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Hari Om

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GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Nasikagra drishti

Let him firmly hold his body, head and neck erect and perfectly still, gazing at the tip of his nose, without looking around.

—*Bhagavad Gita 6:13*

One cannot practise meditation without a firm seat. If the body is unsteady the mind will also become unsteady. There is an intimate connection between the body and the mind. One should attain mastery over the asana by daily practice. Sitting in the lotus pose or the adept pose will help in maintaining the nervous equilibrium and mental poise.

Though the gaze is directed towards the tip of the nose in nasikagra drishti when the eyes are half-closed and the eyeballs are steady the mind should be fixed only on the Self.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

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The Yogi is superior to the ascetic. He is deemed superior even to those versed in sacred lore. The Yogi is superior even to those who perform action with some motive. Therefore, Arjuna, do you become a Yogi. (*Bhagavad Gita VI:46*)

तपस्विभ्योऽधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मतोधिकः । कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन ॥

First Step

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Mumukshutva is the first step to jnana yoga. *Mumukshutva* means the desire to transcend. The first component is desire, an idea, and the second is transcendence. That indicates a recognition of your present condition. If the recognition of your present situation and condition is not there, there would be no desire to leave anything, improve, change or transcend.

Jnana yoga begins with self-perception, self-awareness and knowing where you are in life and what you need to do in order to improve life. That is the first stage of jnana yoga, not reading a book.

If this first stage is not attained, there is no beginning in jnana yoga. Intellectuals think their study is jnana yoga, but

that is their misconception. Psychics may think that their experience is their jnana yoga, that is their misconception. A questioner, a critic may think that asking questions is jnana yoga, that is their misconception. In all these external acts there is no recognition of the self. When you read, what is the recognition of the self in that?

The first stage of jnana yoga, *mumukshutva*, indicates that there is self-recognition before you even attempt to ask anything, before you even attempt to understand anything. Self-recognition has to happen. You know what is the first practice of jnana yoga? Some people say that in raja yoga the first practice of *pratyahara* is relaxation or *shavasana*. In the same way, the first practice of jnana yoga is the SWAN principle. The SWAN technique is a practice of jnana yoga, for it allows you to recognize yourself, and then your fine-tuning begins from that point on, the moment you recognize yourself.

Knowledge is not to be equated with jnana yoga. You know many things now, but how much do you live what you know? Therefore, knowledge cannot be jnana yoga, it cannot equal jnana yoga. So what equals jnana yoga?

When you live what you believe, that is jnana yoga. When you live what you know, that is jnana yoga, and if you live what you know, then not only the heart, which is only one aspect of your whole human personality, but the whole nature lives that knowledge. The heart indicates an expression, an awareness, a perception in the realm of the sentiments, which has to be beautified. The more those sentiments, emotions are beautified the more the heart is identified as a clear and pure heart.

The heart indicates a pure state of being, and mind indicates an interactive state of being. The heart and mind indicate a pure state of being which is attainable if that drive of *mumukshutva* becomes your guiding force in life and not questions, not scriptures, not debates, not other things that are clubbed as jnana yoga.

– 29 December 2014, Ganga Darshan, Munger

No Need for Questions

From May I Answer That, Swami Sivananda Saraswati



Swamiji, how did Maya arise in Brahman?

This is an *ati-prasna* or transcendental question. You will find this question coming up to your mind in various forms: When did Karma begin? When and why was the world created? Why is there evil in the world? Why did the Unmanifest manifest itself? And so on.

The same question is asked by Rama in *Yoga Vasishtha* and Vasishtha says: “You are putting the cart before the horse. You will not be benefited by an enquiry into this question at

all. Meditate and realize Brahman. You will then know the answer to this question. The problem itself will have dissolved by then." No one can answer this question. When knowledge dawns, the question itself vanishes. Therefore there is no answer to the question at all.

The *Brahma Sutras* says: *Lokavattu Lila Kaivalyam* – This world is nothing but divine play. It is only to pacify your doubt. It is really not an answer, for there can be no answer. Yet, the question will arise in the case of every seeker after Truth. You cannot help it. You will have to use your discrimination, pacify the doubt, and then through intense sadhana and meditation, realize God. Then the doubt will vanish.

A great yogi and jnani was worried with this doubt for twelve years. Then he told me: "The worry is over now. It troubled me for twelve years. I could not find an answer. So I have given up that pursuit and have taken to meditation, japa and kirtan. Now I find peace and progress." Faith in the Guru, in the *Granth Sahib*, kirtan, japa, meditation and the practice of righteousness will enable you to progress on the spiritual path and will take you to That where there is no questioning possible.

Life and death – which is more dreadful?

Life and death are both processes of gaining more and more fresh experiences in the progress of evolution tending towards the fruition of the wishes of the experiencer. Life is a scene where the individual puts on the dress or the form of a certain amount of desires which can be fulfilled in the special environment afforded by it. Death is the time when the individual goes behind the screen and puts on a new dress to appear in another scene of life and fulfil another quality of desires which cannot find the required atmosphere for fruition in the present life, but demand a fresh suitable environment. Hence, when properly understood, neither of them is dreadful. Both are necessary processes of breaking barriers and tearing the veils on the path to perfection. To the ignorant man,

however, both are dreadful experiences. He imagines death to be more dreadful.

Do you believe in heaven and hell existing as some independent planes apart from this earth-plane of ours?

Why not? They are also planes of existence just like ours. They are as real as the earthly plane. All the worlds, *lokas*, and all the *tirthas*, sacred rivers, are existent in the human being himself, if he has belief in the scriptures.

One can enjoy heaven or hell in this birth if he so wishes. The greater the grossness, the more intense will be the torture and suffering until such time as the individual is refined and fit for the descent of the Lord's grace by repeated calcinations or purificatory processes.

If you want to enjoy heaven on earth, go on purifying yourself by controlling the lower mind, the desires and cravings. All is bliss, all is joy, all is happiness then. If you allow a free rein to the horses of the senses and yield to the prompting of the devilish mind, if you follow the path of adharma, hell itself will prevail, not elsewhere in some incredible region, but here on this earth itself.

I would like to know why we are all created and put to this miserable and pitiable plight. You would argue that we are never created and never would die. Then why are we not all in that all-pure, omnipotent state without being entangled by samskaras and maya?

Questions like these are *ati-prasnas*, transcendental queries, for which you will not get an answer even if you rack your brain for millions of years. Intelligent people leave questions such as the 'why?' and the 'how?' of the universe. If a small son questions his father, "Papa, how did you procreate me?" what answer will Papa give? He will simply say, "Wait. When you become a man, you will understand this point."

This is exactly the case with you and several other new aspirants in whom the light is trying to shine forth. Do not

put the cart before the horse. Realize the atma. Then you will understand these matters. At the present moment, apply yourself to solid sadhana in earnestness and remove *mala*, impurities, *vikshepa*, dissipation, and *avarana*, ignorance.

Do not enter into vain discussions and arguments on such matters. You can ask me questions on other points of philosophy. Wherever you go, you will get the same answer. Have you grasped my point?

What is the feeling of a jnani when he eats a mango or some delicious food?

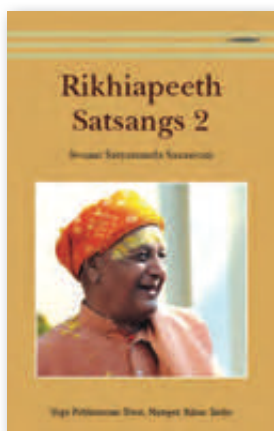
He has not the idea of *bhokta*, *bhoga* and *bhogya*, enjoyer, enjoyment and enjoyable. The eating of a mango will not produce any *samskara* in him. He will not think again at a certain time, "I ate a delicious mango at Mr Raman's bungalow last year." He is free from the *bhav*, the feeling, "*Aham Bhokta*" or "I am the enjoyer."

He is aware of the hunger. He is aware that hunger is the dharma of the *pranamaya kosha* and that something or the other should be thrust inside the stomach to appease this hunger.



Prerequisites for Jnana Yoga

From Rikhiapeeth Satsangs 2, Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Can you talk about jnana yoga, and is jnana yoga part of raja yoga?

The vedic tradition speaks of three paths that an individual has to follow for personal evolution. Just as you have evolution of a society, a political system, an education system, so on and so forth, in the same way, there is something known as personal evolution, which relates to you alone. It does not include even your nearest and dearest ones,

such as your husband, wife, children, mother, father, brother or sister. It is perhaps the only aspect of yourself that you can truly call your own.

