

Swamiji's New Year Message

Swamiji's gave a special talk on the new years day and the topic for this year was "Power of Prayer". Please click on the link below to listen to this special class:

Swamiji Talk on Power of Prayer

Saddharshanam, Class 9

Verse 13

Can that be true knowledge when the knower does not know himself? To one who knows oneself, the support of knowledge and the object of knowledge the two will vanish.

How para vidhya is different from apara vidhya? How abatma vidhya is different than atma vidhya

Verse 14

Sleep is not knowledge. Perception of objects is not knowledge. In the knowledge as it is, one does not hold anything. True knowledge is other than sleep and the perception of objects. It is awareness alone, shining, not void.

Any wordy knowledge is a process in which the intellect grasps something. Brahma vidhya is a knowledge in which the intellect does not grasp anything new. So drop the idea of grasping something new as Brahman. It may lead to the conclusion that Brahma vidhya is something where we don't grasp anything, so it must be nithra or state of blankness or thoughtlessness. But it is not a state of blankness or

thoughtlessness. If thoughtlessness is Brahma vidhya, then sleep will be Brahma vidhya. Perception, knowing, objectification are also not Brahma vidhya and no perception, not knowing and not objectifying are also not Brahma Vidhya. Then what is Brahma vidhya – it is chaithanyam or consciousness itself.

This creates more confusion in that everybody already has consciousness so everybody is already liberated and no need for sravana manana nidhidhyasanam. Brahma vidhya is dropping the two fold misconception. It is not a thoughtless state or it is not grasping something. It is a state where thought arises which removes two misconceptions. What is that thought that arises in the mind is aham brahma asmi. At the time of brahma vidhya, I don't have thoughtless mind, but I have an unique thought that I am aham brahma asmi. This thought removes the following two misconceptions:

1. I am jiva different from Brahman.
2. Brahman is an object to be grasped, but it is the very subject which grasps everything.

The thought that eliminates these two misconception is Brahma Vidhya.

Verse 15

The Consciousness that is the Self is the Truth. The knowledge which is of various forms is entirely different nor can it exist without consciousness. Here, in the world, can the various gold ornaments exist without gold?

One gold associated with different forms and names appear as ornaments. In the same way, when consciousness is associated with any particular thought, the consciousness becomes particular knowledge. General consciousness becomes particularized consciousness. Pot outside enters my mind through sense organs, generating pot thought. This is different than any other thought. Before this thought entered

the mind, the general consciousness was in the mind. When I opened my eyes, I saw pot, creating pot thought and general consciousness became pot consciousness. This pot consciousness is pot knowledge. When turn my eyes to some other object, the pot knowledge disappears and replaced by the knowledge of that object.

Consciousness is called knowledge when it is associated with a thought. Plurality does not belong to consciousness, it belongs to thoughts. Every knowledge is consciousness associated with a relevant thought. If you extend this principle, Brahma Vidhya is also a consciousness associated with the relevant thought "Aham Brahma Vidhya". Consciousness itself appears as manifold cognition. Consciousness is one but cognition are many. These cognition can never exist separate from consciousness, because consciousness alone is appearing as cognition. Without consciousness, there is no knowledge of pot, ornament, wall etc. Just as ornaments do not exist separate from gold. Gold can exist without ornaments, but ornaments can't exist without gold. Consciousness can exist without cognition, but cognition can't exist without consciousness. Consciousness is sathyam and cognition are mithya. Without real gold, ornaments exists? Similarly without consciousness, the unreal cognition exist? Brahma Vidhya is also a cognition, can it exist without consciousness. We boldly says that is also mithya. Brahman is sathyam, but Brahma vidhya is mithya. But this mithya gyanam is enough to remove the mithya samsara. To remove dream thirst, it is enough if you have dream water and dream water alone remove dream thirst. Similarly for mithya samsara, mithya gyanam and mithya gyanam alone is required. Vyavahariga sathyam not paramarthika sathyam is required.

Verse 16

"That" and "thou" are based firmly "I". From the knowledge of their origin, when that "I" has perished, for one without the notion of "that", "thou" and "I", that natural state of

oneself that is shining, will emerge.

This thought is not generated by meditation but by guru sashtra pramanam. Misconception dropping is brahma vidhya. First misconception is that I am a finite localized individual. This misconception is ahangara creating individuality. Once I create this first person ahangara, then second a's and third person arrives. The finite second person and finite third person arise because of finite first person called ahangara. When gyani says aham, it denotes infinite first person and so there is not second or third person. The word first person is not relevant to gyani.

Bagawat Geeta, Class 53 – Summary of Chapter 3

In the second chapter Lord Krishna discussed karma yoga and gyana yoga, focusing more on gyana yoga. Lord Krishna begins second chapter with gyana yoga and concludes the second chapter with sthira pragya. In between the two, he discusses karma yoga and asks Arjuna to do his karma, which is to fight the Mahabaratha war. Lord Krishna glorifies gyana yoga but asks Arjuna to do karma yoga. Arjuna finds this unacceptable.

Introduction Verses 1 to 7

Arjuna asks should I follow Gyna Yoga or Karma Yoga. If you consider Gyana Yoga is better, then why should I fight the war? In answering this question, we should note the following points:

1. There is no choice between karma yoga and gyna yoga. It is apples to orange comparison.

2. Qualifications for gyana yoga can be obtained only through karma yoga. Qualifications are detachment, purity, maturity. Many of us do not have these qualifications.
3. Moksha can be obtained only through gyana yoga.

Follow karma yoga to obtain qualifications; Use the qualification to acquire gyana yoga; Use Gyana yoga to obtain moksham. All other yogas like japam, parayanam etc. are all part of karma yoga. There are no other yogas other than karma yoga and gyana yoga.

Arjuna's question was wrong; both yogas should be followed. There is a choice regarding marga or life style; one can follow sanyasa asrama or gragasthasram; but both sanhyasi and grahastha should follow karma yoga and gyana yoga.

Which is better? Grahasthasram or sanyasa asram? Krishna is clear that grahasthasram is better for most people.

Karma Yoga Verses 8 to 20

In these verses, Krishna elaborately discusses Karma yoga. Karma: Proper action; Yoga: Proper attitude. So proper action with proper attitude is karma yoga.

