

Jnana Yoga Chapter 2

*Om Namah Shri Ethirajaya Vivekananda Surayeh
Sachit Sukhaa Swaroopaya Swaminitapaharineh*

We have been discussing Jnana Yoga of Swami Vivekananda and we have been discussing specifically what are the special contributions of Swamiji. In that connection we recall Sriramakrishna's contributions. Sriramakrishna only spoke through the mouth of Swami Vivekananda. Sriramakrishna only reiterated what Vedas or Vedantas has been speaking of from the beginning of time. The most important point is Ekam Sat. The truth is only one. That truth is called Brahman. That Brahman alone exists and nothing else. Everything else, by implication, is nothing but Brahman. Brahman is the only one that everyone can experience. Whatever is experienced is Brahman. Whoever experiences is also Brahman. It is this one principle which expressed in the most wonderful specialised way is what constitutes Hinduism or even more universal name of Vedanta.

The most important, Ekam Sat. Vipraha Bahuda Vadanti. Sages or Wise people call it by various names or approaching this reality through various paths. As Sriramakrishna would say, Jotho math, thatho path. As many opinions or faiths, that many paths. This is his first point. The second, each of the Yogas can lead to self realisation or God realisation independently. Even though that is true no man can exclusively practice one particular Yoga because they all come together. But the emphasis is on one particular Yoga. One of the special contributions of Swamiji, Karma Yoga, also by implication can lead to God realisation. This has never, in the history of Indian philosophy, been accepted before. Karma Yoga had always taken a back step, as an accompaniment, as a means of purification of the mind, for practicing self control, but no more than that. Even though Srikrishna has emphasised it in the Bhagavad Gita, this teaching of Sriramakrishna is nothing but what Srikrishna had taught. He was the man who has said in the past through Karma Yoga, though commentators have twisted it a bit, even those who do not follow Jnana Marga also came to believe Karma is secondary. Karma Yoga if practiced independently and done properly can also lead to God realisation. What is the proper way? Shiva Jnane Jeeva Seva. This means thinking I am not serving anyone but God alone. It does not only mean what we do for others but also what we do to ourselves. It is like thinking when you are eating that is God who is eating, or thinking when sitting that it is God is sitting, or sleeping. If we can look upon ourselves also as we would look at God, we can say we are serving God. This is a wonderful philosophy. Swamiji has placed emphasis on Karma Yoga as a means of God realisation.

The next clarification Swami Vivekananda has given is on the term Advaita is used in two distinct senses, a direct mystic experience of the non dual reality. That is the primary sense and the secondary sense is the system of philosophy, the path of philosophy as advaita with rationality. The path and goal. The primary meaning is the goal and secondary meaning is the path. What is the distinction here? There are two points to be noted here. All followers of Jnana marga came to believe that they were following the superior path. There is no superior path at all. If you are going to London, and there are four fast lanes, the one in the fast lane may think he is superior and all others are inferior. That is not the right thing. You take the path most suitable to you because the destination you reach or not will depend on many factors. The car

you are travelling may quite possibly have an accident. The one going on the slowest lane may go very slowly, even sleep off while driving, but may still be reaching the destination very happily. A bit like the race between the hare and the tortoise! Swami Vivekananda removed that idea. The removal of this superiority complex came with removal of the ignorance that the goal and the path are one and the same. The goal is different from the path. Any path will take us to the same goal. The goal is one, but paths are many. As Sriramakrishna would say, Jatho math, thatho path. All paths are taking us to the same God. This is what we should remember when we meditate upon.

Advaita as a state of experience and Jnana marga, the path of knowledge, are totally different. There was a controversy as to why Swami Vivekananda preached Jnana Yoga to people who are not of Indian origin. There was some superiority complex going on. Jnana Yoga must be preached only to Adhikara vadas. The privilege comes only to few people. And who are they? Not all Indians or not all castes, but only to Brahmins. Not all Brahmins, but only monks, not all monks but only those who are followers of Shankarachariar. They believed everyone cannot understand the meaning of the content. Swami Vivekananda believed that it should be shared with everyone and those who can understand the meaning of Jnana Yoga should benefit from it. It's like when reading the Gospel of Sriramakrishna, if you do not understand some parts of it, you do not throw away the book or parts of the book that you do not understand. That's because it also serves as a point of inspiration. How does our understanding develop? Is it that you meditate for a while and one day you open your eyes and then open the book, everything becomes crystal clear? You read a little and you understand a small percentage of the book. You read it the second time then you understand better. You read it for the third time and then your understanding improves. Swami Vivekananda said everyone is a child of God and everyone has equal rights to hear these great truths. You have shut these truths and have become like frogs in a small, dirty well, thinking you are the whole universe! On his talks on Hinduism at the Chicago parliament of religion, he said even if one does not follow this teaching of Advaita Vedanta, as a goal you may understand but as a path you may not follow. But once you know the goal crystal clearly, you can adopt a path that is suitable for you. Instead of using the word God realisation, he has used the word Advaita and it is with much reason and rationality he had practiced. He never cared much for such criticism.

