Tapaha: Moderation in everything is important. Golden means has to be adopted. Don't let any activity get out of hand. You must be able to say "no" to anything, at any time. Moderation is just one meaning of Tapaha.

Danam: It is sharing with others. Make your life one of taking as well as giving. When both are practiced, only then the cycle of universe continues. There should not be any stagnation. Thus, the water cycle is: Ocean>cloud>river>ocean. Everything in life is cyclic. If we refuse this, then stagnation occurs and it affects negatively. In health as well energy taken in must equal energy put out else health problems occur. Superficially Danam appears like a loss. Scriptures, however, say whatever you give alone comes back. Hatred comes back. Love comes back. So, give good and things in plenty. Danam is highlighted in this shloka. Panch Maha Yagya also requires charity.

How to perform Danam?

1) Give with Shradha or with faith. Nothing given is a loss. It always comes back to me. I may lose materially but I gain spiritually. It comes through inner growth or through Chitta shudhi. This faith must be strong.

2) Ashradhaya Adeyam: Do not give without faith. When you give without faith you tend to see only the loss. Don't give with heartburns. Even if you don't have faith, give. Faithless giving is better than not giving at all. One hopes this giving will lead to faithful giving.

3) Shriya Deyam: Give in abundance. Depending upon your

capacity give proportionately.

4) Hriya Deyam: Don't look down upon the receiver. Arrogantly given danam becomes Rajas and or Tamas Danam. Gita, in chapter 17 discusses this topic. During giving, have the feeling that you have the good fortune to be able to help others.

5) Bhiya Danam: Give with concern to the receiver. Whatever you give must help others. One must have empathy. Identify with problem of receiver and give.

Here another shastric meaning comes in. Danam is considered a compulsory duty by shastras. You have to share with others without expecting anything back. It can even be kind words or even service to others. Live like the trees. They give more than they receive. That is why everybody wants trees. However, nobody wants more humans around as they only take. Giving is not a kama karma; it is considered a nitya karma, like giving tax. If you don't do your Vedic duties you can get Pratyavaya Papam. So to fulfill your daily karmas, give.

Samvida Deyam: Giving must be performed with understanding of Desha (place), Kala (time) and Patram (recipient must be a deserving person). You need not give to persons without right credentials. One can find appropriate institutions and give through them as well.

Keep in mind that Danam is not money alone, it includes seva, kindness etc. as well.

Shlokas # 6, 7 and 8:

Shloka # 6:

Now, if there should arise any doubt regarding your acts or any uncertainty in respect of your conduct in life, you should act in those matters exactly as those Brahmanas who are present there, who are thoughtful, religious (experienced), not set on by others, not cruel (i.e. gentle) and are devoted

to dharma.

Previously we saw scriptures are the primary source of dharma and adharma (do's and don't's). But Vedas do not discuss all possible situations in life. They are already very voluminous. So, Vedas do provide guidelines for us. We should be able to interpret them according to scriptures and according to situations. Therefore interpretation is important. With time, society and life styles change and they have to be taken into consideration. Vedas are very flexible in this regard. Citing an example Swamiji says Vedas are like the constitution of a country that can be applied to many situations that a country faces.

To interpret the Vedas, it must be performed in the right spirit as well. So, who will interpret the scriptures? Interpreters require a fine intellect to perform this task. Interpreters should have qualifications. Suppose one has a doubt about a religious practice or ritual, how to address this? This is called Vrata chikitsa. Vratam means conduct.

Vedas say, go to those people who are Guna Brahmanas. They must be able to interpret. The rules of interpretation are documented in Mimasa shastra. Once an interpretation is done, the verdict must be accepted. One who does not accept such a verdict is called a Nastika.

The qualifications of a Samarshinaha (independent interpreter) are:

- Yukta: One who lives a life of Dharma.
- Ayukta: One who is impartial and independent person. He must not benefit from verdict.
- Aluksha: One who is considerate and empathic. He must benefit society.
- Dharma and Kama: He must not be interested in money, wealth etc.

Therefore, a Brahmin was supposed to lead a life of poverty

totally immersed in scriptures. Such a life of voluntary poverty meant such a person was not afraid of anything.