Types of actions:

1. Satvic – Promotes the spiritual progress the most; Best action; beneficiaries are more; unselfish
2. Rajesic – Mediocre; promotes some spiritual growth; Beneficiaries are less; confined only to family; selfish actions.
3. Tamasic – Does not promote spiritual growth, but results in degradation of spiritual growth; Harmful action; worst action. I get the benefits, but others get harmed.

Perform panca maha yagya to improve spiritual progress and

become satvic. The goal is to become samtvam by accepting all results as a eeswara prasada.

Reasons to follow Karma Yoga, in four different angles:

1. Follow karma yoga as the command of God; follow out of fear of god
2. Follow karma yoga as a sense of gratitude or yagyaha
3. Follow karma yoga as a purifier of kama and soga
4. Follow karma yoga as dharma by which cosmic harmony can be maintained.

Verse 20, second line to verse 29: Duties of a Gyani

Gyani does not require any sadhana (karma yoga, gyana yoga etc.) because he already achieved the goal of gyanam. But as long as he is in the society, he should follow karma yoga as a model to the society. In this verse, Lord Krishna is indirectly advising all elderly people to be role models for rest of the society.

Verses 30 to 35: Summarizes karma yoga; verse 30 is most important;

Krishna gives five-part process of Karma Yoga:

1. Make the Spiritual goal as the primary goal; all other goals are subservient to this goal.
2. Eeswara arpana buddhi: Dedicate all your actions to god so you don't hate any of your duty
3. Eeswara prasadh budhhi: Be prepared for any future situations because future is not under your control. You are not the only one responsible for your success. Accept any result as Eeswara prasadhham.
4. Nirmamaha: when success comes don't claim total credit
5. Maintain mental poise/balance

Verses 36 to 43: Obstacles of karma yoga:

Arjuna asks Lord Krishna what are the obstacles of karma

yoaga.

Lord Krishna answers Kama/krodha or raga dvesha; materialistic attractions; Artha kama is important, but dharma moksha is also important. But when artha kama becomes more important than dharma mokhsa, that becomes an obstacle. There are two stages handle this obstacle:

First Stage: handle in relative measures;

1. Dhamaha – Mastery of sense organs; don't let anything enter your mind without control.
2. Shamaha – Discipline of mine and thought pattern. Undisciplined mind has a tendency to get attracted to anything.
3. Vivekaha – Discrimination; understanding that finite plus finite is always finite; insecurity plus insecurity is more insecurity. Understand that I am complete (poornatvam) with myself and I will not be full with any amount of acquisition.

Second Stage: Obsolete solution is to discover fullness and security within myself.

Saddharshanam, Class 8

All pairs of opposites and triads shine, taking the support of some entity. When that is searched, all will get dropped. To them who see the Truth, there is never any wavering.

The idea given in this verse is self-inquiry always means atma vichara, even though we can loosely describe it as ahangara vichara:

- Atma vichara will lead to atma gyanam

- Atma Gyanam will lead to destruction of atma agyanam
- Atma agyanam is all the errors committed regarding atma; Destruction of these errors is technically called adhyasa nasa. These errors are called ahangara. The false I, born out of ignorance of real I, is ahangara.

When the rope in front of me is not clearly known, there is rope ignorance. Rope ignorance leads to snake. The rope is the substratum of the snake. You tackle the snake by inquiry into rope adhishtanam. Never attack unreal always attack or inquire into the real adhishtanam. Rope inquiry will lead to rope knowledge. Rope knowledge will lead to rope ignorance destruction. Rope ignorance destruction will lead to the destruction of snake knowledge. In the place of rope, we have atma and in the place of snake we have ahangara. Once ahangara is destroyed, all forms of dualities (subject and object) and thirupidies or triads (subject, object and instrument) are destroyed. Thirupudi and dwandams are unreal and require an adhishtanam or substratum, which is atma vasthu.

All dwandas or pair or subject object pairs are born out of ahangara. All of them are supported by atma. If these unreal dwandam or triads are to be destroyed, don't attack the ahangara; attack the adhishtanam, the support which is atma. No dream activity will remove the dream; you must wake up to destroy dream. Similarly, to destroy ahangara, you need to get the knowledge of atma. When knowledge comes, ignorance go away; when ignorance go away, all the unreal dvida and triad get resolved. This results in the establishing the adhishtanam, atma.

In this instance, Ramana Maharishi only talks about the significance of atma vichara and not the procedure for atma vichara. Any pursuit requires employment of appropriate instrument for the pursuit of knowledge. For example, to know the color of crow you need eyes. Simple process of questioning will not generate knowledge. For atma vichara, the regular instruments (mind and sense organs) are incapable,

insufficient and irrelevant. They are extrovert, turned outside. The instrument of atma vichara is guru sasthra upadesa. Inquiring to atma is exposing to traditional teaching or Vedanta vichara. The procedure for atma vichara is vedanta sravana manana nidhidhyasanam.

Verse 12

If there is no ignorance, how does knowledge shine? Without knowledge, does ignorance shine? And whose are the two? Thus, having inquired, abidance in the original nature is the knowledge of the Truth.

If darkness is the problem, light is the only solution. Similarly, to remove ignorance (internal darkness), gyanam is the only solution. Gyanam is a relative entity falling within duality, opposing ignorance and therefore gyanam is also mithya. You can't conceive of gyanam without the concept of ignorance and therefore knowledge and ignorance also come under Dvaidam. Arrival of one displaces the other. Initially we should pursue gyanam and destroy ignorance and after gaining gyanam we should disown gyanam because claiming gyanam is also a form of ahangara. You should say I am the adhishtanam of gyanam and ignorance and different from both. If knowledge, vidhya is also a mithya, why should I pursue it? Vidhya mithya is required to remove avidhya mithya. Once avidya is removed, you should disown both. It is like using soap to remove dirt. You apply the soap to remove the dirt but after that you wash off the soap. Similarly, to remove ignorance, you obtain knowledge. But after removing the ignorance, you disown knowledge.

Both gyanam and agyanam are associated with ahangara and this is the real knowledge. Gyana nishta is the availability of this knowledge, effortlessly. We can recall our phone number, names etc. when needed, without any effort. Gyana Nisha is the availability of gyanam effortlessly.