The three paths of personal evolution are karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga. In each of these paths you deal with yourself, but the methods of dealing are different. In the path of karma yoga, you deal with yourself through enactment of *karma*, action. In bhakti yoga, you deal through emotions, feelings and devotion. In jnana yoga, you deal with yourself through *buddhi*, intellect. When I use the phrase 'deal with yourself', I mean dealing with your mind. Throughout life, that is what you are doing: dealing with the mind. Your life is just a play of the mind; therefore, to deal with life you have to deal with the mind, or vice versa.

When I speak of dealing with the mind, I do not just mean the conscious mind or the gross material awareness. In fact, I mean that all dimensions of the mind have to be dealt with, from the conscious to the unconscious. In order to deal with the mind at all levels, you have to remove the *avarana* or covering in the form of karmas that prevent your access to those deeper

realms. This refinement of mind from all extraneous material is enhanced by karma yoga or the yoga of perfection.

The refined mind then begins to perceive the reality and the process of knowledge begins, as the second barrier of *avidya*, ignorance, that prevents access to the deeper realms is slowly removed. This is accomplished through jnana yoga. This is why all yoga books begin with the sentence, “Now, therefore, I teach you yoga.” This is the first line in all yoga texts that expound the system of yoga. In the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, the sage starts his exposition by saying, *Atha yoganushasanam* – “Now, therefore, the disciplines of raja yoga.”

So, in order to learn jnana yoga and practise jnana yoga, first of all, you have to fulfil certain conditions. Otherwise, your foray into jnana yoga will only be intellectual and not experiential. Intellectual knowledge is not experience; intellectual knowledge is just information. If you have not eaten a particular sweet, but have read about it, you may be able to say everything about that sweet, but your knowledge will be incomplete because you have not tasted it and have no experience of it. Experience is personal knowledge and this applies to jnana yoga, which provides personal knowledge of the Self.

The prerequisites for jnana yoga are a peaceful and balanced mind, restrained senses, disenchantment from worldly pleasures, endurance, faith in guru and God. They are defined as *sama* or balance; *dama*, control of the senses; *uparati*, indifference to worldly pleasures; *titiksha*, endurance; *shraddha*, faith in the unseen; *samadhana*, the final realization. These six conditions are the prerequisites for a jnana yogi.





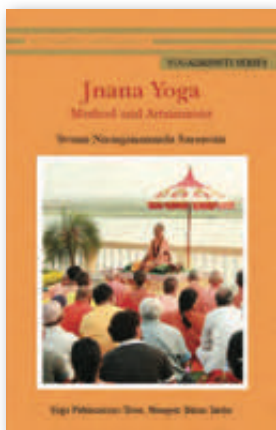
Following these principles makes him fully prepared for the experience of jnana or knowledge of the Self. If he does not fulfil these conditions, but only goes through the Upanishads, the *Brahma Sutras* and the Vedas, then it will only be intellectual knowledge, not experiential.

Every yoga has its own textbook. Just as the *Yoga Sutras* is the textbook of raja yoga, *Sandilya Bhakti Sutras* and *Narada Bhakti Sutras* are the textbooks of bhakti yoga, the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Mimamsa Sutras* and the *Dharma Sutras* are the texts of karma yoga. In the same way, the textbook of jnana yoga is the *Brahma Sutras*, which consists of aphorisms on Brahma. The *Brahma Sutras* should be studied after studying the *Panchadashi*, which is an important text of fifteen chapters defining in technical terms the highest reality. Swami Vivekananda, Swami Sivananda and Yogi Aurobindo have written very good commentaries on jnana yoga.

– October 2007

Stages of Jnana Yoga

From Jnana Yoga, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Meditation has to be understood in the right perspective and context. The one word 'meditation' contains many different ideas, stages, experiences and attainments within it. What is the starting point of meditation which can lead to jnana yoga?

Stage one

For everyone, the starting point, focus and aim of meditation in the first stage is physical stability. Those who have practised the meditative process sequentially, according to the Bihar Yoga tradition, will know that the first practice of meditation that is taught is *kaya sthairyam*. Many people think, "It is only a practice to become quiet and still, but I want to meditate." They forget an important factor: concentration cannot be achieved without stilling the senses, and the senses are not mental, but physical. Therefore, *kaya sthairyam*, stillness of the body, stillness of sensory input and output, is the first step in meditation.

You may be able to sit quietly for five or ten minutes, but the nature of the senses is such that disturbance will be created in that state of stillness and silence. You will allow yourself to be disturbed; you will not be able to resist the disturbance. I haven't come across anybody who can resist the mental disturbance. Anxiety overpowers the mind. Frustration, guilt and desires overpower the mind. These are mental dissipations and distractions which break the harmony and peace of mind, and nobody can resist them. Everybody falls prey to anxiety, fears, inhibitions, complexes, frustrations, depressions and

elations. This means only one thing: nobody has perfected *kaya sthairyam*.

How can you resist, observe and quieten the sensorial and physical distractions? Since the term *kaya sthairyam* means stillness of body, people think, "If I sit still, I am practising *kaya sthairyam*." You do not perfect *kaya sthairyam* by sitting still; it is the stillness of the senses that must be attained. The senses continuously move towards their gratification and identify with sense objects. That craving and need has to stop. Therefore, the first stage of meditation is stilling the senses and the interaction of the senses with sense objects. That is known as *kaya sthairyam*.



Stage two

After having perfected *kaya sthairyam*, you come to the mind. In meditation, the mind has to be stilled. The chatter of thoughts has to be stopped, refused and diminished. The cravings and expectations have to be diminished. As you are able to gain more control over your mental behaviour, you will discover that the mental chatter gradually reduces. That is an indication of progress. Today, you might be disturbed by a hundred thoughts. Tomorrow, only ten will come. That is when you know that you are walking on the right path. As the *vasanas*, passions, lessen, as the thoughts lessen, there is less distraction and disturbance in the mind and more stillness, silence and peace. In this stage, you are searching for that centre within where you experience peace.

One experiences peace only when one contemplates on the Supreme Element. Try it. Begin contemplating on something, your family or your work. The moment you start thinking, the mind becomes restless, thoughts begin to come at great speed, and those thoughts are about your problems, desires, attachments and wishes. However, when you meditate on guru or God, the mind does not become restless. It feels as if the mind has become centred on guru or God and no worldly thoughts come. A feeling of faith manifests. Therefore, one has to discover that centre within where one can fix one's mind and quieten the chatter of the mind. That is the second stage of meditation.

Stage three

In the third stage of meditation, you become the *drashta*, the observer. Without becoming the observer, you cannot walk further. You have to know what you are going to do and where you are going to walk. The *drashta* holds the map of the journey in his hands, because that is a natural and spontaneous attainment of *drashta-hood*, of becoming the observer.

Until a few years ago, those who wanted to undertake long journeys would go to the Automobile Association. The representative there would help plan out the route by marking

it with a highlighter on a map. As you held out the marked map, you saw your route clearly defined as well as all the other lanes and by-lanes which you need not take. You became the drashta of your path. When you hold the map in your hand, you automatically become the drashta of your path, "I have to go through the highlighted road only, as it will take me to my destination." That is the third state of meditation. After having stilled the mental behaviours, you become the drashta.

Being the drashta means that if there is joy, fine, but you are not that joy. You are the observer of the joy. If there is pain, let it be, you are not experiencing it, you are observing it. In this way, no matter what circumstance you go through, you become its observer. Being the drashta, you watch all the experiences that are taking place in the manas, chitta, buddhi and ahamkara. You watch which of them is binding you and which is freeing you. Which desire is binding you to the world and which is freeing you? Which thought is attaching you to the world of senses and which thought is freeing you from it? Until the drashta bhava manifests, you cannot make such a decision. The drashta bhava brings both *viveka*, discrimination, and *vairagya*, non-attachment. Therefore, in the third step you have to awaken the drashta bhava. You have to enhance the positive thoughts and samskaras which bring about human evolution and get rid of the unnecessary thoughts and samskaras which manifest incessantly. Your path is now clearly outlined, as all the dissipations of the mind have stopped.

