

The Yoga of Meditation

Chapter 6 (1 of 2)

Today we are doing the sixth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, The Yoga of Meditation. We will explore the technique of meditation and the nature of meditation. In the first six chapters of the Gita we have been dealing with the individual realization of the self or the soul. These first six chapters are the effort part; it doesn't come naturally. Being a human being comes naturally. Enjoying yourself, indulging your whims and your moods and getting what you want comes naturally. This is the normal human condition. The first six chapters introduced the concept of yoga and described six interrelated aspects of yoga. Yoga is the conscious and willful action we take toward a purpose: to merge with the goal of our yoga, to complete what we are striving for. We have described the first five so far: the Yoga of Dejection, the Yoga of Discrimination, the Yoga of Action, the Yoga of Knowledge, and the Yoga of Renunciation.

(2:02) All are interrelated. The basic teaching is the same: moving our consciousness out of identification with our human condition into identification with our spiritual condition, moving out of our identification with our separate ego existence into a relationship with an overall field of oneness and consciousness in which we all live in and are expressions of. Yoga is an unveiling. It is an effort that requires persistence. It requires a sense of what it is that you are heading for. It requires effort at times and at other times it is a natural movement.

For some, moving from a state of suffering to a state of non-suffering is a natural movement. To come out of ignorance into discrimination and knowledge is a natural movement in the evolution of consciousness even as human beings. To discover right actions, those actions that work, is a natural expressions when one is striving to have things work and to find out what is real, and to act according to what is true.

The Yoga of Knowledge is the revelation that comes when we begin to align our life with the purpose of life; when we move out of our little individual expression of needs and wants and start expanding and connecting to something larger than ourselves. As we begin to take actions aligned with that current, then a natural revelation of the nature of truth starts coming. When this knowledge builds to a sufficient point we begin to undo the habit of our human identity and connect with the spiritual possibility that is arising within us.

(4:40) The Yoga of Renunciation is a natural continuation of knowledge. When you have greater discrimination, greater knowledge of what is true, then you have less pull to what is not true. You let go of it. You realize that you have some say about staying in suffering and so you choose to let go of suffering. You relinquish the habit of misery, the habit of selfishness, the habit of anger and dissatisfaction. In this relinquishing you find yourself moving into a relationship with the inexplicable quality that is the essence of what we are—the soul.

In the sixth chapter we are now moving into a direct relationship with the soul. It is the indicator and also the technique of moving into oneness with the soul, with moving into relationship with the essential quality that lives us. So meditation is basically contemplation of that which contemplates. It is when consciousness turns its attention from outward things to the inward thoughts associated with outward things, the inner feelings associated with outward things. It starts turning its attention on that which is the source of attention.

(6:16) It is a movement that starts occurring when we move into relationship with something that is the essence of ourselves. Meditation is a movement into relationship with that which is the soul, the truth of ourselves. Consciousness turns inward on itself. That is the essence of meditation. For some people, it comes naturally. They sit and automatically become quiet and contemplative. They turn inward and the world falls away. Often people who meditate have a capacity to be single focused, a capacity to have a purpose and to organize their lives around that. But it is not necessarily required.

There are basically three types of meditation as there are three gunas. Tamasic meditation is sleep and stupor, watching the TV zoned out, not paying attention, only partially present. Rajasic meditation is simply being miserable, sitting with how restless you are and how ranging your thoughts are and how you want to be any place but meditating. Sattwa is the only natural meditation. When someone is sufficiently sattwa then meditation comes naturally. This capacity to meditate may be in the mental, or the vital in the drives and feelings, or it may be in the body. It could be in all three or any two or any one.

(8:34) The ability to be contemplative, or in relationship with the present moment, exists with all living creatures. It is only human beings that isolate themselves from that natural repose, that presence with what is arising. Animals and plants are in constant relationship with what they are, but they don't know that they are. Human beings can separate themselves from what they are, unlike the rest of nature, and become miserable as a consequence: thinking they are a *who*, not the *what*, making stories, striving, being dissatisfied.

When we start choosing to meditate, here in the West there are many different types of meditation: vipassana meditation, techniques of contemplation, or imagination. But unless your system has been prepared, you won't be able to meditate for very long. Maybe you will have five minutes, ten minutes or fifteen minutes max. Only when you have been organizing your life in order to move into relationship with the soul can meditation become a substantial part of your daily existence.

(10:14) In this chapter Krishna is revealing to Arjuna something of the nature of meditation and also meditation as a technique of moving toward the truth of the soul, hinting at its relationship with samadhi, equanimity, and other attributes that have been described in the other chapters. It is the maturation, the settling down of the otherwise restless consciousness, becoming silent and still.

Chapter 6 Dhyana Yoga The Yoga of Meditation

The Blessed Lord Said:

234. One who performs his ordained duties without expecting the fruits of action is a true sannyasi and a yogi, but not the one who has given up the rituals or outer activities.

235. Arjuna, what is called sannyasa is also known as yoga because no one can ever become a yogi without renouncing desire.

236. Action in detachment is the secret behind success in yoga and the capacity to maintain serenity is the secret behind the undisturbed peace of a yogi.

In these verses the Gita is refreshing its two basic principles. The first is detachment from the outcome of our actions. The second is renouncing desire: sannyasa, letting go of having things different than how they are, letting go of the endless striving. There are two modes, two directions that the Gita points to, both of which allow us to rest. When you let go of needing the meditation to produce a certain kind of outcome, when you let go of whatever else you could be doing besides meditating, you become poised in relationship with the present moment. That is essentially meditative.

(13:10) The human ego is endlessly restless, striving through desire for outcomes, desiring things to be different than they are, resisting things as they are. So when we have consciously quieted these things as the first five chapters pointed to, then meditation comes more naturally.

237. When a seeker is free from all desire and attachment to the object of senses, he is said to have attained the highest state of yoga.

238. The Self is said to be the friend and also the enemy of the self. Therefore, one should liberate the self by the help of the Self and not bind it by the self.

239. One who has conquered the self by the Self, for him the self is a friend, but one who unable to do this, for him the self is like an enemy.

240. One who has conquered his self attains peace and calmness, remains unperturbed by heat or cold, pain or pleasure, praise or censure.

The Gita is speaking of the relationship with two selves. The capital "S" Self is our authentic Self. It is that quality aligned with the spiritual path, which has an inherent intelligence and will with less human conditioning and attachment. This letting go of the human ego, the small self, and moving into relationship with it as a collaborator rather than as an enemy is what this verse is talking about. This is where we can get our human nature to move into alignment with our spiritual nature, to come out of our identification with the ego alone and start moving into relationship with that central quality of being which is in proximity to the essence of what we are. I call it the authentic or the central Self.

(15:58) It is the organizing principle that gives us self-awareness and it has inherent in it an intelligence and curiosity and interest in existence. And it has this capacity for will to take independent action, to choose. This is who is doing the yoga. This part of our self comes forward the more we do yoga and the parts of the ego that are aligned with it blend into that, and the parts that are not fall away. We become organized around a central Self that is close to the characteristic of the soul. In Sanskrit the soul is called atman. And this central being is called jivatman. It is the portion of the soul that has taken on the identity of the individual in which the soul is occupied.

This sense of identity of the personal self or me-ness is very close to this principle of I am. The I am-ness is what asks questions that takes actions. It is that organizing principle in which our ego has shaped itself. The thing about the central Self is that it tends to be quiet; it tends to rest in the background until there is an opportunity for it to come forward. And then it enlivens and enriches the ego when it comes forward. We call that spiritual experience or insight or inspiration or aspiration. Then it recedes back down.