Swami Vivekananda's unique contributions through the exposition of this Jnana Yoga is nothing but the exposition of the Upanishads. He, in his own words, has said he has preached only the Upanishad. We often ask the question, why is that we are not able to follow or understand the Upanishads or these 'truths' that easily? That is because of another greatest contribution to the Vedanta philosophy, the invention of what is called 'Maya'. He has delivered three lectures on the concept of Maya, Maya and illusion, The concept of God, Maya and freedom.

Before Sriramakrishna or Swami Vivekananda, the word Maya was being used by everyone in India. When asked why one is said the reply would be it was because of Maya, or rob someone, the reply would be because of Maya. For anything and everything, the answer was Maya. The idea being Maya is considered to be an illusion or delusion. What is the difference between the terms illusion and delusion? Delusion is individual. Illusion is universal. If you see a mirage it is an illusion, but where there is no beauty, if one sees beauty, it is called delusion! Swami Vivekananda has given a beautiful explanation of what is Maya. He defines Maya as a statement of fact. Maya is that which makes us think subjectively. There is no objective

distortion. But subjectively it is that which makes us experience the unlimited as limited is called Maya. The uncontradictable is seen as contradictory is Maya. It is not an illusion or delusion but it is a limitation and it is a contradiction. For example, here is a man who wants to transform the whole world. Before he could take one single step, an adamant wall comes and he never succeeds in going beyond that. This is Maya. Your mind is running ahead of you but your body and other circumstances severely limit you. That experience of limitation is what Swami Vivekananda calls Maya. Then comes the contradiction. You want to make the whole world good, beautiful, harmonious. But the truth is it is totally different. It is completely the opposite of what we imagined. This contradiction or lie is Maya. This Maya or statement of fact is what we experience everyday. With this definition he completely destroyed the idea that Maya is not an illusion or delusion but a reality, a fact we are experiencing everyday.

Even during Swamiji's time, there were people who studied the contributions of Swami Vivekananda. One of them is a disciple of Swami Vivekananda himself, Sister Nivedita. She has written the most complete and brilliant introduction to the complete works of Swamiji. She wrote the introduction when the first volume was published. In the introduction she points out the special contributions of Swami Vivekananda. She wrote, 'And yet, this statement that Swami Vivekananda's teachings holds nothing new is not absolutely true. It must never be forgotten that it was Swami Vivekananda, who while proclaiming the sovereignty of the Advaita philosophy, as including that experience in which all is one without a second, also added to Hinduism the doctrine that Dvaita, Vishitadvaita and Advaita are but three phases or stages in a single development of which the last named constitutes the goal'. Before Sriramakrishna there were quarrels not only between religion but also between these three schools of philosophy. Each claiming that they are based on the Upanishads or what is called the Vedanta, yet ours is the superior path. Sister Nivedita points out that it is a single journey to the highest goal, of which we start with the Dvaita duality, progress into qualified non-dualism, and finally end with total non-dualism. There is no contradiction. But supposing, people queried what Swami Vivekananda had discussed. Sriramakrishna had a ready answer to this. He said let each one travel with sincerity, with faith in their own particular starting path and reach the end of what he thinks is the highest goal. Then he can see if he has reached the highest goal or if there is further to go. Because, not to start the journey and to quarrel even before starting is not going to help anyone. Looking at this in a humorous light, Christians say Jesus is the greatest, the Muslims say Prophet Mohammed is the greatest Prophet. For the Hindus there are too many Gods and Avatars to enumerate. The three are quarrelling and come to Sriramakrishna. He poses a simple question. Supposing Jesus, Buddha, Rama, Krishna and Prophet Mohammed meet in one place, what do you think they will be doing? They will be holding hands and quarrelling amongst them saying each one has done better than the other. That was the idea. At Sriramakrishna's suggestion someone had got a painting done of all the Avatars, including Sriramakrishna, sitting and dancing. That is what Swami Vivekananda's reply would be. According to Sister Nivedita, Sriramakrishna not only harmonised all stages of life, that is the ashramas of life, Brahmacharia, Grihastha and Vanaprastha. Each stage is great in its own way. When a householder is leading good householder's life, a sanyasi is leading a good Sanyasin's life, there is no question of who is inferior or superior. There are beautiful stories written by Swamiji taken from the Mahabharata in the book called Karma Yoga. This is what Sister Nivedita's explanation as a special contribution of Swami Vivekananda, as harmonising all