Verse 13

Can that be true knowledge when the knower does not know himself? To one who knows oneself, the support of knowledge and the object of knowledge, the two will vanish.

Without understanding ourselves, we are trying to understand one anatma after another. Without knowing about oneself, knowing about everything else is a fruitless pursuit. Apara vidhya is as good as avidhya (ignorance). Apara vidhya, without para vidhya is mithya. Atma alone functions as a knower, without knowing that knower, all other knowledge is false.

Knowledge of anatma is not useful because:

1. It is knowledge of anatma and anatma being mithya and knowledge of a mithya will not be a great knowledge.
2. Anatama gyanam will not free the individual from the sense of limitation which is the problem of samsara.

Bagawat Geeta, Class 52

Arjuna's, asks in verse 32 what is the obstacle to the practice of Karma Yoga and ultimately Gyana Yoga? Why is that many people are not able to follow karma yoga? Lord Krishna's answers that it is because of raga dwesha kama krodha or moha and delusion. This is due to confusion regarding priority of life. Artha and kama becomes more important than dharma and moksha.

Goals of humans are Artha, Kama, Dharma and Moksha or Wealth, Entertainment, values and spiritual freedom. On one side, we have wealth and entertainment and the other side we have

values and mokshas. One who has clarity that moksha and dharma is more important is a viveki. Kama is the main problem and krodha is only kama in a different form. Struggling to complete myself with wealth, family etc. is kama. Since obstructed kama is krodha, controlling kama is required.

Solution to Kama:

- Dhamaha: Discipline of sense organs; filtering what enters mind through sense organs at every level
- Samaha: Mental discipline; Discipline at mental level; unhealthy thoughts should be nipped in the bud, like how the enemies and diseases are nipped in the bud. Unhealthy thoughts are like a terrorist or internal enemy and should be controlled.
- Vivekaha: Discipline at intellectual level. I, the finite thing, will remain a finite thing with the acquisition of any finite thing. Security and fullness must be found in myself. Mistaken I is the source of all sorrow.

Verse 42

They declare the sense organs to be superior to the sense objects. The mind is superior to the intellect. The intellect is indeed superior to the mind. That which is superior to the intellect is indeed that Self.

These three-fold solutions are temporary and not a permanent solution. Self-knowledge is the only permanent solution. Desire is a symptom or expression of incompleteness. It will go away only with poornatvam or the knowledge that I don't lack anything and I don't miss anything.

Dhayananda Saraswathi states that "converting everything around me into luxury is moksha". When things around me are necessities, it is samsara; when they luxury, it is moksha.

Paraha (superior) Atma signifies three:

1. Sukshma; subtle; a subtler thing is called superior.
2. Mohanthaha: Ever pervading
3. Prathyaha: Closer to you

A subtle thing (atma) controlling gross body etc.

- Sense organs are superior to sense object. Because of the existence of sense objects are revealed by sense organs.
- Superior to sense organs is the mind because sense organs can function only with mind. If the mind is not functioning properly, sense organs can't function.
- Superior to mind is intellect. Mind has two functions: doubting and emotions. Both can be controlled by knowledge or discriminating intellectual power. Gyani is the one who is not under the grip of emotion because he can control it; note that he does have emotion, but he knows how to control it. This was very well explained in Katho Upanishad by comparing the body to a chariot, the sense organs to the horses, the mind to the charioteer.
- Atma is superior to intellect. Atma is the consciousness because of which I know the intellect. I the subject can't be questioned, because only the subject makes the object aware. That awareness is atma.

Verse 43

Oh Arjuna! This knowing the Self which is beyond the intellect, and steadying the mind with the mind, conquer the elusive enemy which is in the form of desire.

The ultimate object is to know the chaithanyam or atma which is:

- Not a part or product of the body Atma
- Atma is independent of the body;

- Atma is limitless;
- Atma is eternal;
- Atma survives the fall of the body, but not available for transactions because there is no medium.

Atma is like light. When light pervades the hand, you see the hand but not the light; but the light is there. It is also there beyond the hand. Similarly, atma is not only in your body but also extends beyond your body. One should know this and own up to the fact that this formless consciousness is the real I. The real transformation is the transcending the form, that I am the formless consciousness. Body and mind are like the instruments I use to transact with the world. By claiming the new identity, we should change our orientation from physical body to formless consciousness. This new orientation is gyana nishta. The physical body is limited, but I am not limited.

Gyana Nishta is internalizing this knowledge and ready availability of this knowledge at the time of difficulty. This comes by dwelling on the teaching in any form – by teaching, writing, thinking, sharing etc.

Ten Commandments – Yamas, Niyamas and ways to Incorporate them in daily life

Continuing the discussion from last week on the topic of how to put in practice the teachings of Bhagawan Ramana Maharishi and the Bhagawad Gita, Dr. Katta presented an excerpt of an

audio recording of Swamiji delivered on New Year 2,000. After searching I found the text of this lecture that I have copied for your benefit. For those of you who like to listen, Ravi has posted Swamiji's recording in Advaidam website. For those who like to read, this information is presented below. Please try to practice these teachings.

Ten Commandments of Hinduism and how to follow them:

New Year: 2000 – 10 commandments

Sadhaks or spiritual seekers attend lectures, read books, and use other means such as participation in study groups to acquire spiritual knowledge. After some time, a stage is reached when many aspirants feel they have studied a lot and have a reasonably good understanding of the scriptures but are not able to implement the knowledge gained. They have the "theory" but are unable to put it to "practice". *Sadhaks* who face this problem can take up the following programme. Even others who do not have this problem can use this programme to reinforce the scriptural teaching.

This programme is a one-year project that can be renewed every year. The programme can be practiced as it is or modified to suit the needs or convenience of the individual. Since the project consists of 12 components with each component taking a month, the New Year is a good time to start this programme. This programme is essentially the practice of "ten commandments" of Hinduism – fivefold abstention (called 'yama') and fivefold discipline ('*niyama*'). These are the do's and don'ts of Hinduism.

The programme is presented in two parts. First, the *yamas* (don'ts) and *niyamas* (do's) are defined and explained from the standpoint of practicing them. Of the two groups, our scriptures consider *yamas* to be more important than the *niyamas* and so the former is discussed first. Secondly, a method of implementation of the *yamas* and *niyamas* is

presented.