Such people alone should interpret. And, if their verdict for some reason compromises with Shastras, one has to accept it. Citing story of Shankaracharya, once while he was travelling with his disciples he was offered alcohol to drink. He drank it. His disciples were disdainful of his action. Soon after, he came across a black smith who was melting metal. Shankara drank some of the molten metal as well astonishing his disciples. His message to his disciples was, I could do all this as nothing affects me. Until you can reach this stage you still have to follow scriptures.

When mahatmas violate dharma, we should keep in mind that they also follow dharma most of the time at a very high level.

Take Away:

1. Yagya, Dana and Tapaha are the three sadhanas that are considered the essence of Vedic religion.
2. While giving or making a Danam one must keep following in mind:
3. Do it with shradha;
4. Give generously;
5. Do not look down upon the person receiving the danam.

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Taitreya Upanishad Class 19

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.”

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.

Swamiji said Anuvakaha 11, Chapter # 1, presents the core of dharma shastra's. This knowledge is supposed to be learned by everybody and certainly followed by a Brahmachari. Dharma includes:

- Performing puja to God or performing Karma's.
- Developing proper values and ethics or Daivika Sampathi
- Developing proper attitude or Bhavana

All three are important. Some rituals are mentioned as well such as Daivika Karmani and Pitr Karmani

The Upanishad also talks about Satyam Vada. It also discusses some attitudes we need to develop, the topic we are now discussing.

One has to look upon one's Mother, Father, Teacher and the Guest, each of them respectively, as God. Mother and father both may have defects. Despite that one should look upon them as God. Acharya can also have defects but one should look upon him as God. Acharya here includes teachers of material sciences (physics, chemistry...) and arts (dance, music.) as well.

Atithi is to be looked upon as God. In Vedic times this value was a very important one. The visit of a guest was looked upon as will of God. As per Vedas, Atithi is one who comes as an unknown visitor on an unplanned visit. Unfortunately, we cannot follow this value anymore as many Swami's and Con artists are now coming in as Atithi's. Moreover, nowadays, hotels are available as are restaurants, as well as modern tools of quick communication. Even the average family today is a small one usually living in small quarters. So, this value has become one of academic interest only. They say Shiva and Vishnu also lived with their in-laws for long periods enjoying hospitality. Even with in-laws the longer your stay, the level of hospitality decreases.

Chapter # 1, Anuvakaha # 11, Shloka # 3:

Let only actions that are free from blemishes be done, and not others. You must follow only those virtuous actions that are irreproachable, and not others.

Chapter # 1, Anuvakaha # 11, Shloka # 4:

You must not breathe a word when those, who are more distinguished than you, are in discussion on spiritual matters (or, you must offer a seat to superiors and worship them with acts of reverence and love).

Continuing Anuvakaha 11, chapter 1, here, the teacher gives an important advice. There are three sources of knowledge for dharma and adharma or establishing the Do's and Don'ts in life. They are:

- **Vedas:** also known as Sruthi Grantham, is the primary source of dharma. Especially the Vedapoorva Bhaga.
- **Smrithi's:** Rishi's and Acharyas wrote secondary scriptures, also known as Smrithi Grantham. Smrithi's are based upon Vedic teachings. Thus, words are of Acharya but content is of Vedas. Smrithi elaborates the teachings of Sruthi through stories. Values are hidden in the story like butter in milk. We have to churn and extract the butter. Acharyas churned and brought the butter up. They all bring Dharma Gyanam.
- **Lifestyle of people who lived according to the Sruthis.** These are people have conquered Raga and Dvesha. Their life is an open book of shastric living also called Shista Achara. They follow shastras in life. Their life is visible to us or it may even come to us in the form of a biography.

Suppose Smrithi has a statement or a Shishta does something, contradicting the Sruthi's; whose direction should I follow? How to handle such contradictions? Citing an example of this contradiction, Durvasa was a great Rishi but he was angry all the time, while Shastra's say one has to maintain a balanced mind.