religions, all yogas, all scriptures, all schools of philosophy. If you look at any religion practiced anywhere in this world, in past, present or future, they all have to come under the umbrella of dualism, qualified non-dualism or non-dualism. There is no choice. It is the greatness of Sister Nivedita, that she understood Swamiji's teachings and pointed them out. She continues, 'This is a part and parcel of a still greater and more simple doctrine that the many and the one are the same reality. Here comes up, Vibraha bahuda vidanti. Perceived by the mind at different times in different attitudes. Or, as Sriramakrishna expressed the same thing, 'God is both with form and without form, and he is that which includes both form and formlessness. It is this which adds its crowning significance to our Master's life, for here he becomes the meeting point, not only of east and west but also of the past and future. If the many and the one are indeed the same reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation which are paths of realisation. No distinction henceforth between the sacred and the secular. To labour is to pray, to conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion, to have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid. Oh, what a statement it is! What it means is, if a housewife is preparing food for her husband and children, if it is done in a proper way, it is the greatest spiritual practice. But suppose a soldier is out there killing his enemies who are adharmic, unrighteous, he is also practicing spiritual discipline only, provided that spirit is there that I am doing it to go towards God. This is called Karma Yoga. This is the realisation which makes Vivekananda the great preacher of Karma not as diverse from but as expressing Jnana and Bhakti, knowledge and devotion. To him the workshop, the study, the farmyard and the fields are as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man, as the cell of the monk or the door of the temple. To him there is no difference between the service of man and the worship of God, between manliness and faith, between true righteousness and spirituality.' This is the quotation taken from Sister Nivedita's Introduction to the complete works of Swami Vivekananda.

Later on a very intelligent Professor of Philosophy, Swami S.S. Raghavachari, had contributed a great deal. I am going to quote from what he has written about Swami Vivekananda's contributions to Vedantas, especially the Yogas. There are the four Yogas, Bhakti, Karma, Jnana and Raja Yoga. The systematic formulation of these Yogas in clear relief is decidedly an original contribution of Swami. The scheme of the four Yogas does justice to the several dimensions of human personality. And Swamiji took care to see the inner logic of all the four and worked out their final coordinates. Each of his methods can be self sufficient. And can also be pursued together with the others. Remember the third line of Swami Vivekananda's summary? The first is each soul is potentially divine. The second is the goal is to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. The third line is, do this either by work or by worship, or psychic control, or by philosophy, by one or together, and be free. You can pursue independently, but that's not really true because you cannot exclusively practice any one Yoga as the others are always following, as shadow follows, but one particular Yoga will be dominant. What Raghavachari is saying is, the Yogas can be pursued together with the others. It is with historical justice to recognise Swami Vivekananda as the first philosopher of our country to formulate, systematise and coordinate these methods of spiritual life with equal zeal and with equal regard to each and with an eye to their final synthesis and practice. It is his outstanding contribution to the Indian thought and to the world thought. He was no mere revivalist simply restating the conventional theory of the Yogas. In his formulation they acquire

an elevation. There is the creative re-thinking. And the older methods of realisation emerge transfigured with a new beauty and added power. Certain limitations and undesirable acquisitions had gathered around these in the older formulations. He is here referring to the Yogas. Swami Vivekananda purified them in his statement. They shine forth in all their natural death and vastness of import. Jnana Yoga is now going to elaborate what were the defects and how did Swami Vivekananda clean them. Jnana Yoga in its older formulations was invariably coupled with sanyasa renunciation. Swami Vivekananda accepted the principle but breathed into sanyasa a fresh and positive meaning. It was not mere renunciation, but renunciation and service. The ideal of sanyasa gets in his hand a profoundly humanitarian connotation. This is an important statement because previously the idea of Jnana Yoga was that sanyasa was running away from society and don't look back. The sanyasis only get back to society during breakfast time, lunch time and dinner time. At other times they would turn their backs to society. They did not bother about births and death, so long as they get their bikshas. Swamiji added to renunciation service as another concept to go with it. It is this interpretation that has conferred on the order of monks founded by him, the Ramakrishna order, all the uniquely constructive character it possesses. Jnana Yoga, for Swami Vivekananda, is no mere contemplation in solitude and retirement but the pursuit of knowledge in and through the most ardent and dynamic social service.