The five yamas are *ahimsa*, *satyam*, *asteyam*, *brahmacharyam*, and *aparigraha*.

1) *Ahimsa* (non-violence) is the avoidance of violence and injury. Ahimsa has several aspects. The grossest form of *Himsa* is physical violence. Physical violence is not confined to beating people but includes actions such as throwing or banging things. When we begin practice on this programme, we must first pay attention to physical violence. If we feel we are already free from the weakness, we can concentrate on verbal violence – shouting or using abusive or indecent language.

2) *Satyam* (truthfulness) is primarily a verbal discipline. We maintain harmony between knowledge, motives, and words. Our words must not hide our knowledge or motives. There must be harmony between thought and word. *Satyam* is a positive attribute and yet it is listed as a *yama*. So we have to redefine *satyam* as something to be given; that is the avoidance of a *satyam*. We must emphasize more on eschewing a *satyam*, by not telling lies or speaking untruths.

3) *Asteyam* (non-stealing) literally means non-stealing. We may wonder whether this value is required for us because we are not thieves. *Steyam* is not just breaking into a house and stealing. Any unfair transaction through which we derive some benefit is *steyam*. Not paying a person his due is a form of stealing because we keep what legitimately belongs to another person.

4) *Brahmacharyam* (chastity) means having the right attitude towards members of the opposite sex. Men must have a decent and appropriate attitude towards women and similarly women must have a decent and appropriate attitude towards men. Like *satyam*, *brahmacharyam* is a positive characteristic and yet finds a place among the yamas. So we must understand

brahmacharyam as giving up all indecent and inappropriate attitudes towards the opposite sex.

5) *Aparigraha* (non-possessiveness) is the fifth *yama*. *Parigraha* means possession. *Aparigraha* is literally non-possession and must be understood as leading a simple life. There are two aspects to *aparigraha* – owning less and having the right attitude towards what little we own. We give up luxury, pomp, and show. We draw a line and limit our possessions to what is necessary. A simple living is suitable for high thinking.

We should not develop possessiveness towards the limited possessions we have. This is even more important than owning less. We should remind ourselves that what we have belongs to the Lord and is given to us temporarily for us to grow. We use our possessions with gratitude to the Lord who claim them at any time giving advance notice or not.

The five *niyamas* are *saucham*, *santosha*, *tapas*, *swadhyaya*, and *Ishwara pranidhanam*.

6) *Sacuham* (purity) means cleanliness or purity. We must first focus on gross or physical purity and later concentrate on subtle or inner purity. *Saucham* can be understood as keeping ourselves and everything around us clean. This includes our body, clothes, possessions and house. *Saucham* is not only cleanliness but also orderliness. Our house may be very clean but due to disorderliness we may have to search for anything and everything. A good maxim to follow is ‘a place for everything and everything in its place.’

7) *Santosha* (contentment) means contentment or satisfaction. *Santosha* has to be developed at two levels because life is twofold pursuit – earning and owning. Initially we aspire to earn a lot of wealth and also own many possessions. The first stage of contentment is at the level of owning. We are satisfied with our possessions and stop earning

for more. Earning continues but spending decreases. Such a person produces more, consumes less and creates wealth for the community, society and nation and is called a karma yogi.

The second stage of contentment focuses on earning. We stop craving for more and more. Such a person is *jnana* yogi. Contentment at both levels of earning and owning is called *santosha* or *trupti* and should be practiced as a *niyama* meaning with a positive attitude. We think of what we have rather than what we do not have and give up beggarliness of the mind. We tell our mind that we have plenty. This is the principle of abundance.

A contented person will readily share his wealth with others. Without *santosha*, *dhanam* (charity) cannot take place. Contentment is a prerequisite for a charitable disposition.

8) *Tapas* (austerity) means austerity and like *ahimsa* and *santosha* has many dimensions. The grossest form of *tapas* pertains to physical activity. Activity is important not only from the religious and spiritual angle but also from the aspect of health. In the olden days the very lifestyle ensured that people were physically fit. Today we can consider some form of exercise. An ideal exercise is the *surya namaskar*. It is common to hear people say that they do not have time for exercise. Those who cannot spare a few minutes a day for maintaining their health today may have to spend many months later for recovering (lost) health due to sickness.

9) *Swadhyaya* (spiritual study) is the study of our scriptures and is a very important commandment. Many years ago *swadhyaya* was done by every person. It was a daily ritual known as *Brahma yagna*. Today people do not give much importance to spiritual study. May think it is for intellectuals and those who want to take to monastic life. At the minimum we must study a few verses of the *Bhagavad Gita* everyday and reflect upon the teaching.

10) *Ishwara Pranidhanam* (surrender to God) is looking upon every experience in our lives, favourable or unfavourable, as God's will because every experience we undergo is the result of our past actions. This is called *karma phallam* and can be pleasure or pain. Behind every *karma phallam* is the law of karma and behind the law of karma is the Lord. The Lord is invisible, the law of karma is invisible but when the Lord and the law of karma function, the result is a tangible experience. So we accept every experience without resistance. And the mind is free of negative emotions and thoughts. This acceptance is called *Ishwara Pranidhanam* or *sarangati*. An inability or unwillingness to do so will produce unhealthy thoughts in the mind and lead to bitterness, anger, frustration, hatred, etc.

The ten *yamas* and *niyamas* should be practiced by all the *sadhaks*. We have no choice in the matter. Without these attributes, the study of *Vedanta* will neither be meaningful nor beneficial.

How can a *sadhak* practice the ten commandments? Aspirants may consider the following method of implementation that is designed as a one-year project. Every month we should focus on one commandment beginning with the first and proceed in order. Each commandment is important and should be given attention. Practicing the *yamas* and *niyamas* can be made effective by following a five-fold strategy: *sankalpa*, *avadhanam*, *samyama*, *simha-avalokanam*, and *vicara*.

1) *Sankalpa* (resolve) means making a resolve every day. We begin the day with a resolve that we will practice the commandment chosen for the month. During the "*ahimsa*" month; we will resolve firmly: Today I will practice *ahimsa*. I will not shout at my family members, subordinates etc. We must maintain a notebook and soon after getting up we must write, 'I will practice *ahimsa* today' 24 times. We should write with a full heart, sincerity, and commitment.

