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... Bhagavad Gītā ...

Chapter 6

AI Summary - Class 207

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Summary

Vedāntic Meditation and samādhi

Introduction to Meditation in the Bhagavad Gītā

Krishna introduces the practice of meditation in the sixth chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā. The discussion centers on the process and culmination of meditation, with particular emphasis on achieving mental absorption in the object of meditation. This chapter serves as a foundational text for understanding the systematic approach to meditative practice.

Vedāntic Meditation: Core Principles

Definition and Focus

Vedāntic meditation is characterized by maintaining a continuous flow of similar thoughts (Sajātīya pratyaya pravāhaḥ / Eka rūpa vṛtti pravāhaḥ) related to the nature of ātman. This practice is distinct from other meditation forms due to its exclusive focus on the Self.

Key Features of ātman in Meditation

- ātma caitanya (Consciousness of the Self)
- svarūpaḥ (Essential Nature)
- Anitya (Eternal Nature)
- Various other attributes described in Bhagavad Gītā Chapter 2, verses 12-15

While ātman possesses many features, the meditator should focus on these features without shifting attention to different objects. The key is maintaining continuity of thought about the Self's nature. (Acharya Tadany)



Prerequisites for Vedāntic Meditation

Acharya Tadany emphasized that Vedāntic meditation is impossible without proper preparation:

1. Study of Vedānta under a competent guru is essential
2. Understanding of the philosophical foundations must precede practice
3. Non-Vedāntic students can practice alternative forms of meditation such as mental puja
4. Proper guidance ensures correct understanding of ātman's features

The Bhagavad Gītā's Teaching on ātma

Essential Verses

Verses 12-15 of the second chapter contain the essence of the Bhagavad Gītā's teachings on ātma. These verses provide the foundational understanding necessary for Vedāntic meditation practice.

Importance of Scriptural Study

The discussion highlighted that intellectual understanding through scriptural study forms the basis for authentic meditative practice. Without this foundation, meditation may lack proper direction and understanding.

The Three Stages of Meditation

Stage 1: dhāraṇa

The initial stage involves collecting scattered thoughts and developing concentration. The practitioner learns to gather the wandering mind and direct it toward a single point of focus.

Stage 2: dhyānam

In this intermediate stage, the meditator experiences absorption with awareness of distinction between the meditator, meditation, and the object of meditation. The three-fold division remains present in consciousness.

Stage 3: samādhi

The final destination of aṣṭāṅga yōgaḥ, where spontaneous absorption occurs. In this state, the distinction between meditator, meditation, and object dissolves into unified experience.

The Gradual Process of Meditation

Initial Phase: Collecting Scattered Thoughts



The meditation journey begins with the challenging task of gathering the mind's scattered attention. This phase requires consistent effort and practice to develop basic concentration skills.

Progressive Development

Through sustained practice, the meditator gradually moves from effortful concentration to more natural states of absorption. The process is incremental, requiring patience and dedication.

Culmination in samādhi

The ultimate goal is spontaneous absorption where meditation becomes effortless. This represents the fruition of the entire practice.

Seven Definitions of samādhi

The verses present seven distinct definitions of samādhi, each highlighting different aspects of this culminating state, these two were studied in today's class.

1. Mental absorption in the object of meditation
2. Continuous flow of similar thoughts

Distinction Between Meditation Types

Aspect	Vedāntic Meditation	Other Meditation Forms
Primary Focus	Features of ātman (Self)	Various objects (deities, breath, mantras)
Prerequisites	Study of Vedānta under guru	May not require scriptural study
Nature of Practice	Continuous flow of similar thoughts about Self	May involve varied techniques
Accessibility	Requires philosophical preparation	More immediately accessible
Example Practices	Contemplation on ātma caitanya	Mental puja, breath awareness

Practical Guidance

For Vedāntic Students

- Seek a competent guru for proper instruction in Vedānta
- Study the Bhagavad Gītā systematically, especially Chapter 2, verses 12-15
- Develop clear understanding of ātman's features before attempting meditation



- Practice maintaining continuous thought flow on Self's nature
- Progress gradually through the stages without forcing advancement

For Non-Vedāntic Practitioners

- Explore alternative meditation forms such as mental puja
- Develop concentration through accessible techniques
- Consider studying Vedānta if drawn to Self-inquiry
- Respect the prerequisites for authentic Vedāntic practice

Key Insights from the Discussion

Vedāntic meditation is impossible without studying Vedānta under a competent guru. The intellectual understanding of ātman's nature must precede and inform the meditative practice. The journey from scattered thoughts to Nirvikalpa samādhi is gradual and systematic, requiring patience, proper guidance, and sustained effort.

While ātman has infinite features, meditation maintains focus on these features without shifting to different objects, creating a continuous flow of Self-related contemplation.