Stage four

In the fourth stage, you start fine-tuning yourself. This is where the process of jnana yoga begins. The body is still, the senses are still, the mind is still, the disturbed state of the mind has been quietened, you have become the drashta and made the appropriate use of *viveka* and *vairagya*. After stilling the senses, stilling the mental chatter and becoming the observer of your mental processes, you consciously alter your mental behaviour. You apply your power of discernment, *viveka*

shakti, to sift the appropriate from the inappropriate and then apply your power of non-attachment, *vairagya shakti*, to detach from the negative and move towards the positive. In this way, slowly, the percentage of *tamas* and *rajas* reduces and that of *sattwa* is enhanced.

Now begins the contemplation: Who am I? In this contemplation, the *mahavakya* that you focus on is *Prajnanam Brahman* – “This consciousness is Brahman, this whole life is Brahman, I am surrounded by Brahman, I am surrounded by that Supreme Element.” We are surrounded by that Supreme Element just as a fish is surrounded by water, but does not know that it is living in water. We are surrounded by air and know that is so due to our intelligence, but we would not know it if we did not possess intelligence. How would you then know that you are surrounded by something called air? In the same way that air pervades the entire earth, an element subtler than air is the *Ishwara tattwa*, *Paramatma tattwa*, *Brahma tattwa*. It is also all-pervading like air. Air is not Indian, American, Chinese or Russian; it is all-pervading. In the same way, the Supreme Spirit is not Indian, Chinese, American, European or African; it is all-pervading.

That Supreme Element is what you need to search for. The process of connecting with it begins with the thinking, “The Supreme Element is all pervading. It is within me, it is in my consciousness and I am a part of it. I am not the body, nor the experiences associated with the body. I am the conscious element and that conscious element is *prajna*.”

Prajna means awakened intellect or awakened discrimination. In that awakened state, you are able to establish a connection with God. But this God is not a physical entity which is manifest; it is formless. *Brahman* means formless God, a combination of consciousness and energy. When this *jnana* or understanding takes over the consciousness, the whole world appears as a playground. You realize that just as children go to a park and play, you have come to this earth to play with wealth, family and job.

Stage five

When you go on contemplating the above, you reach the fifth stage of meditation where you perceive the whole world as manifestation of the Supreme Spirit. You no longer see yourself as separate from God. Right now, there is an experience of duality, "Here is me and there is God." 'My' experiences take place in a narrow field and the God experience takes place in an expansive field. There is dvaita bhava: "I am here and I am contemplating my object of worship, my ishta or my God, my Brahman." By contemplating in this way for a long time, you begin to feel *Sarvam khalvidam Brahman* - "All is Brahman". Now comes the second mahavakya: *Aham Brahmasmi*.

The second mahavakya is an experience of *advaita*, non-duality. There are always problems in duality, whereas there is peace in non-duality. Take the example of religions. Every religion says, "This is it." A Hindu will say, "This is the truth." A Muslim will say, "This is the truth" and a Christian will say, "This is the truth." No one will say, "That is also the truth." When you highlight only one thing, that which you are connected with, it represents dvaita. You think that what you are seeing and experiencing is the only reality. However, if you say, "That is also true," it becomes an accepting statement. "This is true and that is also true. We accept both." At this point, all differences come to an end. When there is acceptance, differences cease to be.

Through meditation, you come to the point where, after transcending the mind, you begin to experience the totality of consciousness. In that experience of totality of consciousness, you begin to experience and contemplate upon the transcendental or divine nature. That is when you realize that consciousness is Brahman.

The first mahavakya, *Prajnanam Brahman*, is called 'lakshana vakya'. *Vakya* means statement or sentence and *lakshana*, in this context, means quality. There are two meanings of the word lakshana: symptom and quality. In this context, it means quality. The quality of consciousness is Brahman. Therefore,

reflect on that. Reflect on that quality of consciousness which is unbound by the fetters of *maya* and *avidya*, delusion and ignorance. That luminous state of consciousness is Brahman.

The luminous state of consciousness is an outcome of wisdom, of knowledge becoming an integral part of consciousness. When consciousness and knowledge become one and there is no distinction between the two, inner luminosity is experienced. That is *prajna*. That inner luminosity is known as the transcendental, divine or godly luminosity, or Brahman. That is what you discover in the fifth stage of meditation. After you have modified and fine-tuned the expressions and behaviour patterns of the mind, consciousness, energy, lifestyle, environment, family, routine, and acquired a state of balance, you are able to practise this stage. Thus, meditation is actually the method by which one can perfect *jnana yoga*.

– 13 May 2011, *Ganga Darshan*, Munger



Intuitive Knowledge

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



What is jnana yoga? How can we pass through intellectual knowledge to the intuitive knowledge? Jnana yoga means the practice of yoga through awareness. Just as in bhakti yoga you go through the emotional channel, in the same way in jnana yoga consciousness becomes the tool of higher awareness.

Just as in raja yoga you have eight steps, in jnana yoga you have three. The first step is hearing the truth from the guru. Contemplating on the truth you have heard from your guru is the second. Then dissolving your mind or becoming one with the truth is the third.

Now again in order to change the intellectual significance of jnana yoga and make it more intuitive there are methods in jnana yoga. There are four techniques. The first technique is discerning truth from untruth. The first is called *viveka*, discrimination. The second is *detachment*, *vairagya* or dispassion. The third is special qualities. The fourth is the desire for liberation, passivity in mind.

The first of the six qualities is achieving equanimity, the second quality is to be able to control the mind and the third

one is to be able to withdraw the mind. The fourth one is endurance power – tolerance. The fifth one is faith and the sixth one is having a mind without confusion. These are the six important qualities.

So these are the four techniques which make a complete difference between the intellectual jnana yoga and the intuitive jnana yoga.

The word *jnana* means knowledge, but this knowledge should not be misunderstood for the intellectual knowledge, here by knowledge we mean the experience. Experience is a very personal thing. This experience which everyone has is obtained through two channels. One is direct, the other is indirect. Direct experience can be had through the senses and the mind. If there is a flower and you see the flower through your eyes this is called direct experience, *parokshanubhuti*. Then there is another kind of experience that is known as indirect experience, *aparokshanubhuti*. In this experience you do not need a vehicle of knowledge. The total experience is a subjective process. So in jnana yoga the experience is known as *parokshanubhuti* and *aparokshanubhuti*. When you know about the ultimate truth through the books it is called indirect experience but when you know about the truth in *samadhi* that is called direct experience.

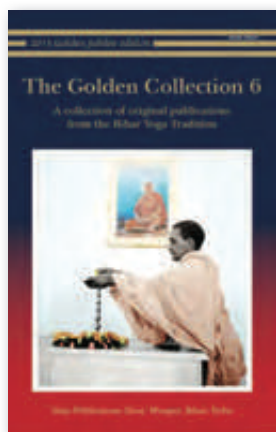
For example if you read in a book about chocolate. The book may have been written so well that you understand what chocolate should be. If anybody asks about chocolate, you can tell them everything about it. This is called intellectual knowledge of chocolate. This is called indirect experience. But even if you have not read any book, but you have tasted a little bit of chocolate, then you have the experience that is called direct experience.

The experience of the truth should be from within rather than from the mind. That is why jnana yoga is a way where you arrive at the highest truth without any intellectual medium.

– 17 December 1979

Method and Sadhana

From The Golden Collection 6, Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Yoga and jnana are the two wings of liberation. A hatha yogi starts his sadhana with the body and prana. A raja yogi starts his spiritual practice with the mind. A jnana yogi starts his spiritual sadhana with the *buddhi*, discriminative mind, and will. To be more accurate, a jnana yogi starts directly with *Brahman*, the Supreme Soul. He repeats constantly: *Aham Brahmasmi* – ‘I am Brahman.’ He who is attempting to fix the mind on Brahman

is really doing the highest karma yoga, highest yajna, highest duty and highest charity. He need not visit pilgrimages. He need not distribute charity.

Tattva jnana, knowledge of the true principle of truth, is release from the trammels of one's own mind, leading to moksha. The same mind which becomes of the nature of the universe through *ajnana* or ignorance, through spiritual practice and direction becomes of the nature of *jnana*, higher knowledge. If the mind is bathed in the water of jnana and cleansed of all its impurities, then the shining moksha will disclose itself in its native effulgence to those who strive after it. The real bliss is that which arises when the mind, divested of all desires through the eternal jnana, destroys its subtle form.