The answer is Shruti alone dominates, not the Shista or the Smrithi. So, in all such cases of contradiction, follow the Vedas. Shastras believe, in general, that no human being is 100% perfect. Even Rishi's can have doshas. Even Avatara's can have Doshas. There is only one perfect being and that is God. Even god, when he comes down as a human being, he shows human weaknesses. So, the teacher says, follow the Shastra Vidhi, at all times.

Why Mahatmas perform contradictory actions, one does not know. Do not challenge them? Do not judge them. Learn from their right actions and don't take up their wrong actions. Thus, Parashurama cut his mother's head while Ekalavya cut his thumb as a dakshina for his Guru. In such cases do not judge or

criticize them. Sometimes the situation requires compromises, like Sri Krishna's actions in Mahabharata. No value is absolute; they are all situational. If so, why can't I compromise, is a question that can rise? Shastras say you can also do so but only after mastering Values and Ethics. Once you conquer Raga and Dvesha you can consider compromising on values. Rishi's and Mahatma's have transcended Raga and Dvesha, hence they can perform contradictory actions.

Vedas say such a person can contradict Vedas and even create their own Dharma.

Birla gave a blank check book to Mahatma Gandhi. However, after quiet some time he noted that Gandhiji had used only one Rupee. So, you give freedom to one who is mature and responsible. So too, it is with Mahatma's. Once you reach this maturity you can also perform actions contradictory to shastra's.

Follow your Guru, but be aware that if the Guru performs actions contradicting the shastras, don't follow him, follow the shastra's. Thus, it is said of Sri Krishna, don't go by what he did rather go by what he said.

Don't take adharmic actions. Do not criticize mahatmas.

Great people also had weaknesses. Filter the weaknesses. Look at positives and imbibe them. Mimamsa is filtering positives and pulling it out. Citing several examples: Prashurama, in cutting his mother's head, was following his father's instructions. Ekalavya was willing to give anything as Gurudashina. He displayed Guru bhakti. Rama sent Sita to the forest. The lesson was, a king was supposed to have the pulse of the people in mind or a Prajaraanjaka Raja. Pandavas sharing of one wife, here the mother's instructions were followed. Prahalada violated father's instructions but he was glorified. Here Pitravakyam was not in sync with the shastra's.

Vedic tradition is not person centered. Thus, Vedas are not

prophet centered like Christianity and Islam. Buddha was an Avatara but Buddhism contradicted the Vedas, hence he could not succeed in India.

Until you know the shatras, the Guru has to teach you; after that Guru has to withdraw. After that, shastras alone prevail.

Patanjali, a Rsihi, gave us the Yoga system. Yoga's philosophy, however, was not in sync with Vedas. So, his philosophy was not accepted. Yoga itself was accepted.

Gyana Vaiseshika was accepted but its philosophy was not accepted, as it was not in sync with Vedas.

Anywhere Shastras are contradicted, do not accept it. This is the teaching of the Guru. Even Shankaracharya's writings were analyzed for such contradictions.

Shloka # 4:

Keep an open mind. Suppose some Brahmanas (Not by birth, rather people who have studied Vedas) were to come, who are superior to us in age, experience, and knowledge, welcome them and use it as an opportunity to learn. Experience is a big teacher. An uneducated man with experience knows a lot more than an educated one without experience. When they, come ask them to take a seat. Once seated don't talk about your self. Use their visit to learn more. Mahatmas generally don't like to talk. So, don't talk about your self. Ask them questions and make them talk. Thus, learn more and more.

Take Away:

2. Follow the teachings of Shastra's at all times. Any contradictions to Shastras, anywhere, do not follow them.
3. Do not criticize mahatmas.

With Best Wishes,

Bhagawat Gita, Class 88: Chapter 6, Verses 18 & 19

Greetings All,

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

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

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

6.

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

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

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

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

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

The Yamas, Don'ts, are:

1. Give up violence. This is the practice of nonviolence both at the mental and physical level. When we are violent the environment gets disturbed. **The world is only an image. When you smile, the world smiles. The**

world is a mirror. If I do violence, I will get it back at some time in future.