About Karma Yoga, action or Karma, no longer signified ritual actions or mere conformity to the conventional code of morals. Karma in its new significance means humanitarian action in accordance with one's aptitude, ability and interest. The ideas of privilege and social hierarchy are abundant, and a powerful conception of duty emerges in consequence. The Ramakrishna order never discriminates whether a person is a Brahmin or non-brahmin, a shudra, a chandela or an Indian or westerner, a man or a woman, poor or rich, literate or illiterate, no distinction at all. Service to everybody has become possible, which has been Swami Vivekananda's greatest contribution.

In the past Karma Yoga means pure adherence to rituals. But now, the idea is, it is not only rituals but also any action you do that can be a path leading to God. This is not a new idea but this is what the Bhagavad Gita is stating by Srikrishna long back. There is a verse in the Bhagavad Gita which says whatever you are seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, you are closing or opening your eyes, you think that I am not doing, but it is Brahman who is doing. That idea he has put forth in a simplest language which is what Professor Raghavachari has elaborated.

About Bhakti Yoga:

Bhakti Yoga has tended to degenerate into fanaticism and sectarianism. You can see how much bloodshed is done in the name of God, in the name of religion. Among the Semitic religions, Judaism, Christians and Islam, millions have been killed as late as 1940s, during the Second World War. When the German holocaust was happening the Church actively encouraged, indirectly of course, to eliminate people. Later there were reports that they sheltered many of these Nazis, gave them special identities and sent them to various countries so that they will never be found. A great religion doing this kind of action all in the name of God! In Southern France when many people were butchered, thousands of Christians. When the Bishop was asked if the Christians should be slaughtered, he allowed this to happen and said God will sort them out! Cults, theologians and narrow mythological conception of the deity got blended with the universal gospel of love. Further, Bhakti Yoga has a tendency to degenerate in another

aspect. It easily causes sentimentalism and emotionalism giving rise to the attitude of self abasement and shedding of tears. A stupid fool can put some glycerine in his or her eyes, shed tears and utter the name of Rama or Krishna and give the appearance of a great devotee. Once when Swami was giving a talk a lady came and sat in the front pew and looking at the Swami started shedding tears profusely. The Swami was highly impressed and thought his talk must have moved this lady to shed tears. The talk was over, everyone left, but this woman was still staring at the Swami. The Swami asked the lady if she liked his speech very much. She said she was sorry and did not hear a single word of what was said. She was very disturbed so came to listen to the Swami, but the Swami with his goatee beard reminded her of her dead goat that had died two days back, which brought tears to her eyes. It was nothing to do with the Swami's talk. We all congratulate ourselves for shedding tears in the name of God. But our character doesn't change, selfishness doesn't go, generosity doesn't extend, and yet people think we are improving in our spirituality. This is what the Professor is referring to as sentimentalism. He preached the gospel of heroic love which includes a triumphant faith in oneself and a readiness to adore even the most destructive manifestations of the deity. Example, Swami Vivekananda has written a beautiful poem, it's about Mother Shyama dancing in the crematorium. Because we all run away from the terrible aspect of God. Death, destruction, old age and disease are part of life. Mother Kali has two hands on the right side called vara and abhaya, which is to dismiss fear as well as granting of boons. But also look on the left side and you will see a sword, a decapitated head and a garland of skulls. But if it is too much then change the picture to that of beautiful Lord Krishna with a beautiful flute, sporting a beautiful feather in his head, peacock dancing in the background with beautiful young ladies! How pleasant that is! Is this what you call devotion? If you accept God, Srishti, Sthithi, Vinashanam, accept every aspect of God. He preached the gospel of heroic love so that we can adore even the most destructive manifestations of the deity. Bhakti without the weakening self abasement and Bhakti towards God the terrible is an altogether new and invigorating mode of piety. In this form love of God becomes an irresistible species of strength and vitality. Unless we accept both sides of life we are not going to attain peace of mind.