Qualifications for the student of jnana

The aspirant on the jnana yogic path must be equipped with the four means of salvation, *sadhana chatushtaya*: vairagya, viveka, shatsampat and mumukshutva . They are necessary qualifications for a student of Vedanta. Not an iota of spiritual

progress is ever possible unless one is really endowed with this fourfold qualification. These four means are as old as the Vedas or the world itself. Every religion prescribes these four essential requisites for the aspirant, only the names differ.

Viveka is discrimination between the real and the unreal, *sat* and *asat*, permanent and impermanent, *nitya* and *anitya*, self and the non-self, *atman* and *anatman*. Viveka should not be an ephemeral or occasional mood in an aspirant. A *viveki*, person of discrimination, is always on the alert and never gets entangled in anything. Viveka gives inner strength and mental peace. From *viveka* is born *vairagya*.

Vairagya is dispassion but that does not mean abandoning social duties and responsibilities of life. A *vairagi*, a dispassionate person, has no *raga-dwesha*, attraction and repulsion. A worldly man is a slave of these two mighty currents. A dispassionate man has a different training. He has a different experience altogether. He is a master in the art or science of separating himself from the impermanent, perishable objects. A dispassionate person is the most powerful, happiest and richest person in the world.

Shatsampat, the six-fold virtues, include *shama*, equanimity, *dama*, self-control, *uparati*, sensory withdrawal, *titiksha*, endurance, *shraddha*, faith and *samadhana*, constant concentration on reality. Of these six virtues, *shama*, *dama* and *samadhana* are really yogic practices to control the mind. *Shama* represents the *chitta-vritti-nirodha* of *raja* yogis by giving up desires, *dama* corresponds to *pratyahara*. *Samadhana* is the *ekagrata*, one-pointedness, of yogis.

Lastly, we come to the fourth of the main qualifications, *mumukshutva*. It is intense desire for liberation or deliverance from the wheel of birth and death with its concomitant evils of old age, disease, delusion and sorrow. If one is equipped with the previous three qualifications, viz., *viveka*, *vairagya*, and *shatsampat*, *mumukshutva* will come by itself. The aspirant should practise all the four means to the maximum degree. There is a definite significance in the sequence of the four

sadhanas. The aspirant who is in possession of the four means is a blessed divinity on the surface of this earth.

A complete detachment from the outward things, the manifold objects of senses, together with a capacity for metaphysical abstraction and concentration on inward things are demanded from an earnest seeker after truth. The voice of the pure spirit cannot be heard till all superficial organs cease to exist.

The aspirant must possess dauntless energy, for only through indefatigable effort can one realize Brahma jnana. Guru and the scriptures can show you the path and remove your doubts, but the *aparoksha*, direct, intuitive knowledge, is acquired only by individual effort. A hungry man, in order to satisfy himself, must eat. His hunger is not satisfied by watching another eat.

Special intelligence

Brahma vidya or the science of the Self is not a subject that can be understood and realized by mere intellectual study, reasoning or ratiocination, or even by discussions and arguments. It is the most difficult of all sciences. Mere scholarly erudition or a high degree of intelligence cannot help one in the practical realization of the truth inculcated by this science. It demands perfect discipline, a discipline that is not to be found in modern universities and colleges, and solid sadhana for the achievement of the goal that is indicated by this *para vidya* or highest science.

Purification of the mind also will not bring about Brahma jnana. It is only a special intelligence, *atmakara vritti* or *avichhinna vishesha chaitanya*, that can destroy the *moola ajnana*, primitive ignorance, that envelops the *swarupa*, Brahman or Existence. This special intelligence is developed through meditation.

Agni, fire, is of two kinds, *samanya agni* or ordinary fire and *vishesha agni* or special fire. *Samanya agni* is hidden in all trees and woods. It is of no use for burning purposes. *Vishesha agni* that is formed by rubbing a match or rubbing two pieces of

wood is useful for cooking and other purposes. Similarly, there is *samanya chaitanya*, ordinary intelligence or consciousness, that is pervading everywhere. There is also *vishesha chaitanya* or special intelligence. Samanya chaitanya cannot destroy ignorance or *avidya*.

Three Vedantic processes

To develop avichhinna vishesha chaitanya, you will have to take refuge in *shravana*, *manana* and *nididhyasana* – hearing of shrutis, reflection and meditation on Brahman – after purifying the mind. These are the three vedantic processes for the attainment of jnana. This is the ladder with three rungs through which the Vedantin ascends to Brahman.

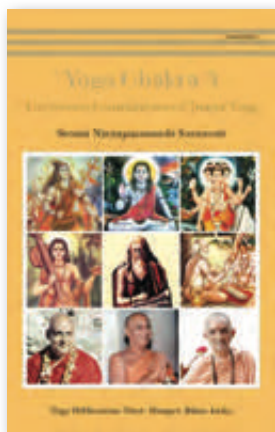
After the mind has been purified, an abstract image is formed in the purified mind by shravana and Brahma chintana. This abstract image melts later on into deep nididhyasana or profound and continued meditation. What is left behind is *chinmatra* or *kevala asti*, pure existence alone. Nididhyasana is meditation on atman. It is deep and intense contemplation. The mind is perfectly established in the Absolute. In nididhyasana, thinking ceases. No worldly thoughts will intrude now. The contemplation is like a steady flow of oil. There is only one idea of 'Aham Brahmasmi'. When this idea also is given up, nirvikalpa samadhi or sahaja advaita nishtha ensues. Just as salt melts in water, the sattwic mind melts in silence in Brahman, its substratum.

If you do shravana or hearing of the shrutis once, you must do manana or reflection on what you have heard ten times and a hundred times or a thousand times nididhyasana, profound and constant meditation. Then only real fruit is attained.



Clarity of Mind

From Yoga Chakra 3, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Cleaning the mind of its impressions and influences, and developing a new awareness is the subject of jnana yoga. Jnana yoga and rational thinking is supported by the components of *shuddhata* and *pavitrata*, purity. Without *shuddhata*, jnana yoga only remains *jnana*, knowledge and knowing. You know so many things but they are never applied. You have read and learnt, that is jnana. However, it is when the purity of intention is there to apply that

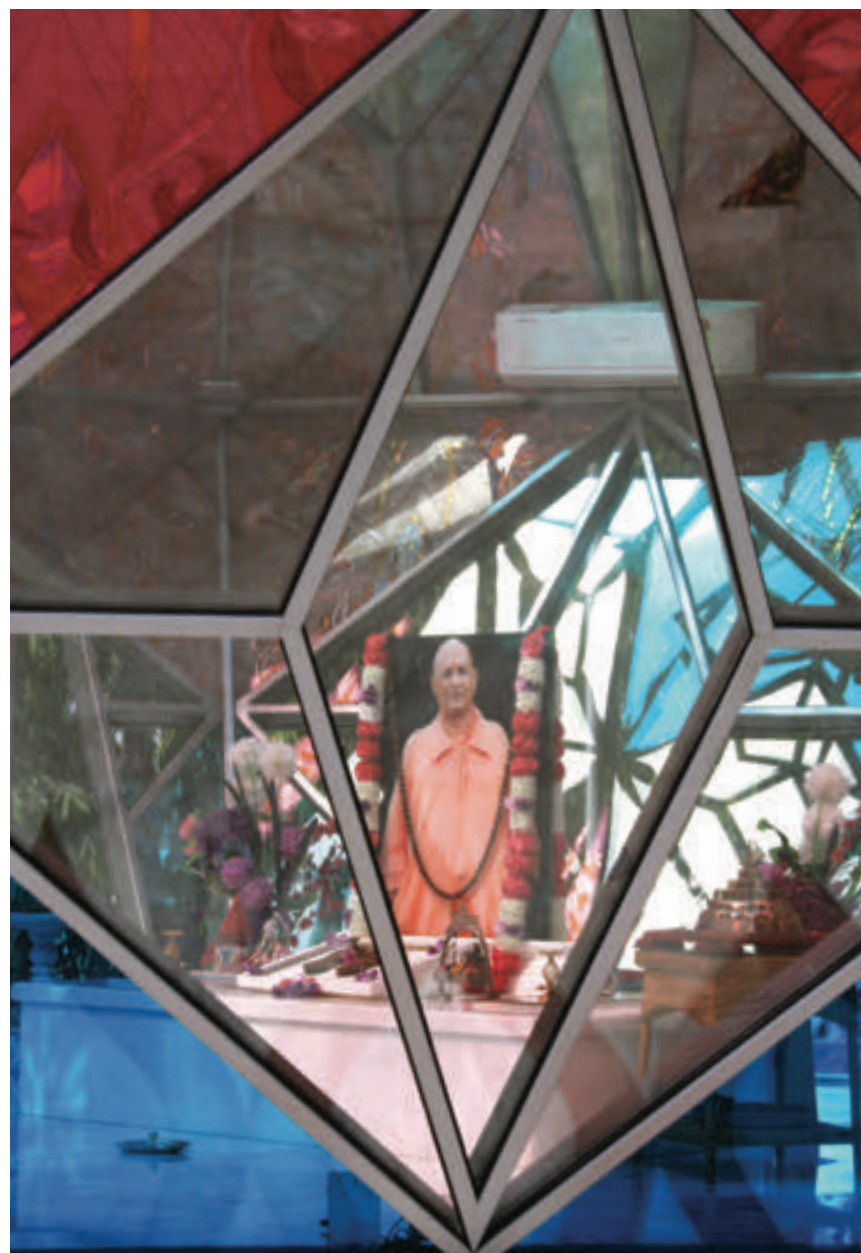
learning, when you decide, 'I make that effort with the truest intention in my life', that it becomes jnana yoga. When that knowledge is applied, it becomes practical wisdom.