2) *Avadhanam* (precaution) is especially important. The scriptures say that for a spiritual seeker, negligence is destruction. Many railway accidents occur due to negligence of simple precautionary measures. Precaution is within our capacity. We must be alert and avoid the contributory factors that make us violate the commandment. This applies even to our health. Maintaining health requires adherence to a few simple rules neglecting which we may have to face the consequences for a life time.

3) *Samyama* (restraint) comes into play when *avadhanam* fails. Violations (of the commandments) will occur, especially in the initial stages and we display the negative behavior we have been trying to avoid. The moment we realize we are using abusive language, we must strive to control ourselves. We practice restraint before the situation gets out of hand.

4) *Simha-avalokanam* (introspection) is the fourth strategy and should be done every day. At the end of the day, we look at our behaviours and determine to what extent we fulfilled our resolve to follow the chosen commandment. For every violation we must take out our notebook and write, ' *on sri gurubhyo namah* ' 24 times. There are three benefits in doing so. First, it serves as a *prayaschitham* or repentance for violating the commandment. Secondly, we invoke the grace of the guru. Guru includes god because HE is the *adiguru*; the first guru is Bhagavan. Thirdly, by the grace of the guru, the circumstances or occasions that make us violate the commandment will become lesser and lesser.

Also there will be a change in our attitude. Presently we are likely to think that our violations are necessary and dictated by the circumstances. We consider them a necessary evil. But as we progress, by the grace of the guru, we will find that we do not violate the commandments even in situations where we once thought it was necessary. Thus by the grace of guru the number of occasions that are likely to provoke us becomes lesser and lesser. We no longer violate as before thus making

real progress.

The above four strategies should be practiced every day.

5) *Vicara* (study) is a powerful and the most important strategy and this involves the study of the significance of each of the commandments. It is seeing the 'value of a value'. Each month we must focus on the commandment chosen for the month. During the "*ahimsa*" month we must collect as much information as possible on this commandment and study the literature for at least an hour a week and try to understand its significance. Why is *moksha* not possible without giving up *himsa*? Why do we resort to violence-physical or verbal? What precautionary measures can we take to avoid *himsa*? Our analysis will reveal that our violent behavior is always preceded by anger. We can further analyze, why do we get angry? Is it because of certain people? How can we change our behavior (rather than expect others to change theirs) to avoid or minimize getting provoked?

Vichara can be done individually or collectively by forming and participating in study groups. Study groups meet periodically and members of the group get an opportunity to share with the other members as to how they are handling the commandments in their daily life. There can be discussions and healthy exchange of ideas that is beneficial to all the group members. Study groups inculcate seriousness and a sense of commitment towards practicing the commandment. Participation in study groups is highly efficacious and strongly recommended.

Vicara will reveal that each commandment has a gross aspect and a subtle aspect or many other dimensions. In the first year, *sadhaks* can focus on the grossest aspect of each commandment and in subsequent years turn their attention to the subtler aspects.

Since the ten commandments consume ten months, the question

arises: what should a *sadhak* do during the remaining two months of the year? In the eleventh month, the aspirant must strive to give up one bad habit – be it smoking or losing one’s temper. Again, we can start from gross, physical habits and proceed to subtle weaknesses. In the last month of the year, the *sadhak* must cultivate one good habit that the aspirant would like to have. If we have the habit of criticizing others, we may want to develop the practice of giving praise where it is due. In case we have a doubt regarding what habits or attributes to focus on the last two months of the programme, we can study the sixteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita wherein Krishna discusses demoniacal traits (called *asuri sampath*) or negative qualities and divine traits (*daivi sampath*) or positive attributes.

I wish you a happy new year and a year where you practice these ten commandments and become a better person.

Bagawat Geeta, Class 51

Greetings All,

Shloka # 38:

अज्ञानं धूमो ज्ञानं तपो भस्म
अज्ञानं धूमो ज्ञानं तपो भस्म 3.38

Just as fire is obscured by smoke, a mirror by dirt and embryo by the womb, so is knowledge by craving.

Continuing his teachings of Gita, Swami Paramarthananda said, now Arjuna asked a question “how come a person violates Dharma in spite of his desire to be a good person? Everybody knows dos and don’ts. In spite of this knowledge of right and wrong,

how come this corruption comes in?"

Sri Krishna says it is nothing but Kama and Krodha. He however, does not explain how they rise in us. They are actually products of Self-Ignorance. Without Self Knowledge this problem will continue. So long as I feel I am a limited person, a sense of incompleteness will be there, and this problem will continue. It may manifest in a vague form (not happy but do not know why) or in a crystallized form such as I have no wife, no house etc. Ragas may change but Sruthi will not. Self -Ignorance is the cause of Kama and Krodha. They are the cause of violation of Dharma. How do they affect Dharma? Since desire and anger cloud discriminative power, our capacity to know what is Dharma and Adharma is clouded. Dharmaputra had the same problem, as did Ravana. Ravana was after all a great Shiva Bhakta. It is not lack of intelligence. It is temporary clouding of our discriminating power. How Kama covers Vivek Shakthi was discussed in Shloka # 38. This is the reason Kamo Karishe, Manyur Karishe is chanted during Amaniavattam ceremony.

Shloka # 39:

ज्ञानं ज्ञानं कुरुते कुरुते कुरुते कुरुते कुरुते
कुरुते कुरुते कुरुते कुरुते कुरुते कुरुते 3.39

Knowledge, O son of Kunti, is obscured by this persistent foe of the knower, i.e. by craving, as by an insatiable fire.

In previous shloka, Sri Krishna said, Kama and Krodha cover our judgment faculty. Both Kama and Krodha are like two sides of a coin. They are the same. What type of Kama? It is a desire that is similar to fire. Fire will destroy its locus. Desire destroys the mind. It is an insatiable desire like a fire. Oblations cannot fulfill it. Fulfillment of desire leads to even more desire. It can't be satisfied.