(18:07) Why is this? Because the ego is not organized. The ego is multiple selves. It is just a structure of repetitive habits, thinking and feeling, that get associated with the body. We then say, "This is me. This is my thought. This is my feeling." These become differing points of views that shape how the world shows up for us. Imagine a cluster of multiple selves in which there is a central seat. Whoever is in the central seat is running the show. If you are in a bad mood, then all the other parts of the ego align with the bad mood. If the good mood comes forward then all the other parts of the ego align with that. You don't notice the difference. You just accept that this is the way it is, like a game we play. Who is in the driver's seat? Who takes over the show? We think that whoever is running the show is us. All the other parts that are aligned with whoever is in the driver's seat we also think are us.

When we are in a good mood, all parts of us are in a good mood. We see good things happening and we feel good about what is arising. And when we are in a bad mood, it has all been crap and it will all be crap, and it is crap right now. We unwittingly are being thrown into these multiple points of view without any rhyme or reason. There is not a central organizing principle. Until the authentic self starts coming forward, applying effort and discipline, setting a goal and creating a purpose, finding meaning and inspiration, the human ego will be in chaos. Who you are talking to one day will be different than who you are talking to the next day depending upon their mood and their cycle.

(20:46) You can't just teach one part of the multiple selves and expect the rest of them to get organized around that one part. You have to have something more essential. You have to have the boss come forward and take a stand and say, "Hey you guys, get your act together. We are up to something. We aren't just going this way and that way." The boss starts kicking ass and telling the different parts of itself to get their act together. The boss applies intelligence and will and experiments with how to reach its purpose. The true Self is the boss. By the sixth chapter the boss has come forward.

When the boss comes forward, it is not fooled by all the multiple selves, the little selves, scabbling and irritated or maybe happy and liking the control, depending on their moods.

It doesn't lose itself in each of its points of view. It is the central director of the play. This movement to the Self has a relationship to the old self which says, "We were running this kingdom just fine before you showed up. Why don't you just go away?" Or, "We like what you are saying. Let's do what you are doing." Depends which part of our multiple self is in alignment. The positive self tends to be more aligned with the authentic self. The negative self tends to be more aligned in its separate smallness, dissatisfaction, complaint, and victimization.

(23:04) In verse 238 it says, *"The Self is said to be the friend and also the enemy of the self."* It means that it has come forward with authority. The true part of your Self, the best part of your ego, the best part of the organizing principle of who you are that is doing yoga, is in charge in these verses. At this point you may have been doing yoga for years so you have become familiar with this part of your Self. Your life is moving forward. You are beginning to have the ability to choose not to go into a negative point of view, to relinquish your position, to let go of your attachment to the outcome. It has gained some authority in your ego.

So the Self can be the friend and also the enemy. If the little self doesn't want to cooperate, watch out. The boss will kick ass. Eventually the boss will win. Why? Because it is closer to truth. It is like a recalcitrant child resisting change. It doesn't want to have something that changes its habits. It is stubborn and resistant and rebellious. It is only the authentic Self, the boss, that can take us on this yoga. If you let the little ego have its way you will be diminished, you will lose your authority and power to let go, to choose, to create.

(25:40) One who has conquered this little self attains peace and calmness. When the boss comes forward all the other discordant parts of yourself quiet and become obedient. When that happens then all parts of the self start quieting. The stubborn parts let go. These multiple selves quiet down. And you find yourself in the state of meditation.

241. A yogi who has conquered his self is ever satisfied with knowledge and wisdom and is free from aversion; for him a stone, gold, and a lump of earth are of equal importance.

242. A yogi who has reached a higher state accepts all equally, whether they are well-wishers, friends, enemies, persons of indifference, mediators, relatives, saints or even sinners.

This is speaking of the state of equality where the consciousness is fulfilled with being itself. The tendency to assign value or importance to things outside of yourself lessens. The nature of ego is that it makes things important or unimportant to itself, but to the authentic Self they are all interesting, they all have a relative importance. There is this ability to accept whatever is arising, whether difficult, confusing and uncomfortable, or easy, illuminating, and satisfying. They are all seen as equal expressions of this same thing. It is not assigned to something outside of itself. Because it is beginning to draw nurturance and fulfillment from within, the need for fulfillment outside of itself lessens automatically.

(28:16) It doesn't need to have something in order to be fulfilled. It doesn't need to avoid something in order to feel its peace and calmness. It can be in all different kinds of

situations. This is the quality of one who has come to the state of the stithi prajna, the state of equanimity and the state of equality. Both of these are reflective of one who has reached his or her own orbit, one who has come to the point of no return. The ways of the old can still come forward, but one is no longer overtaken. This capacity to see your beliefs and positions about these outward things tends to fade their ability to rule you. You become more filled just being and not needing to have an opinion or a judgment, not needing to know or strive or resist.

Verse 243 is unique in the Gita. This is the first set of instructions that Krishna is giving. There are only about three or four places where the Gita has specific instructions and there is no chapter as specific about the technology of meditation as this chapter. Elsewhere it hints at it, but here it is very specific. Quite unique considering that Arjuna is about to kill 16 million people.

So what is this role of meditation relative to where we are headed? You will notice that someone like Arjuna who is inclined to fight and effort, and who is rajasic, finds meditation not natural. It was clear that Arjuna needed some specific help because he wasn't going to get there based on his warrior nature. He needed specific information about how to redesign his relationship with his true nature.

243. While practicing the yoga of ceaseless union with the Self, one should avoid crowded places and try to live within, banishing all ideas of material possession. One should also remain free from desire and control the senses.

244. For practicing the yoga of meditation one should select a serene place and prepare a comfortable and stable seat.

245. Sitting on such a seat, one should try to concentrate on the Self by controlling the mind and the senses.

246. While meditating, one should ensure that the neck, body and spine are erect and motionless, the consciousness is fixed inward on the Self and the thoughts are not desultory.

These are the basic techniques. The first is to avoid noisy crowded places. The environment influences your consciousness. The habit of the consciousness is to get distracted and hooked in because of the senses. The mind, which is the organizing principle of the senses, tends to be activated by a disruptive environment. So you need to be in a relatively quiet place. The second is to try to live within and become aware of your body and of you in your body, of you breathing in your body. You are moving inward. You are becoming aware that thoughts are going on where before you were your thoughts. You are becoming aware that feelings are going on where before you were the feelings. You are becoming aware of the restlessness in your system where before you were the restlessness. This turning within is beginning to pay attention to what is going on with you inwardly.

(33:37) The third is banishing all ideas of material possession, all the distractions of things around that you have to do, the things you are attached to, the things you worry about, the

things you have planned for. You are letting go of those things consciously in this period of meditation. One should also remain free from desire and control the senses. This is related to the first principle. You withdraw all of yourself from anything that would have you be some place other than where you are right now. You let go of the desire to be someone else. You let go of the desire of all the things you had to do before the moment of meditation and all the things you have to do afterwards. You pull away from that inclination and you control your senses. You don't let yourself get hooked into the impact of a thought that comes in, or noise. You are learning to bring the boss forward in the moment of meditation, to bring the true Self forward to allow you to prepare yourself for the state of meditation.

"Select a serene place..." My recommendation is that you find a place in your house, or if in a spiritual community, then in the meditation hall, or in your room, where you meditate. When you first begin to meditate it is very difficult. But when you meditate in the same place, something of that orientation becomes more readily available to you. It gets easier to come into the meditative position. Meditating in the same place on a regular basis reinforces your ability to enter into meditation.

(36:02) *"Prepare a comfortable and stable seat,"* so be comfortable. It is not necessary to be upright and uncomfortable. Many techniques of meditation are organized to keep you alert so you don't fall asleep or daydream. But the Gita says what is needed is just a comfortable and stable seat so you can feel held in your position and not worry about falling over or collapsing. I recommend that people sit up 45 degrees or more, so you can be reclined, but not more than 45 degrees. Beyond that point people tend to go into a stupor. If you are fully up then there is effort in keeping yourself awake, especially on long-term meditations that extend more than 30 minutes. For longer meditations it is more important to be comfortable and relaxed than it is to be rigid and struggling.

"Sitting on such a seat, one should try to concentrate on the Self." Turning your attention from outward things, pulling your attention away from your thoughts and the things that are going on, try to find that connection with the soul that has been your guidepost along these previous five chapters. Moving into that quietude or connection could be in the mental plane or the vital plane or the body plane. For some people it is easier to move into the connection in their body. They feel their body growing quiet. For others they feel the restlessness in their vital growing quiet or they have a heart connection and feel something happening in their heart.

(38:28) For most people, it is in their awareness. There is this progressive quieting of the distractibility of the consciousness to go to mind and thinking. It tends to move into connection with the awareness; that which is sitting which is aware. I call it the silence and stillness practice. You are looking to find that in you which is silent and still. What you are connecting with is that stability, not the instability. You are looking to connect with that stability which is still and silent. This is the thread that allows meditation to become a meaningful practice in your life.

Here it says, *"the neck, body and spine are erect and motionless, the consciousness is fixed inward on the Self and the thoughts are not desultory."* The neck, body and spine should be

erect so it is best not to be crouched over or bent to the side. But if you are meditating on your own, it is useful to make sure that whatever position you are in, the head, neck and body are aligned if you are reclining. Inevitably if you go into a deep meditation the body will move. Your head may fall forward, but then you are in deep meditation so you don't need to worry about this. We will later talk about the thoughts not being desultory.

247. In order to attain the samadhi state through meditation one should have inner calmness, be free from fear and firmly follow the vow of celibacy; by controlling the mind the seeker should concentrate on Me only and accept Me as his supreme goal.

248. In this way, when the yogi is able to still the mind and is established in the Self, he realizes supreme peace known as nirvana and finally attains Me.

These two verses are interesting. This is the first time samadhi is mentioned since the second chapter. Krishna says, "if you want to attain samadhi then this is what you do." Not everyone wants samadhi. Some people meditate just to feel good and have more peace and be happier. Some people feel the pull to a more profound relationship with their soul, their essential Self.

Samadhi is not possible unless there is a significant degree of inner calmness. The vow of celibacy is very important because the inclination of the body to get caught up in male female sexual energy is very distracting and very gripping. Samadhi cannot take root when the sexual nature is still active.

(42:16) *"Controlling the mind the seeker should concentrate on Me only and accept Me as his supreme goal."* Where did this "Me" come in? Weren't we trying to find the soul? Who is this Me? Sounds like Krishna. This is where we begin to come into this relationship between Krishna and Arjuna. Who is Krishna for Arjuna? What is Krishna? Is there such a thing as a Krishna within? We begin to step out of this conversation of impersonality and move into relationship to something that is within us that is greater than what we can know as ourselves.

"Concentrate on Me only" means concentrate on the quality that Krishna is representing for Arjuna within Arjuna, finding that connection between the divine principle and the divinity within yourself. Your true Me is the boss, is the one that you really are, is the essence of *who* you are, or to be more accurate, of *what* you are. But it is also the essence of the you with the *who*. Without that capital Me there would be no individual me. Without the Self there would be no little self. When the parents leave, the children take over the house. But now the parent is coming forward, getting the children to behave, putting things in order.

(44:06) *"The seeker should concentrate on Me only and accept Me as his supreme goal,"* means to accept this relationship as the purpose and organizing principle of your life. This is pointing to one becoming firmly established in the state of the Self. That is what Samadhi is, resting there as your primary place, and returning after being taken away by the endless distractions of the ego. Without that central place, that divinity within you, Samadhi, cannot happen and further progress cannot occur.

249. Arjuna, one who eats too much or too little, who sleeps too much or does not sleep at all, cannot attain success in yoga.

250. Yoga removes all sorrow from one who is temperate in food and recreation, is self-controlled, detached from the fruits of work and who has regulated his sleep and waking state.

251. When the seeker, through controlled mind, develops a natural dispassion for objects of pleasure and his consciousness rests only on the Self, he attains the yoga siddhi state.

252. Like the flame of the lamp that does not flicker when protected from the wind, the mind of a yogi at this stage is not perturbed since it is united with the Self.

253. Yoga is that state when the mind becomes silent and still and the self is satisfied by seeing the Self and derives delight from the Self.

The Gita is describing some of the qualities of one who has dedicated their lives to attain a permanent relationship with their true Self. This way one becomes established in the Self. This is the first attainment. These verses are describing the state where the identification with the ego shifts to the identification with the being. It is a movement from being identified with your moods and whims and stories to becoming that which is the essence of your existence. This Self realization is the first attainment.

(47:18) Here in the West this is the most commonly recognized state of realization. This is where you are in the now. This is where you are in the presence. This is where who you are is that which is presence. It is that existence as an individual, the ability to realize the Self within. It may get veiled or clouded, but it has become a permanent presence, a part of your every day life, something that is there multiple times in the day. It is a constant organizing presence for you.

In that state a quality of balance and peacefulness comes. It is not so much of a struggle anymore. It is not so much the fighting and the battling of the willfulness or the desires or the habits or the inclinations. You are moving to a place where you can be more relaxed, more joyful, more curious. It is a state of being where you are not perturbed. In the gunas this would be the sattwa state of consciousness that is attached to happiness and knowledge, the enjoyment of existence.

(49:06) *"Yoga removes all sorrow from one who is temperate in food and recreation."* It is no longer the asceticism that was required in Chapters 4 and 5. It becomes more relaxed. It is still avoiding those activities that obscure the consciousness because it doesn't want to obscure itself. It tends to enjoy the activities that enhance its consciousness and therefore naturally moves into harmony with life and existence. Things are more effortless. It is less you efforting. These are all symptomatic of one who has come to a stable relationship with them Selves, to the Krishna within.

"His consciousness rests only on the Self." This is the yoga siddhi state. This means the yoga has completed. It has come to its first completion. The separate consciousness has moved into relationship with that which is the source of it Self. The ego has merged into the being. This is the attainment. That is what siddhi means. When this is there naturally for you then you are a master of meditation and yoga as an individual. It is the first true proof, the first true shift. This happens spontaneously for some people. They step out of their identification with ego and become that which has an ego. They step out of their identification with their moods or thoughts and they become that which has a mood or thoughts.

(51:23) For most people it is a gradual process. The being comes forward and it comes more and more forward until it is taken for granted. It is your everyday normal existence. This is the yoga siddhi that this chapter is pointing to. *"Like the flame of the lamp that does not flicker when protected from the wind, the mind of a yogi at this stage is not perturbed since it is united with the Self. Yoga is that state when the mind becomes silent and still and the self is satisfied by seeing the Self and derives delight from the Self."* Quiet, at peace, calm, fulfilled within itself, nothing missing, nothing needed. But this realization is still in the mental plane. It is not fully established in the rest of the system.

This attainment is primarily in the awareness. It is an awareness that you are that which is the source of awareness. It is not necessarily that there are not moods or bad days or desires. This person becomes a happy human being. Why? Because they know how to respond to the situation. They know when to apply effort and when not to apply effort. They tend to be quite successful. They may not even know they have come to this state but they love meditation and spiritual things. Here in the West there are quite a few that come to the state of the being and they don't even know it or it is taken for granted.

(53:36) It may not seem like a big deal for one who has already attained it. That is why these first six chapters are preparatory, taking one out of identification with human consciousness into becoming identified with consciousness itself. Many on the path are in various stages in this journey. But it is still not integral. It still hasn't come in its full power and significance. Next week we will continue with part two in the instructions of Krishna to Arjuna.