Jnana yoga has two components: the first is discovering purity and the second is knowing and discovering how to deal with yourself, how to experience yourself. Jnana yoga will connect you to vidya, and it is living that vidya which will bring positivity in life. Until you live the knowledge, you are just walking in the maze of your own mind and mental creations. Therefore, the purpose of jnana yoga is connection with vidya.

In order to be true to vidya, you have to identify the aim and purpose of vidya. The aim and purpose of vidya is always *atmashuddhi*, self-purification. It is this idea of self-purification that has to be developed.

Internal and external cleansing

There are two types of impurity or accumulations, the external and the internal. The external is known as *mala*, external









impositions, whether of thoughts, speech or other influences. For example, you hear something about somebody from your friend. You have never met the person being discussed, yet you create an opinion. That is an imposed understanding. It is not your own understanding; it is the understanding of your friend which you have totally accepted and made your own, as you believe him. That is an imposed mala. Somebody else's rubbish has come into your mind. In the same way, somebody else's wealth can come into your mind, somebody else's peace can come into your mind. All these things that come from other people, where you have taken in other people's suggestions, thoughts and ideas and changed your own response based on those, that is mala.

The second kind of impurity is *vikara*, which is your own creation. Vikara is your own reaction to a situation which allows one of the six enemies (passion, anger, greed, delusion, pride and envy) to emerge as a powerful figure and distort your natural condition and peace of body, senses, mind and spirit. That deformity is generated when one of the six traits becomes active. If you get angry, that is your deformity. If you hate, that is your deformity. Any of the six, when they take a shape and form, when they gather in strength inside, create a deformity.

The external impositions and the internal expressions both have to be managed to attain purity, and purity means that you are maintaining the clarity of your mind. For example, a crystal ball has no colour of its own, but when you place it on top of a coloured cloth, that colour is reflected in the ball. Similarly, purity represents the colourless state of mind, the unconditioned state of life. This unconditioned, colourless crystal, when it comes in contact with a sense perception, sense object, a desire, or one of the six enemies, takes on the colour of that state, mood or trait of the mind.

Purity means to free the mind from its associations which create deformity, or block or reduce its clarity by external impositions. The idea of purity is to go beyond the mala and

the vikara and to establish yourself in that crystal clear nature. That is the *atmashuddhi* that yoga speaks of.

A hint has been given in the yogic scriptures and literatures, that the focus of every action in life is to attain purification. *Yoginah karmakurvanti sangam tyaktva atmashuddhaye* – “Yogis perform actions by becoming detached for attaining inner purification.” A specific phrase has been used here, ‘*Yoginah karmakurvanti*’ – yogis perform the actions. It doesn’t say ‘normal people who perform the actions’, or ‘bhogis who perform the actions’. It says, ‘yogis who perform the action’. Here the attention is being drawn to the intention of the mind: where one has taken the decision, made the choice, to become a yogi. That means a level of awareness has come in. It means that you are creating a goal for your efforts and direction in life.

With the goal defined and with that awareness of karma, one’s actions are guided so they become free from the effects and influences of the magnets that pull the mind-iron in all directions. That freedom is purity: those influences and their colours are not seen in the mind. Once the mind becomes pure then knowledge is expressed naturally and spontaneously, and perceptions become positive, uniform and harmonious. That is the beginning of jnana yoga.

Seven levels of purity

From the yogic perspective, there are seven levels of purity. The first level begins with the intention to remove impurity and the cause of sorrow. It is known as shuchi. The word *shuchi* is related to sorrow; it means ‘that which removes sorrow of any kind’. Whenever there is any problem or suffering, first there has to emerge a desire, an intention to remove that problem or sorrow. Once the intention is there, then the effort you make to free yourself, to distance yourself from that condition is known as shuchi. *Shuchi* is also an awareness of any kind of discomfort arising from the presence of impurity. In this way, the concept of shuchi includes more than one idea.



In order to come to the level of shuchi, first analyze in meditation what is the discomfort that you feel in your mind. To begin with, just become aware of the general feeling of discomfort, then pinpoint where it is coming from. What is the source? An incident, an event, a person, a thought, a behaviour, an idea? Discover the cause of that sorrow, and see if you are able to eliminate that cause or not through your normal behaviour, applying the concepts of wisdom and justice. Therefore first comes the analysis, the understanding of sorrow and the cause of sorrow, and then the effort to remove it. That is one level.

The second level of purity is *nirmal*, meaning the absence of mala, the imposed attributes. At this level you make the effort to remove the impurity that is present. If the mala is negative thinking about somebody, can you stop that and become nirmal? Hating somebody is a vikara. Can you stop that and experience nirmal by separating yourself from the negativity? Disliking somebody is vikara. Can you convert that into liking them, and become nirmal, without that imposition?

The third level is vimal, which is also in relation to the impurities coming from outside. *Vimal* means to bring in the opposite quality of the impurity that you have now recognized.

If you have seen your impurity as hate, then in vimal you cultivate the quality of love, the opposite virtue, so that that negative quality can be eradicated at the deepest level possible. Don't leave the roots there, even the roots have to be taken out, so they don't grow back in the future. Therefore vimal is converting the negative into a positive, hate is converted to love, separation changes to union. Anything that helps you to bring yourself back into the positive state of mind is vimal.

In the fourth level of *shuddhi* we move into the area of deformity, *vikara*. Up to the third level we were in the realm of *mala*. Now from four to seven, it is the realm of *vikara*. The fourth level is called *shuddhi*, which is translated as purity. However, in the seven levels of purity, the level of *shuddhi* means the state where one is ready to create a state of purity by expanding the effort. It is like expanding the ratio of *nadi shodhana*: first you do 2:2:2:2, then you go to 5:5:5:5, then you go to 10:10:10:10. You are expanding the period of *pranayama*. In the same manner, you try to expand the state of purity. The more you do so, the more the negatives are reduced in size. They are not fully eradicated yet, but they are reducing.

The fifth level is *vishuddhi*, meaning a special kind of purification. It is the same word that is used for *vishuddhi chakra*. From the general condition of purification now you move into more specific or subtle realms of purity. That is the *vishuddhi* component.

The sixth level is *pavitra*. This is the attainment of *sattwic* understanding; it is the awareness or realization of purity. The previous levels were efforts, but *pavitra* is an experience. The previous levels were steps that you were taking, but *pavitrata* is an experience of having expanded the positive and reduced the negative. It is also interesting that the word *pavitra* has the same root as that of *pavak*, fire, which means to burn, to consume. So the word *pavitra* is also an indication of the fire *tattwa*. Whatever you throw into fire, is all consumed, burnt, digested and turned into ash, all identity destroyed. In the same way, *pavitra* indicates the state where everything negative has

been consumed and only the pure essence remains. Purity is the dissolution of form and shape; it is the ash. When name, form, shape, idea, everything is burnt, then the pure essence that remains is the ash. And ash is anti-fungal and anti-bacterial. If you mix it into the soil around trees, a chemical change takes place in the soil, and all the bacteria and insects will run away. Nothing can grow in ash, nothing survives in that dead matter of ash.

In the state of *pavitrata* the state of mind is such that nothing can now alter its conviction, its *sankalpa* and its harmony. No matter who comes and says what, the mind will not change its course. No matter what reactions come up from inside, the mind will not change its course, it will maintain its course. Continued absorption in the state of purity is *pavitrata* and therefore it becomes an experience.

The final stage of purity is *ujjwal*, luminous. You become the luminous self, the untainted self as an effect of purity, you become bright. It is the state of *atmashuddhi*, where the luminosity and the brightness of the inner self shines.

Jnana yoga speaks of purity in relation to understanding the state of mind that you have to develop when you are watching yourself. There have to be markers on the way to indicate where one is at, and these levels of purity are the markers for jnana yoga, showing how you have to apply your wisdom, understand yourself and your mind.



– 2 November 2015, Ganga Darshan, Munger

Jnana Yoga

From On the Wings of the Swan, Volume VI, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Jnana means to know, and a yogi is one who is living what he knows. Therefore, a jnana yogi is one who is established in wisdom, and such a person is not going to ask silly questions. When you travel by train from one place to another, it is not logical to keep asking yourself, 'Where am I?' because you are moving and you know that you will reach your destination. In the same way, the jnana yogi, who is established in wisdom, began his journey with the focus of

discovering 'Who am I?' The question arises only once in a lifetime, not every day. If it arises every day, it means that the person is not a jnana yogi, but is stuck in one place and cannot move forward. As the process of discovery begins, the enquiry is left behind and each day is a new discovery. This discovery continues until the jnana yogi becomes established in wisdom.

To become established in something and to realize its importance, it is necessary to go through a crisis. If everybody in the world were healthy, medical science would not exist. Disease, death and suffering have led to research and the advancement of medical science. If we change an idea, it is because the previous idea was shattered. If there is a change in thinking, it is because the previous thought no longer has any purpose. Crisis acts as a catalyst for change.

The first chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* is about *vishada yoga*, the yoga of grief. It is a beautiful concept. If you are grieving and you are able to provide a direction for yourself, that becomes yoga. If you fail to provide yourself with a direction

and go further into the grief then it becomes imbalance. It is like achieving balance in stress. Negative stress is distress; positive stress is eustress and the balance point is zero stress. If the string of a bow is too loose, there is no stress, no force, and the bow becomes useless. If the string is too tight, it may break because distress is created. There has to be the right tension. Similarly, grief in itself is not bad or negative; it is the management of grief that is important.

If we are able to provide a direction to our thoughts and energies, grief becomes a factor in creating positive change and causing greater achievements in life. The same grief, when mismanaged, becomes a disease or imbalance which then governs the behaviour of the body, the brain and the mind, so there is sweating, dry mouth, frequent urination, sleeplessness, nervous breakdown.

Everyone should have the experience of positive grief; not grief in the way we understand it, but in its positive sense, where it gives the desire for a change, knowing the futility of the condition in which we have been living. Once that stage comes, the process of purification begins. It happened to Sri Rama, to Arjuna, to Buddha, to Christ, to Prophet Mohammed; it has happened to so many people who have become luminaries in the world.

Knowing fully well that we cannot handle it, we do not subject ourselves to grief. Our intense effort, *tapasya*, is not grief; it is pleasure. We meditate because there is pleasure in meditation. We like to practise mantra because there is pleasure in mantra. If we did not derive pleasure in meditation, we would not even practise it. If we do not derive pleasure from something, we



are not attracted to it. However, here we are not talking of those things that give us pleasure and therefore become our sadhana, but of those things that give us the opportunity to change an existing pattern that was the cause of our previous conditioning. Grief is the catalyst for that inner transformation. As seekers, as aspirants, we have to face this grief within ourselves and provide ourselves with a direction.

There is a beautiful concept in tantra. The tradition says there are eleven Rudras who are manifestations of Shiva. The meaning of Rudra is 'one who cries'. How can a person who cries all the time be identified as a manifestation of Shiva? Shiva is consciousness, and there are various layers and stages of progression in that consciousness, defining different levels of existence and experience. In the same manner, the eleven Rudras represent eleven stages of consciousness and each one has a specific pattern, a specific design, a specific yantra and a specific mandala. As we move from one to the other, there is a letting go of the things that previously held us back. When those things are left behind, then grief comes.

Grief can be experienced in different ways. You can be a *drashta*, a witness, to it and this is taught in yoga. You can use a meditative process like antar mouna to discover the real cause; or you can practise swadhyaya and analyze a state in which you have felt helpless and hopeless, and see what options there are for you to outgrow and move out of that situation. We are always given choices in the world. The right choice makes us succeed in life. The wisdom has to prevail where we are able to make the right choice, not follow the wrong one. In order to make the right choice, we should be able to also look at the whole picture.

If there is a photograph of yourself lying on the floor and an ant wanders across the surface, it will only see blobs of colour, not your face. If you want the ant to see your face, you have to pick it up, so it can see the whole image. In the same manner, when we are involved in a situation, we do not see the full picture; we only see blobs. We are frightened by these

meaningless blobs and we don't know how to handle ourselves in that situation. That is known as the pull of pleasure and pain, like and dislike. We get so involved that we feel we are a part of it; however, being able to look at oneself by taking a step back is the concept of drashta. To be able to manage situations and go through changes, crises and grief in an optimistic and positive frame of mind is viveka. *Viveka* is handling the mind with wisdom, being unaffected by different influences.

If somebody says you are ugly, or beautiful, these words make a difference in your mind and you respond. This is only a small example of the effect that words can have. Many other things affect you in the same way. To be able to maintain balance is *sanyam*. When we can maintain a balanced witnessing attitude, it is known as *vairagya*, dispassion. We can be surrounded by money, yet it has no attraction, surrounded by people, yet remain in total isolation, be in the world, yet not belong to it. The classic example is the lotus flower. It grows in water, it is nourished by water, it is surrounded by water, it cannot exist without water, yet the leaves and the flower remain totally unaffected by water and are absolutely dry. That is how a yogi has to be. A yogi is like a magician who is able to manage the psychic, invisible and spiritual, the physical, material and sensorial, and find the balance there.

– 15 October 2003, Ganga Darshan, Munger



The Razor's Edge

From On the Wings of the Swan, Volume IV, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Is there any difference between Vedanta and jnana yoga or are they the same? Why is jnana yoga called the razor's edge?

Vedanta, tantra, Samkhya, and so on, are philosophies, but they have a practical aspect as well. Religion and philosophy are different. Philosophy is an ideal. *Jnana*, or wisdom, is the basis of everything and is known as *sophia* in Greek. *Philos* means to love.

The word philosophy means 'the love of knowing' or 'to love the known.' You could also say that it means to appreciate the seen. The entire process of appreciation and loving is an extension of the process of knowing. There is a totality of wisdom in the process of knowing through experiment, experience, logic, deduction, rationality, normal interaction and feeling.

Jnana yoga is a process of remembering what is already known. At present, you know, but you do not live what you know. You know many things but you cannot live up to them. When we add the word 'yoga' to the word jnana it means to have the living experience of knowing, or to live the knowledge. That is the true meaning of jnana yoga, and the basis of jnana yoga is wisdom, common sense to begin with, openness of nature to end with, and through the process of applying the wisdom, putting into action what is known. Although yoga talks about jnana and gives methods for experiencing jnana yoga, real jnana yoga does not begin until you achieve the state of dhyana. Jnana yoga is not intellectual, it is experiential,

and in order to develop the experiential faculty, *dhyana*, or meditation, has to be perfected.

Vedanta is a system of thought, a philosophy in its own right. The followers of Vedanta can reach great heights by following its principles; however, it is simultaneously an open school of thought which says that the whole of creation can be seen as God: *Sarvam khalvidam Brahman* – “The whole of the visible and invisible creation is God.” Vedanta speaks of experiencing the existence of God in each and every thing. Jnana yoga is an inner process which begins at whatever level you may be, not necessarily with God and creation. It can begin with your mundane personal problems also. You do not need to have high-flying thoughts to practise jnana yoga. The thoughts can also be very material, physical and sensual.

Personal difficulties and handicaps can act as a catalyst for discovering our limitations, creativity, force of will and clarity of mind. If you are aware that all these little changes are happening, it is part of the process of jnana yoga. Whether it is jnana yoga, complete yoga or a different system of thought like Vedanta, Samkhya or Nyaya, the underlying factor in all these is the application of wisdom. Knowledge gets converted into wisdom when applied practically in life.

There are different levels of jnana yoga. Each level of yoga in its basic form can be practised at any level. Just as basic asanas, shatkriyas, bhakti yoga, kirtan or meditation can be practised by anyone, jnana yoga in its most basic form can be practised by everyone. As far as the statement of jnana yoga being called the razor’s edge, at one level it holds true, because when we begin to apply our understanding and wisdom in life, the aspect of ego is also stimulated, which can become the cause of either our fall or our upliftment. However, if you make a general statement that jnana yoga is like a razor’s edge, I would not agree with you. Rather, I would say that our present lifestyle over which we have no control is the razor’s edge.

We do not have control over our mind. We fall down left and right. Trying to deal with our own nature and mind is a

much sharper razor's edge than jnana yoga, which is totally blunt compared to our present life experience. It does not cut at all, but material life is a very sharp razor, it can bleed a person to death. Many people lose their mental and emotional balance at one time or another. Some people fall into a depression from which they cannot recover. Some people become addicts and cannot break the habit. I think that is a much sharper razor's edge than jnana yoga, because we can transcend the negative conditions with the help of jnana yoga and we have the support of a guru if we are sincere.



The Art of Living

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

There are many systems and schools of thought in the world. The common factor and centre of all experience in each one is the human being. Therefore, to conceive of a school of thought or belief, a philosophy or a religion, without the human being is impossible.

What are the basic requirements for leading a successful, happy and healthy life? Contentment, a feeling of harmony, an expression of creativity and an experience of inner peace, which comes with the knowledge that "I am not alone, I am guided, I am part of something which is not finite." These are the basic requirements of life which can alter one's nature, personality, attitude and aspirations.

Many people have found a method, a path, by which they can reach this state of realization. All the belief systems in the world have projected an aspect of understanding which is valid for a group of human beings with a certain type of mentality. We have to look at all of them as a process of education in order to develop our own understanding and mind, and finally to come to a conclusion based on our own experience.

There is an episode in the *Ramayana* in which Tulsidas describes the journey of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana in the forest. He writes that they are walking in single file. First comes Rama, then Sita and behind them Lakshmana. Rama represents the universal cosmic nature, God; Lakshmana represents the individual human nature; and in the middle is maya, the force, the shakti. This is a very apt description of creation and life because, although there are certain inherent qualities that we all share as human beings, due to the permutation and combination of the gunas these qualities are expressed differently in every life.



Realizing the connection

In this world we are linked with each other, we are not just individual units. The breath links us with our world. Who knows, maybe you are breathing in the same air that Clinton or Yeltsin or Her Majesty the Queen breathed in yesterday, so you may have a bit of each one of them in you. You have a part of everybody who lives in the world in you because we are all linked by the breath. This is a very powerful unifying force but nobody thinks about it. The air, the breath, is the force which connects us to life and to other people.

Similarly, the ancient seers experienced that there is another connection which joins us with the cosmic force. People may call that force God or by other names, but that connection is not known to us; it exists but we are unaware of it. The aim in true spiritual life, not sectarian spiritual life, is to realize that connection. Once the connection is realized there is a reaching out of feelings and emotions. We read of people who in childhood have been displaced from their families in different parts of the world. When they suddenly meet again thirty or forty years later, there is an immediate connection, a

realization that the other person is a brother or sister or uncle or aunt. Prior to this realization they might have passed each other on the road hundreds of times without even looking at one another, but the moment the realization occurs that, 'This person is the brother I lost in the market thirty years ago', then all the dams of the heart and head burst open.

It is the same in spiritual life. Once there is realization of the godly nature then we become connected with that. It is a very natural and spontaneous process, not an intellectual one, not something which can be thought about. The situation which stops us from realizing that connection is known as *maya* or *prakriti*. *Maya* or *prakriti* is responsible for providing the experience of the finite nature, whereas the godly nature is infinite. The finite and infinite dimensions are the only two dimensions of existence, *prakriti* or nature representing the finite, and God, or the transcendental, representing the infinite. If God is infinite, then the finite nature is also part of God and, therefore, even *maya* and *prakriti* are known to be part of God.

This concept has been represented in the tantra shastras in the image of *ardhanarishwara*, in which Shiva is represented as a half male and half female figure. The person who is caught in this cosmic play is the individual. If the individual is closer to the infinite then there is no problem, but when the person is closer to the finite, there is a big problem. We are the problem with our head trips, our ego trips, our mind trips, our emotional trips, our sensory and sensual trips, our intellectual trips. We are always tripping, if not through the body then through the mind, if not through the mind then in other ways. This tripping is recognized as the cause of imbalance, distortion in the clarity of the self, conflict and suffering. which in yoga is recognized as *raga* and *dwesha*, attraction and repulsion.

Each one of us is a magnet. A magnet has two poles, one which attracts and one which repels. In our lives we also have two poles – attraction and repulsion. When we identify with the process of attraction or repulsion then we begin to experience joy and frustration. When there is identification

with the joys and frustrations, there is anxiety and insecurity. When we begin to identify with the anxieties and insecurities, there is loss of clarity. When we identify with loss of clarity, there is disillusionment and uncertainty. When we identify with disillusionment and uncertainty there is death of the Self. This has been the statement of the *Bhagavad Gita* and a common experience for us all.

Finding one's balance

So the purpose of spiritual life is to provide us with this balance. That is the only purpose of spiritual life. If you can live a life of balance one hundred percent then you are enlightened. If you can live a life of balance ten percent you are a sadhaka. If you can live a life of balance and harmony fifty percent then you become a swami. If you live a life of balance seventy-five percent then you become a yogi. If you live a life of balance ninety percent then you become a siddha. If you can live a life of balance one hundred percent you become enlightened.

This balance is not only external. You have to see it in all the dimensions of life – personal, social, global and universal. It is this balance which makes one into a being who is able to live a finite life in the realm of prakriti and have an experience of the infinite in the realm of the divine. This is the aim of spiritual life. Spiritual life is an art of living. It is not a belief, theory, concept, philosophy or religion. You can create your own ideas around the art of living, that is a different matter, but the art of perfect living is leading a balanced life, no matter what situation you are in. Christ lived a life in which he tried to balance the various aspects. Buddha and Mahavir lived lives where they tried to balance the various aspects. The saints and sages in the past tried to balance their expressions, participation and involvement in life. Yogis today are trying to lead lives where there is balance.

There is a theory in Advaita Vedanta that the world is false, illusory and the only reality is reality itself. Now this can be the sentiment of a person who has experienced it and come

to the conclusion, "Okay, from my perspective the world is a dream." When we have nightmares in which we are being persecuted and chased by people with guns and knives, we experience fear, anxiety, palpitations, which are exactly the same reactions we would normally experience in the waking state. Then, in the process of running away, we suddenly come to a crevasse, take a jump and begin to fall. We wake up, find ourselves falling out of bed and breathe a sigh of relief, "Thank God it was only a dream. Nobody was chasing me. I am safe in my bed, comfortable and warm." However, while we were dreaming, that thought, that realization and that awareness was not there. So for sadhakas who have attained realization in life, it is all right to say, "I have woken up from my sleep, I can experience or feel that the world is illusory and the only real thing is reality itself." It is an expression of their sentiment. However, we have to start from the beginning.

Spiritual evolution

The theory of evolution in spiritual life is not the Darwinian theory of evolution in which there is movement from one stage to the next. In the theory of spiritual evolution there is talk of going back to the source or centre, going back to *shoonyata* or nothingness. This is the concept of *poornata*, total achievement, fulfilment. Going back to *shoonyata*, to the source, has been the Indian belief – *Poornamadah poornamidam poornaat poornamudachyate*.

The evolution of a tree is from seed to seed, not from seed to trunk to leaf to flower to fruit. Only when the seed again becomes a seed, having the same potential as the original one, can we say that evolution is complete. Similarly, in our lives when we talk of spiritual evolution, we talk of going back to the source and having the same potential, purity and tranquillity as the source. Therefore, all *mandalas* and *yantras*, symbols representing states of consciousness or cosmic creation or the interaction of the *tattwas*, are contained within a circle. In the Buddhist tankas there are tantric mandalas and yantras

containing descriptions of earth, heaven and hell. The figures are represented in the form of a circle which has no beginning and no end, yet everything is contained in it, everything is manifesting from it, everything is part of it.