Citing story to illustrate this desire, Swamiji said, there was lottery where the prize of the day was a watch. A man won

the watch. However, the next day the prize was a scooter. The man who won the watch felt hurt that he had not won the scooter and only got a watch. This is Kama and it is insatiable. The fire is called Kama Rupena. The Kama is an eternal enemy of a scriptural student. It is not an enemy of a non-student. A non-student does not consider desire a weakness and he fully indulges in fulfilling his desires. Now, after studying Gita, I will feel guilty. Citing another example, a man has Diabetes. He nevertheless enjoys all sweets. He also suffers from the consequences. But if a man knows eating sweets is bad for him, even as he eats he feels guilty. Such a person with knowledge suffers before, during and after. While, the ignorant one suffers only afterwards. So either be ignorant or be Knowledgeable. For all those in between, Kama is an eternal enemy. This desire clouds our discriminative power. For a spiritual student, power of discrimination is very important. This power is the first stage of Dharma and Adharma Viveka.

The Gyani needs to know Satya and Asatya. Discrimination is required through out spiritual life. Sadhana Chatustaya Sampana is required. Kama robs Vivek Shakti.

Shloka # 40:

कामोऽज्ञानात्सर्वज्ञानं धूमोऽग्निं तथैव कामो विद्वत्तम
विभ्रंशयति तस्मात्तन्निवृत्त्यै तद्विनाशकं विदुषाम्॥3.40॥

His abode is said to be the senses, mind and intellect. BY means of these he obscures knowledge and deludes the embodied man.

I am a spiritual seeker and Sri Krishna has pointed out that Kama is my enemy. If so, how to win the war against Kama? Arjuna is a warrior, Sri Krishna is also a Warrior, and hence the analogy of war is used. When a country attacks another country the attacker needs a base. Without a base they cannot support the army. A nourishing base is required. I have to

know the enemy bases. This will destroy enemy capabilities. Kama also needs a base to nourish it. They have to be destroyed. What are the bases of Kama? There are three bases. They are:

- The five sense organs introduce sense objects. Thus advertisements are targeted at our Shabda, Sparsha, Roopa, Rasa and Gandha.
- Manaha: The Mind. Ads are only for 20 seconds. They push sense objects to our mind. Mind records the object. It creates a strong Samskara. Mind keeps dwelling on the sense objects. Mind produces Vasana (this is very nice. I want to try it. I want more of it. I cannot survive without it.) Mind does it by avrithi.
- Budhihi: Intellect, contributes to desire by its wrong thinking. What is wrong judgment? The judgment that an external object will make my life happier and more secure. This is the worst judgment, per Vedanta. External world is not a source of joy or sorrow. I alone am source of both Joy and Sorrow. How can I be cause of both? Citing an example, a garland is lying in a semi-dark room. I mistake it for a snake. It becomes a source of sorrow or fear. When I understand myself as I am, it is Ananda. But not understanding myself is Dukha. So, how to prove that the world is not a source of joy or sorrow.

Citing another example Swamiji says, while one object may cause sorrow one, for another person it may bring joy. Thus, when a person sells his house, he does so probably because he was not happy with it. However, another person buys the house because he likes it. Same thing happens when a man divorces his wife. He now does not like her. She does not bring him joy anymore. She in turn, turns around and marries somebody else, who finds her very interesting and likable.

Thus, the mind, by repeated thinking of an object and the Buddhi, by its wrong judgment, both support Kama.

Shankaracharya's Bhaja Govindam is all about this subject.

These three bases overpower the person and delude him. For a thinking person sense objects become a source of sorrow. Acquiring, maintaining and losing the object, all cause pain. Instead of enjoying what I have, I am reminded of the missing scooter. The more I am used to external crutches the more dependent I become. By covering intelligence, a man becomes deluded.

How Kama attacks and what are its bases were discussed. Now Sri Krishna tells us how to handle Kama?

Shloka # 41:

संयम्यैवात्मनो ज्ञानं प्राप्य विमुक्तये
संयम्यैवात्मनो ज्ञानं प्राप्य विमुक्तये 3.41

Therefore, mighty prince! First controlling the senses, give up this wicked craving that destroys knowledge and realization.

Sri Krishna says you have to handle and conquer Kama. Kama covers discriminative power. It destroys Atmagyanam and Atma Vigyanam.

Atma Gyanam is gained in two stages. In first stage, one gets Gyanam. In second stage one gets Vigyanam.

First Stage:

Gyanam consists of Atma (consciousness) and Anatma Viveka. Consciousness is the Nithyaha, Akarta, Abhokta, Nirvikaraha, Aprameya, Sanatanaha, Avyaktha etc. It survives death. Seeker now knows he has Atma. I am the body and I have the spirit. This is first stage.

Second Stage:

In second stage instead of saying I am the body and I have

Atma, now we have a shift to “ I am the Atma with a body”. Body is a temporary medium. In waking, I function in this body. In sleep, I don't feel the body. When I set aside the body, I don't experience the world. I am not the body. I am the user of the body. This requires Sravanam, Mananam and Nididhyasanam. This is known as Vigyanam or AparokshaGyanam.

Kama does not allow Gyanam and Vigyanam to come in. When I am immersed in making money, it means Kama has won. One has to find the time for Gyanam and Vigyanam. Scriptural study is compulsory for all, of all ages. Kama obstructs scriptural study. Time is money but nobody says time is moksha. Handle Kama by handling these three bases.

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Saddharshanam, Class 7

Greetings All,

Shloka # 9:

The world arises and sets with the “I” thought. Therefore, this world is illumined by the “I” thought. The Reality is the abode of the birth and death of the “I” thought and the world. It is One, complete and without birth and decay.

Continuing his teaching and refreshing our memory of last class, Swamy Paramarthananda said, in all these shlokas

Bhagawan Ramana Maharishi is stressing the importance of Ahamkara Vichara that leads to Brahman. At that moment Ahamkara and Jagat are reduced to nama and roopa. This is what we learnt in last class.

In the next shloka there is an incidental diversion but an important one.

Shloka # 10:

Let the worship of names and forms of the Supreme , be the means to the vision of Truth. Know that abidance in Reality as "It is me" alone is the vision of truth.