2. **Satyam:** Give up speaking of untruth, both in thought and speech.
3. **Asteyam:** Non-stealing: Do not possess anything that is not yours. An unfair deal is a stolen one, whether you recognize it or not. Nonpayment is stealing. Any benefit occurring via unfair means is stealing.
4. **Brahmacharya:** Give up inappropriate attitude towards opposite sex. Both male and female should give up inappropriate relationships.
5. **Aparigraha:** Non-possessiveness. Possessing too much is not right. Even legitimately earned wealth should not be owned beyond a certain measure. Practice non-possession.

Niyamas or Do's:

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

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

What do you mean by acceptance? I do not resist any

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dharana: means turning mind away from world and fixing mind on object of meditation. It is like the focusing of the camera before taking a picture. Object of meditation varies depending upon the level of the student. In Yoga shastra they also talk

of various chakras as well. All Chakras are related to God. **Exercise in concentration is not meditation. Only focusing upon god is meditation.** Even removal of thought is not recommended. There has to be mental activity for it to be meditation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

From Savikalpa now one moves to Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

Just as you get absorbed in watching a movie, you forget that you are in a theater at that time. "I" as an entity am forgotten. I have become one with the movie. How do I know it? My reactions to the movie tell us that the subject-object division has been temporarily resolved. **This absorption where I forget the surroundings, or self-forgetfulness, is called Nirvikalpa Samadhi. Thought is there, meditator is there, but I am absorbed; this is Nirvikalpa Samadhi.** This is the phalam of the eight steps or destination.

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

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

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

Take away:

1. Ahimsa: The world is only an image. When you smile, the

world smiles. The world is a mirror. If I do violence, I will get it back at some time in future.

2. Exercise in concentration is not meditation. Only focusing upon god is meditation.
3. Try practicing the ten commandments of Hinduism in daily life.

With Best Wishes

Ram Ramaswamy

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 ॐ

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 ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ 6.15 ॥

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 bhedom is there; in aneka rupa dhyanam also there is bhedom. 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

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

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

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

Shloka # 11:

शुद्धं शुद्धं शुद्धशुद्धशुद्धं शुद्धशुद्धशुद्धशुद्धं
शुद्धशुद्धशुद्धशुद्धं शुद्धशुद्धं शुद्धशुद्धशुद्धशुद्धशुद्धं६.११

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 कुरुते योऽसौ संन्यास्य कर्मसु
सुखं कुरुते योऽसौ संन्यास्य कर्मसु 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 Gyanendriyas 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

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

Greetings All,

सर्वज्ञः सर्वभूतहिते रतः
सर्वभूतहिते रतः सर्वज्ञः सर्वभूतहिते रतः
सर्वभूतहिते रतः सर्वज्ञः सर्वभूतहिते रतः 6.7

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

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

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

fact, individual effort alone will help in tapping the grace of the Lord, therefore, the third value is self-effort.

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

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

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

the person hearing me. Through out them all, there is one non-variable principle called Consciousness. It is the one aware of each thought rising in mind.

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

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

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

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

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

state of mind, or any special meditation; it is available to us all the time.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Take away:

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

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

Vedanta wants us to say:

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

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

With Best Wishes

Ram Ramaswamy

Tatireya Upanishad, Class 15

Greetings All,

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

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

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

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

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

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

5. Purushasuktam: Has to be chanted.

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

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

The ninth Anuvakaha highlights Brahma yagna as very important.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bhuta Yagna has not been mentioned but should be performed.

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

So, follow Pancha maha Yagna.

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

Take Away:

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

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

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 OOOM.

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 todays 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 Prarabhdha Karmas as well. It is a Kavacha against Prarabhdha 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

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 prarabhdham 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 punyam 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:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे ॥ अथ श्रीकृष्ण उवाच ॥
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ श्रीकृष्णार्जुनसंवादे ॥ अथ श्रीकृष्ण उवाच ॥ 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:

सर्वसंशुद्धो सर्वसंशुद्धो सर्वसंशुद्धो सर्वसंशुद्धो
सर्वसंशुद्धो सर्वसंशुद्धो सर्वसंशुद्धो सर्वसंशुद्धो 6.7

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

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

How do I know that I am master of myself? What is the sign?

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

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

Karpura Budhi: It catches fire immediately.

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

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

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

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

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

With Best Wishes

Ram Ramaswamy

Omkara Upasana

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

omkara upasana