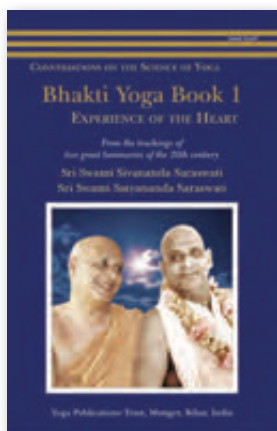
All you need to do is learn how to keep your balance and harmony. The more you can expand the area of balance in your life, that change makes you a sadhaka, a sannyasi, a yogi, a siddha.

*1997, Ganga Darshan, Munger
printed in YOGA Vol. 9, Issue 5*



Bhakti and/or Jnana Yoga

*From Conversations on the Science of Yoga – Bhakti Yoga Book 1:
Experience of the Heart*



What is the difference between bhakti and Vedanta?

Swami Sivananda: Self-surrender is the highest form of bhakti. Self-surrender is surrender of the ego or individuality, and what remains is the Absolute of the Vedantins. Thus there is no difference between Vedanta and the highest form of bhakti. The bhakta surrenders the ego and a Vedantin disintegrates the ego. The ego is not there in both. The ideals are the same. Whether one eats

rice or wheat, it is all the same; the purpose of both is to appease hunger. There is no quarrel between the two. Whether one follows bhakti or Vedanta the effect is annihilation of the ego. That is the truth.

How do the path of jnana and bhakti lead to perfection?

Swami Sivananda: Action, emotion and intelligence are the three horses that are linked to this body-chariot. They should work in perfect harmony or unison, only then will the chariot run smoothly. There must be integral development. Vedanta without devotion is quite dry. Jnana without bhakti is not perfect. How can one who has realized his oneness with atman remain without serving the world which is atman only? Devotion is not divorced from jnana, but rather jnana is exceedingly helpful to the perfect attainment of bhakti.

Jnana yoga is like crossing a river by swimming; bhakti yoga is like crossing a river by boat. The jnani gets knowledge by self-reliance and assertion; the bhakta gets darshan of God

by self-surrender. The jnani asserts and expands; the bhakta dedicates and consecrates himself to God and contracts himself.

Suppose in the body there is a small circle the size of a one-rupee coin. This rupee contracts and merges itself into the circumference of the circle. This is bhakti. Imagine there is a two-anna piece (old coin) in the centre of the circle. This coin expands so that it occupies the whole body of the circle and the circumference also. This is jnana.

A bhakta wants to eat sugar-candy; a jnani wants to become sugar-candy itself. A bhakta is like a kitten that cries for help; a jnani is like a baby monkey that clings itself boldly to the mother. A bhakta attains gradual liberation; a jnani attains immediate liberation. A jnana yogi exhibits psychic powers through his will; a bhakta obtains all the divine powers through self-surrender and the consequent descent of divine grace.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna clearly points out that bhakti and jnana are not incompatible like oil and water. He says in the following verses (4:39, 10:10 and 18:55):

*Shraddhaavaamllabhate jnaanam tatparah samyatendriyah;
Jnaanam labdhvaa paraam shaantimachirenaadhigachchhati.*

The man who is full of faith, who is devoted, and who has subdued all the senses, obtains knowledge; and, having obtained the knowledge, he goes at once to the supreme peace. (4:39)

*Teshaam satatayuktaanaam bhajataam preetipoorvakam;
Dadaami buddhiyogam tam yena maamupayaanti te.*

To them who are ever steadfast, worshipping Me with love, I give the yoga of discrimination by which they come to Me. (10:10)

*Bhaktiyaa maamabhijaanaati yaavaanyashchaasmi tattvatah;
Tato maam tattvato jnaatvaa vishate tadanantaram.*



By devotion he knows Me in truth, what and who I am;
and knowing Me in truth, he forthwith enters into the
Supreme. (18:55)

To deny jnana altogether, to say that there is nothing beyond heavenly worlds as some sectarian bhaktas do, is the height of folly. To deny bhakti and Ishwara as some dry Vedantins or jnanis do is also foolishness. A happy combination of head and heart is perfection.

What is greater – jnana or bhakti?

Swami Satyananda: This is a question that has been discussed in India for many thousands of years. Many great acharyas have put forth their arguments in different bhakti and jnana yoga teachings. Adi Shankaracharya said, “Without jnana yoga one cannot attain liberation even if one does pilgrimage or sadhana.” The great bhaktas, Mirabai and Chaitanya, said there is no way for human beings other than bhakti.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Arjuna asks Sri Krishna to be clear and precise about the importance of these different paths of yoga. Arjuna said, “Sometimes you say jnana yoga is supreme, sometimes you say bhakti yoga is supreme and sometimes

karma yoga is supreme. I am confused.” Arjuna wanted to know for certain so that he could take one of these paths. In reply, Sri Krishna said, “Of course, there is the path of jnana and there is the path of bhakti, undoubtedly. However, if you think that one of these two paths is superior to the other, or that they are different from each other, or that their destinations are different from each other, then it is foolishness. If you are established in either of these two, you obtain the same results which you obtain from the other path.” Then he added, “If you are firmly established, if you are well established.”

When you take a nail and drive it into wood, it goes in very easily. If you take the same nail with a hammer and drive it against a rock, it won't be easy, but you will have the experience. In the same way, each and every one has a definite point in the evolution of consciousness. According to his level of consciousness, if he practises the right type of yoga, he is automatically established in that.

In this connection, a detailed discussion was held in *Yoga Vasishtha* which is a very ancient text like the *Yoga Sutras*. It is a dialogue between Sri Rama and his guru, Vasishtha. *Yoga Vasishtha* says that the two paths are like the two wings of a bird, and therefore everyone should try to develop both practices at the same time.



Paths Towards Innocence

From On the Wings of the Swan, Volume IV, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Are there any practices, actions or attitudes that can lead one to the state of innocence?

There are three paths, which lead to the state of innocence and we will look at them individually.

The first path is through the intellect, *jnana yoga*. It is said to be a difficult method. The belief of *jnana yoga* is that, as you develop and expand the horizon of your perception and rationality, the intellect will become simple. In the course of time it will lose its devious, distorted and dissipated nature and become simple and innocent. How can the *jnana yoga* process lead to innocence?

Jnana yoga is the application of personal realizations. It is not just something that we believe in, but something which we can apply in our lives. This begins with self-study, "Who am I?" This enquiry is not in a physical context, but in the sense of what is my nature, what is my belief, how do I respond to other influences, ideas and thoughts? How is my personality affected, and how can I sublimate the limiting and restricting factors of my personality to experience the purity of self? This process can lead to innocence. That is path number one.

The second path is easier than *jnana yoga*. It is *karma yoga*. To practise *karma yoga* properly, there has to be a very high standard of surrender. To develop innocence, you have to hold the ideal of surrender in your mind. This ideal takes time to grow; however, if the actions become selfless, then it is possible to experience innocence.



The third path is that of bhakti, which is not just devotion. Bhakti is not just thinking of a pure and divine concept. In bhakti there are nine different steps. The first step is keeping the company of truthful people: *satsang*, *santana sanga*. The second step is *hari nama katha prasanga*, talking about God, understanding the different roles that God has played in creation, and the realization of those roles. The third step is to become egoless: I am not the doer, I am not the enjoyer, I am only an instrument which the divine plays in order to bring out the best melodies that are inherent within me. In the words of Saint Francis of Assisi, "Make me an instrument of Thy peace." Sri Rama has defined nine steps of bhakti in the *Ramayana* and a similar nine steps have been defined by Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Both have stated that perfection of any one of the states of bhakti will lead to purity of self, or an innocent nature. Therefore, bhakti seems to be the easiest, safest and cheapest of the methods.

Jnana yoga is an involved and intricate process. Karma yoga is also difficult. So let us keep in mind bhakti yoga as the easier method by which to develop innocence.

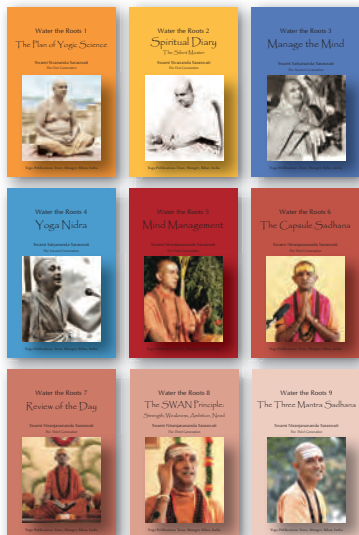


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