Third and fourth lines of this shloka are discussed first. In previous shloka Bhagawan Ramana Maharishi said Ahamkara Vichara should lead to Adishtana Gyanam or Brahma Nishta. This is Sad Darshanam. Aim of Ahamkara Vichara is Sad Darshanam. What is Sad? It is Brahman. It is Ahamkara Adishtanam. It is the title of this text. When we say Sad Darshanam or Brahma Gyanam, one can mistake it as knowledge about an object called Brahman. Knowledge of anything means there is an object to know and a subject who knows. One may think of Brahma Gyanam as an object or also as an experience of Brahman. To remove this misconception, Bhagawan Ramana Maharishi says, it is actually abidance in Brahman and not the knowing of Brahman. In Sad is Vastu. **Vastu in Vedanta parlance means Reality.** In common parlance Vastu means things. Meaning of Vasa is "to exist". Vastu means that which remains always or Brahman. Therefore abiding in Brahman is Gyanam. To avoid objectification of Brahman the word abiding is used. The word abidance can also cause confusion as one can think of it as going deep down and sitting on a Brahman, like a carpet. One has to understand the meaning of abidance properly.

What is Brahma Nishta? Abidance is a stage of knowledge where one knows, "that Brahman I am". It is not an object. It is not below for me to sit upon. Brahman is Me. The word Bhava

means Gyanam. It is a state of effortless knowledge. It is acquired through Ahamkara Vichara. Brahma Gyanam is Brahma Nishta or abidance in Brahman. It is a stage in which one enjoys the knowledge that I am Brahman, acquired through Ahamkara Vichara.

Once you acquire this knowledge, it is always present. If you say you have experienced Brahman keep in mind it can be displaced by another experience. Any experience is displaceable. Knowledge, however, cannot be displaced. Citing an example, knowledge of your phone number cannot be displaced. Even a great sorrow cannot displace knowledge of your phone number. That is why we work for this knowledge. Once you get the knowledge, you don't have to work for it anymore. It is always there for you. You are in a state of knowledge. Just as you know your phone number all the time, so also you know you are in a state of knowledge because it is retrievable in your mind. It does not require remembering. It should be available at all times. Nishta is a state of knowledge. You know who you are. Even as we know Ahamkara Gyanam, Atma Gyanam is also now known to us. Atma Gyanam is also available, on demand.

Brahman is neither an object nor an object under me. Brahman is Me. As per Bhagawan Ramana Maharishi this is Saddarshanam. It is called Vichara Marga.

Now comes a question? This is raised in first two lines of the shloka. Is Vichara Marga (Gyana Marga) easy or difficult? Some say it is easy and others say it is difficult. Some parts of the Scriptures say it is easy while others say it is difficult. Gyana Marga is compared to walking on razors edge. The answer is that it depends upon who the person concerned is. For a prepared person it is easy while for an unprepared person it is difficult. For many people, sitting is difficult, for others it is not. The question then is who is considered prepared and who is not? It is a Sadhana Chatushtaya Sampana person who can be considered reasonably prepared. In humanity

probably 99% of people are not prepared. The most important quality required is detachment. Detachment means free from Kama, Krodha, Raga and Dvesha. Most of us are not prepared. That is the reason Vedas have kept Gyana Sadhana as the last one. Therefore, Upanishads occur in Veda Anta. So, Gyana Marga is not easy. Bhagawan Ramana Maharishi cannot be considered an example, as he is an exception.

Bhagawan Ramana Maharishi says a person should go through a religious life. One should lead a Dvaita life before advaita. Ramana Cult people miss this point. May you remain in Mithya until Ahankara matures to pluck you down. Raw fruit is difficult to pluck. When you pluck it oozes in sorrow at the separation. It is not ready for separation. A tree is required for the ripening. At that point Dvaitam loses its charm.

Never criticize puja. Bhagawan Ramana Maharishi was the greatest Bhakta of Arunachala. How to do puja of Brahman? Worship Saguna Brahman in form of Ishta Devata such as Shiva, Krishna etc.

Bhagawan Ramana Maharishi cannot be quoted as an example as he was genius. Ramana Cult people commit this mistake. Bhagawan Ramana Maharishi warns that do not give up puja. Puja helps with Nirguna Gyanam.

He gives another warning. Dvaita Puja is very important, but never take it as an end in itself. You have to go beyond it. Use Dvaitam to go beyond Dvaitam.

What is the connection between Puja and Vichara? Puja is an indirect means also known as Parampara Sadhana. Vichara is direct means known as Sakshat Sadhana. Puja helps Vichara. Vichara helps Gyanam. Religious life leads to philosophical enquiry. This enquiry then leads to Moksha. It is a very important verse as it teaches the majority of us that we need both Puja and Vichara.

Shloka # 11:

All pairs of opposites and all triads shine, taking the support of some entity. When that is searched, all will get dropped. To them who see the Truth, there is never any wavering.

Now back to Vichara, after emphasizing puja. The entire cosmos that we experience is nothing but Brahman with name and form. On this Brahman appear many names and forms. We look at it as subject and object also called Dvandam. We can also look at it as Triputi (The division of the knower, the known and the knowing instrument or the act of knowing – the pramata, the prameyam and the pramanam). All are one Brahman. Of this Brahman, part is Satyam and another part is Mithya. Mithya has Nama and Roopa. Thus, the entire cosmos is a mixture of Satyam and Mithya (nama and roopa).

Shankaracharya has said: You can never experience pure Brahman. Nor does pure Mithya exist. Whatever we experience is a mixture of the two.

The very “I”, singular, is also a mixture of Satya Atma and Mithya Ahamkara. Therefore, when we talk of Self-enquiry, the enquiry is into a mixture of Atma and Ahamkara. Therefore, in shastras the word used is Viveka or sorting it out rather than Vichara. Atma Ahamkara Viveka is self-enquiry. Since “I ‘ is a mixture of both it is called Ahamkara Vichara and sometimes Atma Vichara. If both descriptions are right which is a more accurate one? One may ask what do we care?

Swamiji said this information is required to change our attitude. Bhagawan Ramana Maharishi says Atma Vichara is more accurate although Ahamkara Vichara is also acceptable. Enquiry into Mithya won't lead us anywhere as it is a mystery. It leads us only to further mysteries. You get lost going round and round. Don't enquire into Mithya, say the Vedas.

Therefore Atma Vichara will lead you somewhere.