Raja Yoga got mixed up with occultism and study mongering and became the arena of superstitions and miracles, attainment of supernormal powers that could be utilised even for nefarious ends of life became the chief interest in Yoga. Raja is often unfortunately equated with Pranayama. What about Yama and niyama? One of our Swamis remarked very humorously that if you don't practice Yamaha, Yama will come and catch you! Pranayama means the control of Prana. If Pranayama is not practiced correctly, it turns into Prana Yama, or death! If practiced wrongly it will give negative results. Raghavachari was telling, attainment of supernatural powers that could be utilised even for inferior ends of life became the chief interest in Yoga. That's what they say became of Raja Yoga. Swami Vivekananda set forth its principles in all its scientific and philosophical purity and demonstrated its supreme function in practical spirituality. This spiritualisation of Yoga, it's elevation from the realm of magic to that of science is one of Swami Vivekananda's greatest service. That means he purified Raja Yoga of its lower ends. Mind you, he is not telling that miracles cannot be attained but they are not the goal of life. When you can get the infinite why do you want to run after the finite and which ultimately which turns out to be tragic! Thus, in all his reaffirmations Swami Vivekananda purified and perfected what he revived. There is both conservation and enrichment because he kept the real essence

of every Yoga and at the same time he cleaned all the flaws, purified it and added something more. Presented in this fashion his gospel of strength and the methods of attaining it became the philosophy of new Vedanta combining the essential wisdom of the ancients with the rational humanitarian temper of the best in modern thought. This is one of the greatest contributions of Swami. He brought all this in accordance with the latest modern thought by removing all the deficiencies, by purifying it and bringing it according to the latest modern scientific rational thinking so that not only devotees of God can benefit but also the scientists who are pursuing in a limited way. There are many mental or psychological disease which we don't know the cause of, how it is expressed or what to do about it. Psychiatric treatment is only palliative and very temporary. We have to admit that. The reason for that is because we have not gone to the root of the problem. We are only studying a little bit about what we experience in this present life. According to Vedanta whatever body, whatever mind we have, it is coming from Janma Janmantram, coming from many lives! Unless we accept the habits, samskaras, that have been coming accumulated through innumerable past births. If we do not accept it then we do not what is the root cause. But if we accept it then there is a way out.

The whole Raja Yoga can be viewed in two ways. The first is, it is exclusively for the betterment of the mind. The second is, it can also be used for the realisation of the self, or God. This nature of Raja Yoga where it can help us become better, mature, rational human beings, that's not being studied much except by one or two people in the West who have taken it up. But their voices are very weak, very feeble and nobody listens to them. This is not being studied much. I will give you an example that has not been accepted by scientists. There was a gentleman called Edgar Casey who was a propagator of past life. Many had faith in him and used to come to him with their troubles, of course. Then he would go into a state of hypnosis and tell them that 500 years or 5000 years before you have done this evil action and the result of that is fructifying now. The important point is, he said this is the root cause. But what is the remedy? For evil there is only one remedy. First is to stop doing the evil and the second start doing extra good to compensate. This is the only way to regain balance. He used to give pure moral instruction like to be unselfish, you be generous, you pray for the welfare of everybody, you identify yourself with everybody, you love everybody. Through this your physical and mental diseases will be cured. The important point is through the living of spiritual life one can remove many problems including physical disease. According to Swami Brahmananda, if anyone can meditate well, even his physical health will improve. What is the relationship between meditation on God and physical health? It is a subject in itself but this gives a very reasonable, rational idea. What Swami Vivekananda has contributed is bringing the understanding of these concepts to the level of modern thinking. Unless it is brought to the level of modern thinking people will not accept it. If they don't accept it, they will not practice it. If they don't practice they are not going to get the benefits out of it. Swami Vivekananda is saying there is a lot you can take not only for spiritual improvement but also for mental improvement and physical improvement, all of which is contained in the Yogas. In any case we are born with a particular spirit that unless something is explained rationally, with reason, you will not accept it. This is the modern trend and unfortunately we are born that way. This is the neurotic age. It will take about 1000 years to understand the real implications of what he has done.

I have not even gone into the subject matter yet. This is the introduction, background without which we cannot appreciate Swami Vivekananda's exposition of Jnana Yoga.

According to the ancient Indian system of spiritual practices, even though we talk about the four Yogas, in practice Hindus have accepted only two paths as the real paths, Bhakti Yoga and Jnana Yoga. Karma Yoga and Raja Yoga are subservient or supporting Yogas. Unless we understand what are the similarities and dissimilarities within Bhakti Yoga, the path of devotion, and Jnana Yoga, the path of knowledge, we will not be able to appreciate fully the greatness of Swami Vivekananda's Jnana Yoga because he simply expounded the highest truth in the simplest and clearest possible language. He had compressed the ancient Vedantic thought and yet was capable of expressing it in the most modern language so that people with even a little English knowledge can understand. He said, his goal was to take the toughest Indian philosophy, reformulate it that even a child will be able to understand it. One of his success is the lectures on Jnana Yoga which he delivered in London.

Hinduism has, from very ancient times, had two paths, the path of knowledge and the path of devotion. Etymological the word Marga comes from the verbal root Marg, which means to seek, to hunt, to strive, to attain. Though this word Marga is usually translated as a way or path, the word Marga really means an attitude towards the ultimate reality. It is an attitude. What is Bhakti? It is a particular attitude of how a person recalls the ultimate reality called God. Jnana and Bhakti are two basically different approaches to reality. For one thing, the ultimate reality is regarded as personal in the path of devotion. God is always personal otherwise you cannot forge a relationship with him. I can have no relationship with Nirguna Brahman. Why? Because it cannot see, it cannot taste, it cannot hear. You go on praying it cannot hear! Whatever you do, he does not know that you exist. It is impersonal for the Brahman but it is personal for the Bhakti. In Jnana Marga this is the first dissimilarity that we find. Naturally the relationship between the individual self and the supreme self is a personal one in the path of devotion and it is an impersonal relationship in the path of knowledge. What are the five personal relationships? Shanta, Dasiya, Sakhiya, Vatsalya, Madura. Which means, I am your devotee, I am your servant, I am your friend, I am your child and I am your lover. This is the formulation of relationship in the path of Bhakti. In the path of knowledge, Jnana Marga, there can be no formulation of relationship because there is the only one, the Brahman. Therefore the person who is practicing Jnana Yoga has no option but to say, 'I am that' or 'Aham Brahmasmi'. Is it a relationship? It is only you there, so there is no relationship. In the path of devotion, Divine grace is regarded as the sole means of attaining liberation whereas in the path of knowledge self effort is emphasised.

I want to end this topic with a story. Sriramakrishna's Guru, Thothapuri, gave sanyasa to Sriramakrishna and trained him. He instructed Sriramakrishna to remove every thought from his mind. Sriramakrishna said he could remove every thought except one thought which was that of the Divine Mother. The thought of the Divine Mother means the idea of personal God. The ultimate reality as personal God. It was nothing to do with the feminine or male. Thothapuri got very angry. He was wondering how to make Sriramakrishna, his disciple, understand the point that he should eliminate all thought from his mind. He took a sharp edged of a broken piece of glass, pressed into the forehead of Gadadhar, or Sriramakrishna, and said he should meditate upon this. Because, if he said he should meditate upon God which he was already doing, but to meditate upon the pain that entails. This was because Thothapuri never understood the role of Sriramakrishna. Then, Sriramakrishna graphically describes that as soon as the thought of the Divine Mother enters his mind, and she filled his consciousness. He took the sword of

discrimination and cut the figure of the Divine Mother into two. The moment this was done, the figure vanished, his mind became thoughtless and plunged into what we called the Samadhi state or Nirvikalpa Samadhi. You have to interpret it in your own way. Did Sriramakrishna remove the thought of the Divine Mother or was it the Divine Mother who removed it for him. Who did it? There is a rational conundrum here. What is this rational conundrum? I will remove this thought. Here I is a thought. A thought will remove the other thought. Who is going to remove that thought which removed the last thought. For this you need another thought, yet another thought to remove the second thought and infinite regress. Clearly Sriramakrishna was demonstrating that self effort can go until the last thought. This is called in Vedantic language as Brahmakala. After that it is not in your hands. Because after that only someone from inside can come and remove the last thought. In any case, that being which remove the last thought is called Grace or Nirguna Brahman, whatever name you may call it. The point is Sriramakrishna was endowed with the mind of a Bhakta, therefore the question of self effort as all sufficient for attaining the realisation of God is rejected toto. What was accepted was that it is possible to do self effort till the last step, but once you reach the last step, self effort drops and what remains is the Divine Grace. That is the point Sriramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda emphasised as, Thasmat Twameva Sharanam Mama Deena Bandu.
Om Shanti Shanti Shantihee.