The second answer is Mithya is nourished by ignorance, as it

is a false entity. Like in the snake and rope analogy, the snake exists because of ignorance of rope. Rope enquiry leads to rope knowledge that removes the snake. Therefore Vichara is Adishtana Vichara, leading to Adishtana Gyanam destroying Adishtana Agyanam. With this the Mithya serpent is destroyed.

Questions such as: How did the universe come into being? How did the first Karma occur? This is mystery leading to more mystery. Jagat Vichara is not the goal of Vedanta. So, Atma Vichara is Self-enquiry. This is the essence of this Shloka.

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

Three Gunas

In Chapters 14, 17 and 18 of Bagawat Geeta, Bagawan Krishna discusses the three gunas – Satvic, Rajasic and Tomasic. Swamiji has presented many aspects of these gunas in a chart form in his book on Bagawat Geeta. I prepared a chart based on Swamiji's chart and added other aspects of the gunas based on Swamiji's teaching. I presented these charts to Swamiji for his blessing and presenting them, with his permission, for your use.

Please click on the link below to access the chart.

Three Gunas

Bagawat Geeta, Class 50

Greetings All,

Shloka # 36:

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय 3.36

Arjuna said:

Now impelled by what does man commit sin? O Krishna, though loath to sin, he is driven to it forcibly, as it were.

Continuing his teachings, Swami Paramarthananda said, with shloka # 35 the topic of Karma Yoga has completed. Recapping previous class he said Karma yoga is the first step of spiritual sadhana. Although it does not lead to liberation it gives a person Gyana Yogyata. Once he has Gyana Yogyata he does not need Karma Yoga anymore. He can take to Sanyasa ashrama or Grihasta Ashrama with reduced Karma Yoga. Only in Gyana Yoga can one get liberation.

A karma Yogi is one who leads a Dharmic way of life, with dharmic actions dedicated to God. Dharma is an ethical and moral way of life. **It's very definition is leading a life where every action is a performed as worship of the divine or as Deva-arpanam.** If one fails to follow Karma Yoga one is spiritually destroyed.

Now, Arjuna asks his question. Setting the stage for this question, swamiji says, every human being has discriminating power and they know ethics. These ethics are common sense rules. Even a thief knows ethics, which is why he steals secretly. Even a thief does not like his own money to be stolen. Everyone knows telling lies is wrong. **Dharma can be summarized as " What I do not want others to do to me, same I**

should not do to others”. This is dharma. If I want everybody to love me then I should not hate anybody. Similarly, I want everybody to help me, which means that I should be helping others. Everybody knows dharma. I clearly know what is dharma. Here Arjuna asks, why do I still not follow it? What is the force that makes me violate my own conscience?

In many religions they place this force as external such as devil or Shaitan. Some think God himself makes me do it. Some think the devil makes me do it. Some think fate makes me do it. Hence the saying: Vinasha Kale Viparitha Buddhi. If this force is in me, can I control it? Do we have the will?

Some say there is no will. Everything is fatalistic. Some say will is feeble, in front of such forces.

Shloka # 37:

कृष्ण उवाच ॥

इह त्वं भवसिद्धयै च
भयं भवसिद्धयै च भवसिद्धयै च ॥३.३७॥

Sri Krishna said:

This is craving, this is wrath, born of the constituents of Rajas. He is voracious, a great sinner, know him to be the foe in this context.

From this shloka and till the end of the Chapter, Sri Krishna now answers Arjuna’s question.

He says there is no external force controlling us. It is all within us. There is no external devil. What is this basic force? It is our Ignorance that is the root cause. Ignorance works at two levels. They are:

1. Ignorance with respect to dharma and adharma.
2. At a higher level, it is our Atma Anatma Agyana.

Sri Krishna does not talk of Agyanam. Agyanam however expresses itself in two forces. They are Kama and Krodha. They both are the problems. Therefore, in the following verses, Sri Krishna is going to discuss the problem of Kama Krodhaḥ, the source of Kama Krodhaḥ, and the remedy or the medicine to the disease of Kama Krodhaḥ. Thus, the three topics are: kama krodhah svarupam; kama krodhah karanam; kama krodhah pariharaha. This is now going to be discussed.

Kama is desire. Krodha is anger. Every human being experiences desire, intimately. The object of desire may vary from individual to individual. The anger too, you feel intimately. It is at the tip of your nose. It is experienced intimately. Both of them are born out of our Rajo Guna. They obstruct Karma Yoga and Dharmic way of life. Desire is a glutton. There is no way to fulfill all desires. They never end. Actually it continues to expand and increase.

Why is it so?

All desires are expressions of one basic desire. Right now, I feel incomplete with myself. My struggle is, how to become complete within myself. All desires are superficial. Finally, I want to become one with infinite. I do not want Kuraiva (Tamil, feeling of want) but want Niraiva (Tamil, feeling of fullness).

Vedanta says the incomplete one (finite) can never become infinite. You can never become poornaha. Our approach is illogical. Finite is trying to become infinite.

Swami Chinmayananda described happiness as follows:

Happiness=desires fulfilled/number of desires you have.

Unfortunately the numbers of desires you have keep expanding and this causes happiness to keep falling.

Finite wanting to become infinite is not possible. So what? As

anger. How does desire cause problems for humans? Sri Krishna says desire causes problems by blunting one's reasoning power. A person blinded by desire cannot think or discriminate. Buddhi has to decide what action to take. It has to decide whether to give importance to spirituality or go after materialism. Every moment in life one has to decide this. Life is full of choices. Kama covers our Vivek Shakti. How does Kama cover Vivek Shakti? Citing examples:

1. Like smoke covering fire. Agni has brightness and can enlighten. It is covered by smoke that covers the light.
2. Mirror covered by dust. Dust cannot reflect my face.
3. Child in a fetus covered by the womb cannot function fully. It does not have enough space.

In the same way covered by desire, Buddhi cannot think.

All three examples have significance. When covered by smoke, you just need to fan it. With a dirty mirror you have to wipe it off. With a child you cannot do anything but wait. It has to mature for 10 months and then come out. Some desires can be easily removed. If desire is of some intensity one has to go through fulfillment of desire. When desire is intense, you have to allow it to go through and hope that one grows out of it. It may take time.

Take away from class:

This definition of dharma was new to me. It is something we should all follow.

“ What I do not want others to do to me, same I should not do to others”.

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy

