

Swami Dayatmananda on Jnana Yoga

(A series of thirty six lectures on Jnana Yoga. This is lecture #3)

Class begins with the chanting of the following dhyana sloka on Swami Vivekananda:

ॐ नमः श्री यति राजाय विवेकानन्द सूरये

सत्चित् - सुख स्वरूपाय स्वामिने तापहारिने

Om Namah Sri yathirajaaya Vivekananda Suraye

Satchit sukha swarupaaya swamine taapahaariney

Continuing the discussion on Jnana Yoga

We have been discussing the Jnana yoga of Swami Vivekananda. And in our last class, pointing out what is the importance of discussing Swami Vivekananda's Jnana Yoga when there are so many traditional books, teachings and teachers. And what distinguishes the interpretation of Jnana yoga by Swamiji and by other traditional teachers. We have been discussing the similarities and dissimilarities.

The first point we discussed was a devotee always starts his spiritual practice with the goal of attaining personal aspect of God, saguna aspect of Iswara. Whereas for the Jnani, it is the so-called impersonal. I say so-called because there is a reason why even though intellectually they pose what is called the impersonal aspect of God, even for most of them it is impossible but they claim that their starting point is nirguna nirakara nirvesesha Brahman.

The second point we discussed is if God is personal, there would be relationships. I am a devotee, I am a servant, these five types of relationships: positive relationships that exist between a devotee and God. And we all know what are those five? Santha, Dasya, Sakhya, Vatsalya and Mathura. But Hinduism adds some more types of relationships and in no other religion, we find this. What are those relationships? God can also be our greatest enemy. You'll have to understand the point clearly. God is not a devotee's enemy. A person who is assuming this attitude is one of the greatest devotees of God. So what is the difference? The difference is he deliberately assumes an enemical attitude towards God: Hiranyakashipu, Ravana, and Kamsa, Sisupala, Dantavakra, etc. Hinduism is an extraordinary insight into Psychology. Hinduism is one of the greatest psychiatrist in the whole world. You can have God as an enemy provided it would be only God and nobody else because if you have enmity with anybody else, you'll be unhappy. If you have God as your enemy, then you would be one of the most happiest persons. I am bringing a very interesting point out here. Hiranyakashipu, for example, hated Vishnu. Hiranyakashipu hated Vishnu. Hatred produces what? Happiness or unhappiness? Oh! In the case of Hiranyakashipu, what did this attitude produce? I will leave the implications for your deeper thinking... because here is the law: whichever gives us the unhappiness, we will do

our level best to give it up! But here is a person who is trying to hate God more and more. He must be getting something out of it. Hinduism recognized it and said whatever type of emotions human beings may have, it doesn't matter, provided if it is directed towards God, he will be the happiest person, he will progress spiritually and in the end, he becomes one with the God. Whereas, for the followers of the path of knowledge, they are always positing the idea of an impersonal God. Impersonal means He has no form, therefore, no name and He has no qualities. That is why it is called 'nirguna', 'nishkriya', 'nirakara'. How are you going to worship? Human nature is very peculiar. Even though they say so, but they behave in the most odd way. For the followers of the path of knowledge, their greatest God is their own Guru who must have composed the hymn:

गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णु गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः

गुरु साक्षात् ...

Transliteration:

GururBrahma GururVishnu GururDevo Maheshwaraha

Gurureva Saakshaat Parabrahma...

Because human being as a human mind and where does this mind go? It has to work according to its own limited nature. For example, Buddhists. Buddha never talked about God so, Buddhists do not talk about God. But how could they tolerate then? What are they going to think about? Later on, who became God? Buddha himself had become God for them! Verily escaped!! This is the second point. First is, a devotee believes in the personal aspect of God whereas, a Jnani claims he doesn't believe at all in the personal aspect of God. He believes only in the impersonal aspect of God. Second point is that, because a devotee believes in a personal God, a person can have relationships with a personal God. If you can't have relationship, then impersonal something. When you have relationship with space, you think of space, in what form will you think of space? Then, what happens? You cannot think about it. So, you will have to think of some object, space assuming some particular object. That's what you need to do. This is the second point.

Again, in the path of devotion, divine grace is regarded as the sole means of attaining salvation. Mind you, for a devotee, self effort is necessary only for one purpose - Self Effort cannot give realization but self effort - what does it do? It prepares the way to receive the grace of God. That is the devotee's attitude from the very beginning. He starts with grace, he develops in grace and he becomes one with grace, ends up in grace. So, what does he say? Sharanagati from the beginning, Sharanagati in the middle and total self-surrender in the end, for the devotee. Whereas for the person following Jnana marga, there is only one option. He doesn't accept personal aspect of God. What does he japa? You know, for a devotee, what is the japa? Whatever maybe the form of God, at the end he will say Namah: and you must recollect, what is the meaning of Namah: ? The first idea that comes is Salutations to God. What is the real idea

that comes? “Nothing belongs to me”, “Oh Lord! Everything belongs to You!” From the beginning to the end... And that’s what Sri ramakrishna’s teachings are distinguished, emphasized on this aspect of Sharanagati. Whereas for the follower of the path of knowledge, that is not possible because he does not have any personal God. So, who is going to bestow the grace? Whom is he going to salute? Even to make salutations, you know, suppose a Jnani, he goes somewhere, he wants to salute the God, do you know what he says?

Tasmai Mahyam Namoh Namah:||

Therefore, salutations unto myself!

There is no option because there is nobody else! *Aham brahmasmi* means I salute myself! What does he do? Self effort. I will do everything through my own self effort. I will start with self effort, I will progress in self effort, and in the end, where does self effort lead? self effort ends in Self. When the culmination point is reached, the effort becomes removed, what remains? Self. self effort starts with ‘small s’ and ends with ‘big S’. *Aham Brahmasmi*, you know! The Guru starts to train the disciple - he who is following the path of knowledge, what does he say? *Tatvamasi*. Thou art that! And the disciple, if he practices, in the end, he ends up how? *Aham Brahmasmi*. There is no other go. That is another difference.

The next difference is, between the two paths lie, in their starting point, Jnana Marga, (Marga means ‘path’) the path of knowledge, begins with an enquiry into the nature of one’s own self because there is nothing outside the Self. ‘I’ consciousness in Jnana marga is a sure ground to start with. And spiritual progress in this path is the progressive expansion of ‘I’ consciousness. The devotee, or the follower of the path of knowledge, he has only one option. He starts with I. What am I? He starts with. In the very beginning would be, ‘I am the body/mind’, and the culminating point would be *Aham Brahmasmi*. The starting point for the follower of path of knowledge is, beginning of enquiry into ‘I’ whereas in the path of devotion, the starting point is faith. What is the faith? There is a God. And somehow or other, I belong to Him. I do not know but through scriptures, through Gurus, through other saints, I somehow have the faith. Beginning is the faith, middle progress is in faith but it doesn’t end in faith. It ends in what? Faith transmuted into Fact, Realization. That is why Swami Vivekananda says, “Religion is Realization.” In Bhakti marga, the starting point is faith in an unknown supreme being who is the creator, sustainer and dissolver of this universe, and the main struggle is to convert this indirect i.e, knowledge obtained by faith of the deity, into a direct experience of the vision of God. Next, we have to understand that knowledge plays a very important role in both the paths. What is common thing? There is a misconception because we understand the word knowledge, ‘Jnana’ in a very peculiar way. Without knowledge, there is no devotion. If you don’t know, if you don’t have the knowledge of a deity, how are you going to have either faith or devotion towards...? You must have some kind of knowledge, either you read about it, you heard about it, your parents have taught, or you heard through somebody or you have seen a cinema, whatever it is, there must be knowledge. And the greater the knowledge, the greater will be the devotion. And the reverse also is true, suppose there is a Jnani, who doesn’t have any devotion, can he really attain his goal? A person who is following the path of knowledge, if he doesn’t have devotion, can he progress in life? Is it ever possible? Such beautiful, interesting points, you know! What

happened in the case of Totapuri? In Bhakti, devotion is the path, <recording cut at 12'45"> Another difference you have to note is, in the path of knowledge i.e, Jnana marga, 'Jnana' means knowledge, is not merely the ultimate goal but the sole means of attaining that goal. For a person who is pursuing the path of knowledge, what does he do? He goes on hearing (called 'Shravana'), goes on thinking, meditating (called 'Manana') and ultimately his whole life is transformed (called 'Nididhyasana') and what he starts with, is theoretical. Theory ends in Realization. How does he start? The Guru comes and teaches him, initiates him (*Tatvamas!*). You are That! Highest Reality! And he has to listen again and again, has to read about it, has to read the commentaries, and then he has to go on thinking until all doubts are totally removed and he has to transform. The word 'Nididhyasana' is a very important word. What is 'Nididhyasana'? It indicates clearly, it is not a mere intellectual process but bringing about transformation in one's own life. Whereas, in the path of devotion, what is the starting point? Bhakti. What is the middle point? Bhakti. What is the goal of a Bhakta? It is "I don't want even liberation. I only want more Bhakti! Only give me Bhakti". In one of the most beautiful hymns ever composed, it is called "Mukunda Mala Stotram" by Kulasekara Alwar, one of the greatest devotees. He was one of the twelve Alwars (Alwars means in South India, Vaishnava devotees). He says, "O Lord! You give me any type of birth you want, even I maybe an insect. I will not mind. But I humbly beg you let me never lose my devotion towards your Lotus feet." Janma janmanthara only Bhakti, devotion I want. For a devotee, Bhakti (Devotion) is the starting point, it is the developing point, it is also the end point. He wants to remain a Bhakta. This beautiful idea is expressed in a most wonderful way in a Bengali saying, "Ame chini hote chaina, ami chini kete chai" "I do not wish to become sugar, I want to enjoy sugar" is a way of saying. Most beautiful thing for us to understand. These are some of the similarities and dissimilarities.

But whether a person is following the path of devotion, or he is following the path of knowledge, it doesn't matter. But one thing is very common. Both of them must have certain preliminary qualifications like you know, whether you going to become a doctor or engineer, IT engineer or a lecturer in literature and poetry and all that, it doesn't matter. Certain basic qualifications are necessary. And these basic qualifications is called Sadhanas. These sadhanas may differ only in name. Here is something very important point. The point is people may follow different religions, different yogas. It doesn't matter whether they have faith in God or not. For example, Buddhism doesn't talk about God but their goal is to become perfect spiritually. All of them, they may differ in their opinions about God, whether personal aspect of God or impersonal aspect of God, whether he lives in Vakunta or Kailasa, and whether he will bestow his grace now or later, whether he will bestow his grace on me first and on you later, or not at all - these are all mote points. But one thing everyone agrees and no quarrel is there, is that the path of Sadhana. What is Sadhana? The way to transform our present personality into a spiritual personality. A saint is a saint in any religion, in any cline at any age. There is no difference. A saint is a saint is a saint in whichever religion. Like, you know, a loving person is a loving person whether he is a Hindu or Muslim or Buddhist, one billion years back or one billion years later. See, there are certain concepts, these concepts would never change. That is how humanity progresses in life. You know, for example, a beautiful person is a beautiful person, whatever be the color of the skin, whatever be the age. You know, you get expressions, here is a woman who is seventy years old

and still very beautiful. So, this beauty is recognized by all humanity - there is no bar of time or space or religion or race or ethnic identity. Universal recognition! A good person is a good person. What is the difference between a Hindu good person and a Christian good person? Can you make out any difference? It is like that. That is the most wonderful thing we all need to keep in mind. To be very brief, for the devotee, he starts with faith. It is a great mistake to think he doesn't need any preliminary qualifications. Every devotee needs rigorously certain preliminary qualifications, only, he calls it, you know, according to Ramanuja, he was the greatest exponent of the path of Prabatthi Marga we call it, the path of self surrender. He posits seven steps like, Viveka, Vimokkha, Abhyasa, Kriya, Kalyana, Anuddharsha, etc. seven these things. The same qualities, in Yoga system, just because we studied Patanjali Yoga Sutra, practical Kriya yoga, practical yoga is called Kriya yoga. In the Kriya yoga, what are the two preliminary qualifications? You all know, it is called Ashtanga Marga. Eight stepped way - what are the first two? Foundations - 'Yama' and 'Niyama'. The same 'yama' and 'niyama' is called 'Viveka' and all those things. And the same 'yama', 'niyama' gets sophisticated term in the path of knowledge, you know what they call it? *Sadhana chatushtaya sampatti* - Treasure of four spiritual qualifications. What are they? You all know - first is 'Viveka'. 'Viveka' means discrimination. What is discrimination? Where am I? What is my goal? What needs to be done? What needs not to be done? This is called the point of discrimination. What is the next one? Dispassion. What is dispassion? Not running away to Rishikesh. You know what is dispassion? Whatever, through discrimination, we come to know this is not right, give it up. Whatever is not right for my progress in my particular path, give it up like poison. Slowly, maybe after many lives, but that is the goal, start giving up a little bit. That is called 'Vairagya'. What is 'Vairagya'? The old type of life I am leading is no good, I have to lead a new type of life. Or to put it in the simplest way possible - do you know what it is? Replace old worldly habits with new spiritual habits. They are called *Sadhana chatushtaya sampatti*. Irrespective of whatever path a person is following, the path of devotion, the path of knowledge, but one thing is universally acknowledged by every religion, by every path of yoga is the necessity of a guide - the need of a illumined Guru. The Guru is not merely a guide but a conduit of spiritual power. In Bhakti marga, the seeker has the deity for his support but in Jnana Marga, the Guru is the only support. That's why whenever any great follower of the knowledge writes any book, you know in India, and everywhere also, but in India especially, if they want to write a spiritual book, the first thing is called Mangalacharanam. He has to write a verse praising God, praying to God that by his grace, three things should be accomplished. Three things - the first thing is all the obstacles for the completion of the mission should be removed by the grace of God. And what is the second thing? By the grace of God, the work must be completed. What is the third thing? Make me a fit instrument so that I will be able to write this book. That is called Mangalacharanam. In Vivekachudamani, Sankaracharya, the emperor of the followers of Jnana Marga, how does he do?

Govindam Paramanandam

I salute Govinda who is of the nature of the embodiment of Supreme Bliss.

Govindam Paramanandam!

Whenever I utter the word, 'Govinda', what picture comes to your mind? Sri Krishna. When Shankaracharya is mentioning this name, what does he mean? Govindacharya was his Guru. My guru who is of the nature of supreme bliss, I salute Him. I told you, for them, since God (personal aspect of God) doesn't exist and you cannot salute any personal aspect of God, He cannot even look at you, even to know that you are saluting Him. There is nobody. That's why Guru takes the place of a personal God. So, Guru is very necessary in every tradition. That is why in Hinduism Guru is considered as the supreme God to such an extent, funny extent that if God gives one commandment and the Guru gives another commandment, whom do you think the disciple is going to follow? There's only the Guru. There are many interesting incidents and Sri Ramakrishna mentions one such incident. There was a disciple of Chaitanya in Vrindavan and he was very strict taskmaster, very very strict taskmaster. And his disciple used to pray weeping, "Oh Mother! Our Guru is very harsh so, make him you know, the word 'harsh', the english word 'harsh' how do you spell it? H-a-r-s-h. But in Sanskrit, we can convert it. You add one 'a', it becomes 'Harsha'. 'Harsha' means happiness. So, they are praying, "Oh God! Please make our Guru little bit 'Harsha' so that we can tolerate his discipline." They wholeheartedly prayed to whom? The presiding deity of Brindavan who was none other than Radha Rani. Because Sri Krishna, if Radha Rani says "Get up", he will get up. If she says "Sit down", he will sit down. That's our faith, you know. Mother comes first. So, Radha Rani appeared before the Guru and said "Baba! You treat your disciples a little bit better" He looked at her and said, "You are a cowherd woman. What do you know how to discipline? Disappear from here." This is the example Sri Ramakrishna gives in the Gospel, you know? What does that mean? That the Guru loves his disciples or not? And for whose good is he disciplining? For their good, for everybody's good. We have to understand that. And if you don't accept that aspect, my Guru should be only seat. Whenever I come to him, his face will bloom into thousand petaled lotus. This Guru is not only an inspiration, a guidance and he is also a loving mother. He is not only an illumined soul, his life will be the most inspiring life. I recollect a beautiful incident again narrated by Sri Ramakrishna. Once a man went to Varanasi. At that time, there was a very great soul there called Trilinga Swami. And at that time, Trilinga Swami was observing silence. This gentleman, it must have been an incident that happened because Sri Ramakrishna must have heard about it. He went and asked the Swami, "How can I have the vision of God?" some question like that. We don't know what happened. This Swami was observing mauna. And the devotee went and the Swami was not talking. He was about to go away. He said "Let me wait" or to put even more masala, the devotee got disappointed and went away. And he took about "I'm never ever going to visit this Swamiji. He does not talk and he doesn't even look at me" But then something was pulling him. Next day, again he went. He simply didn't ask any questions. He sat down. And suddenly, the Swami started sobbing so much that the devotee was startled. What is this? This man suddenly... there is nobody and no cause and he is sobbing like that. Next moment, he started laughing joyously, uproariously. The devotee saluted the Swami and then came out. And Sri Ramakrishna is explaining, "You know, the devotee was thinking, Oh if I had not returned what I would've missed! What a great lesson I learned from this Swami" Sri Ramakrishna was commenting the devotee's reaction, understanding that if anybody can weep for God as the Swami had wept, he will have vision of God. And once he has the vision of God, he will be so much blissful and incidentally, I have to tell you something very interesting. You

know, this description the Swami was laughing uproariously, joyously, how many people have you seen laughing and joyously? Very few. Only small children you can see, when they laugh, it is really a joyous laugh. But for most of us, it is only artificial, you know. Once a person sees, that is if that person is having a lot of good fortune, and he comes and sees, meets a person (saint) and he observes the saint sobbing or laughing joyously, then he will understand what is called grief, what is called joy. True grief and true joy. This was a great lesson. These are the kind of things we see in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. Again and again, you read the Gospel, you read the Great Master especially, how Sri Ramakrishna was weeping. Once he was describing the vision of Sri Krishna he had and he showed him a blue flower. "This is the blue flower. This is the color of the Sri Krishna's body. I had this kind of vision." And then he was reminded of Sri Krishna and he started sobbing so greatly, it was impossible for anybody to describe. Only those who have experienced, they know what it is.

These are certain preliminaries. We have discussed the similarities, the dissimilarities and the preliminaries. Now, we have to understand if any person wants to understand Swami Vivekananda's talks I'm telling, even intellectually, certain other qualities are necessary. What is it? Any Tom, Dick and Harry cannot take up the Jnana Yoga lectures. He can read but understanding is an entirely different issue. Why? Because the goal of Jnana Marga is nothing personal. If one can be true to this ideal, and seek it with sincerity, only if one has an impersonal outlook on life, right from the beginning. It's a very important point. Impersonal attitude. What is impersonal attitude? I'll give you a small example because these are highly pregnant with meaning. Personal attitude means what? Everything is taken as personal. If somebody looks at you, then you get offended. If somebody doesn't look at you, you get offended. If someone smiles at you, you can get offended. If somebody doesn't, you can get offended. What is this attitude called? Personal attitude. What is personal? The whole world is centered only in me, and everybody should only admire me and nobody should dare to criticize me. And no tragedy, no grief and no suffering should ever happen in my life. It can happen in anybody's life but not in my life. This is called personal attitude. And even for a devotee, this attitude is an inimical attitude. Utter selfishness. What is impersonal attitude? Supposing somebody is suffering, let me give you an illustration. So what happened? Swami Vivekananda was presented with beautiful cutlery by his American devotees. A very costly one, including a pen knife. And Swamiji lovingly brought it to Belur Math and the devotees used to serve him with this cutlery, with this tea set, etc. So, one day, Swami Turiyananda, he was trying to polish the pen knife or anything... suddenly, it broke. And then, he became very sad thinking that this is a favorite pen knife of Swami Vivekananda and I have broken it unfortunately. Anyway, now and then I add a little bit of masala. If someone else had broken it, if I had broken it, what would have been his reaction? He broke it, so I am the cause of Swami Vivekananda's would-be grief when he comes to know. Swamiji was there fortunately, he looked at Swami Turiyananda and laughed and said, "Hari Bhai! This is how these fellows will get destroyed. They won't become old, they will not get any disease and they won't slowly starve to death, No! This is how the end will come for them." And the way he said, Swami Turiyananda's grief also disappeared. Like this, so many incidents are there. What is the point we are discussing? If someone wants to follow the path of knowledge, he must have an impersonal attitude. What is impersonal attitude? Whatever

happens, it is something that happens to everybody. Not me personally. So, it's ok. The whole world is suffering, I'm also suffering. What is so great about my suffering? If a person does not have that kind of attitude, then he may read books but he will never be able to take one step in the path of knowledge. That is an important point. A person with a natural positive inclination to the pursuit of Jnana Marga, regards himself only as a part of the vast stream of life. That means I am one in the vast stream of life. That is the attitude which Buddhists try to follow. If you recollect, if you remember, beautiful novel named "Siddhartha" by Hermann Hesse. There, there was a person, exactly like the life of Buddha, there was a companion called Govinda. And both of them set out in pursuit of realization. And then, life passes and Govinda becomes very old and then, [not Govinda] I think Siddhartha, he doesn't attain, he goes through so many experiences then he comes to Varanasi and becomes an assistant to a boatman. And then he observed the boatman looks like an illumined soul! So, he asked him, "How did you come about this illumination?" And the boatman says, "All that I did was, I ply the boat, I take the passengers to the other side and bring them back again. River had taught me everything. From now on, you also become a boatman and you will also become illumined like myself." Then, Siddhartha learnt the lesson. What is the lesson? In the river, wood things are thrown, flowers are thrown and so many items of worship are thrown including the images of Gods and Goddesses, you know. After Ganesh Chaturthi or after any Durga Puja, Durga image where do you think they will go? They go into the river. As well, there would be rotten corpses, dead animals, both clean things and dirty things, all are floating. But the river flows unperturbed. That is first point. The second point is everything is flowing by. Time is flowing. Events will flow. Nothing changes. The banks remain the same. But the water is changing all the time. Compare this - In life, so many things happen, you just be a boatman means you be a witness of everything that is happening good and bad. If you can become a witness, you are fit to follow the path of knowledge. That was the lesson and Siddhartha became illumined. It is a beautiful book illuminating the philosophy of Lord Buddha.

But in a way, in a special way, from an existential angle, point of view, what I am trying to tell is that this whole universe is a vast stream of life. How many billions, billions, billions and billions of microbes, viruses, lives are born and dying and carrying on their lives. What are we so much worried about? We are small, we are nothing in comparison with that. There was a beautiful comparison, you know. I've to tell you, anytime you feel proud that you are somebody, bring an astrological map. Find out the whole map that astrologers have mapped out, the whole cosmos. And in that cosmos, you see, our particular galaxy is a tiny weeny bit as the Sun as the central star. And in that our solar system, our Earth is still tiny bit. In that tiny bit, after that you don't see. In that tiny bit means our Earth, in that Earth our U.K is a still tinier bit. In that U.K, Bourne End is still a tinier bit. In that Bourne End, in the auditorium, I'm sitting, I'm thinking I'm somebody. Compare the vastness of this universe. And that's one way of reducing, compressing our Ahankara (Egotism). Anyway, coming back, another point for those who want to tread the path of knowledge, Jnana Marga. What Bhakti is to a devotee of God, Jnana is to a seeker of impersonal Brahman. For a Bhakta, what is the central point? Bhakti. For a Jnani, what is the central point? Jnana. Knowledge. Now, what do you mean by Knowledge? Because knowledge can be of two types: one is Intellectual; another is life giving, life transforming. For a

Jnani, you know, so many I've seen, they study the scriptures, they study the Upanishads, they study especially, the commentaries of Shankaracharya, etc. but absolutely it doesn't touch their heart. They become, in fact, dry to such an extent, in India, we have a funny saying, "Whenever we come across any person telling that the world doesn't exist three times Duniya trikal me hai nahi!" The first thing we suspect is he must be suffering from indigestion problems. He can't eat. And he can't see others eating. What is the way to escape? I am Brahman. I don't need all those things. And unfortunately, in most of the cases, that is the truth. There are people, great people, that is a different issue. But most of the people, it's the dyspepsia which brought down the impersonal aspect of God. Why did he take to the path of impersonal? Because he tried already personal aspect, "Oh God! Cure me of my stomach ache so that I can eat and enjoy!" And God didn't listen - Apply, apply no reply! So now, he has turned his attention to impersonal God. There is no choice - this world is absolutely worthless. It has to be renounced. In English there is a beautiful saying, "Grapes are sour!" Advaita is great! Impersonal aspect is...

For a follower of the path of knowledge, the follower, his life is knowledge. Knowledge is his life. He would give up everything because he loves knowledge. Let me here narrate, a beautiful story. I don't know how many of you have heard about it. In Advaitic tradition, there was a great soul and he was a married person. He married because his parents forced or some unavoidable social circumstances. But he never wanted to marry. Always he wanted to become a monk. And his life is pursuit of knowledge. He was a follower of Shankaracharya. And what happened, he was forced to marry but he resolved, "Even though I am married, that I would devote my life to pursuit of knowledge." He started writing a commentary, it's a beautiful book, he later named it as "Bhamati". Why he named it as "Bhamati", here is the story that comes. Started writing... seven... eight years had passed. From morning till evening, his whole attention - every morning, he would get up, go and take bath, come and start writing, noon, if some food is there, he will eat. Seven, eight years have passed. One day, he almost completed the book and one evening, he could not write because it was dark. Just then, somebody came, lighted up the lamp and in that light, he suddenly noticed there is this person standing there. He asked "Who are you?". She said, "I am your wife, Bhamati. Ever since you married me, you have become absorbed. You completely forgot about me and I have been preparing your food, I've been looking after your simple needs, I am your wife Bhamati." He forgot for so many years that he got married, he had a wife and her name was Bhamati. And then tears came to his eyes and he said, "Look! I married not because I had any desire for marriage but this is my life. I decided. As soon as I complete this book, I will renounce the world. But don't worry. I will make your name immortal." And he named the book as Bhamati.

Can you imagine a person loves knowledge so much that he forgets everything in this world? This is an incident that had really happened. And that book is one of the greatest commentaries on Brahma Sutras. His name was Vachaspathi Misra, the great ninth century scholar who is perfectly at ease in all the systems of Indian philosophy. It is said that one night when he was writing his Magnum Opus, an exclusive gloss on the Brahma Sutra, the lamp ran out of oil and light became dim, he craned his neck nearer to the lamp, when a woman entered, poured oil into the lamp and brightened it. Vachaspathi raised his head and their eyes met. "Who are you?"

asked this scholar. She was none other than his own wedded wife. He had forgotten all about her for many years. Vachaspathi consoled her by saying, "I will make your name immortal!" He gave her name Bhamati to his work which is considered to be next in greatness only to Shankara's own commentary.

Next, the starting point of Jnana marga. *The whole rational of Jnana marga rests on the fundamental thesis that by realizing one's true self, it is possible to know the Ultimate Reality and the mystery of creation.*

We already hinted at this point. What is the starting point? I. Myself. I am Brahman. That is intellectual knowledge. Knowledge by faith - the instructions came from the Guru, from the scriptures. I have to transform it into my own realization. When the follower of the Jnana marga completes his Sadhana, attains perfection, then what does he say? He realizes "Myself is the Brahman!". In the Upanishads, this question is raised, "What is that knowing which everything is known?" Just as through a lump of clay, all that is made up of clay is known. Is there any such thing? Yes, the Atman! The answer that the sages found which they expressed through the Upanishads. The main sadhana in Jnana marga, in the path of knowledge, you know, just as for the devotee, what is the sadhana? He gets initiated, he gets a mantra, he repeats the mantra, he prays, he worships God, he goes on pilgrimage, and as I mentioned, the seven points of Ramanuja like discrimination between food, and then Vimokkha, giving up everything for the love of God, etc. etc. But here, there are three steps: Shravana, Mañana, and Nididhyasana. What is Shravana? Not taking up a book and reading. Shravana means it must come from the Guru's own mouth. That is called Mahavakya. What is Mahavakya? Tatvamasi is one of the Mahavakyas. And he has absolute faith that what the Guru says is 100% the truth. He listens, and then he has to think, "Am I God? How can I be God? I am so puny, I am so helpless, I am so powerless, I absolutely don't have any knowledge." But going on thinking... "You Fool! We are not talking about your body, we are not talking about your mind, we are talking about the pure consciousness which is behind your body, your mind, behind everyone's body mind, behind this whole universe. That pure Consciousness." It takes lives, any concepts into the next state called Mañana. First, acceptance, then think about it until the last bit of the doubts are totally removed and then transform your life. Until now, it is merely intellectual knowledge. But now transform it into your realization. So, Swamiji defined religion as what? Religion is realization. These are the three steps.

Now, we are entering into a beautiful phase. Why do people think that Jnana Marga is difficult? We all have that, you know. So many years you have been coming here as devotees. And anything spoken with Bhakti, on Bhakti, about Bhakti and you think you understand and anything spoken about Jnana marga, you think "It's Ok. It sounds nice but not for me. It is very difficult." Why do people think like that? There are certain reasons. Here are some reasons:

First: Sri Krishna himself declares, Sri Ramakrishna also declares the same. For most people, the path of Jnana marga is not suitable. Arjuna, especially in twelfth chapter (on Bhakti Yoga), asks "You spoke of two paths: the path of devotion and the path of knowledge. Tell me clearly

which path should I accept.” Then Sri Krishna says “Both paths lead to me alone.” But there is a difference for...

[Maharaj recites the below sloka from Bhagavad Gita Ch12 Sloka 5]

क्लेशोऽधिकतरस्तेषामव्यक्तासक्तचेतसाम् ॥

अव्यक्ता हि गतिर्दुःखं देहवद्भिरवाप्यते ॥

kleśho 'dhikataras teṣhām avyaktāsakta-chetasām

avyaktā hi gatiḥ duḥkham dehavadbhir avāpyate

Sri Ramakrishna is putting in his inimitable words, “Kalikale Manus annagatha pran!” In the kali age, man is totally identified with his body. For such a person, to think even that I am the pure Atman is a very difficult path. Sri Ramakrishna says it's a valid path but it is a difficult path. It is suitable only for a few people. This is a fact - many people think that it is not for me. I accept the truth of the validity of the path.

Second: Most people are more emotional rather than rational. Very easy for us to understand. And lack of impersonal attitude of which we discussed a few minutes before. Lack of faith in oneself. When we say, “I have faith.”, what do we mean by “I have faith in God”? It is “God is great, He is all-powerful, He can do anything He likes. But Me, I'm absolutely nobody, nothing. I cannot do anything by myself”. Somehow, that is the attitude we have got. For a person to start saying, “I am Brahman.”, it is an impossibility. But Sri Ramakrishna will come and rescue you. Jesus Christ will come and rescue you. It's far easier for most of us.

Then, most of the people are capable of taking circuitous route only. There are two routes to reach the same goal. You know airports, you go, one is you take an elevator. What is the other one? You go round and round and round. What is Bhakti Marga? Going round and round. What is Jnana marga? You ascending a mountain peak directly. Ascending directly is very difficult.

These are the some of the problems and it is easy to follow the path of devotion rather than the path of knowledge. There is one most important difference - why most people think the path of knowledge is very difficult? There is a special reason. You see, when we read books and when we hear from other people about these two paths, the type of language people use is totally different. What is the language that is used in the path of devotion? “Iti - iti” means “This-this”. What is the description of the impersonal God? What is the description? No description is the description. “Neti - neti”. “Not this - not this”. Is He human being? No. Is He God? No. Is He small? No. Is He big? No. *anuraniya mahatohiya*. Smaller than the atom. Smaller than the smallest. And then, bigger than the biggest. So, the description given is the negative description. It is called *via negativa*. Technical language - *via negativa* means here, I have to go to slight difference.

Whenever we are reading a book or hearing something, leave alone ordinary language. It even seeps into ordinary language, there are six types of religious languages linguistic differences - very briefly, I will tell you about that. First, the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gitas, the Puranas, and the innumerable teachings of saints and sages use different type of language and without understanding these styles, we cannot understand the truths that they contain.

Broadly speaking, religious language may be divided into six groups: the first group, it is called "Language of Dialectics". What is Dialectics, you know? Very rational. You first you go to this step, next you go to the second step, third you go to the third step, fourth you go to the fourth step like that, very rationally ordered type of this thing. Like instructions, you know. First, you do this, second you do this, third you do this. It's called Dialectical language.

The next type of language is called Negation, often found in the Upanishads. Just now we discussed - what is it? Neti neti. The word "Neti" has got two words, "Na", "Iti". Neti - not this, not this, not this.

The third type of language is of evocation, widely used in poetry. Simple example is "My beloved's face looks like a full moon". What is the connection between full moon, round moon and my beloved's this thing? Unless this lady has been eating a lot of butter. It is evocative language. When you read poetry, or any type of literature, higher type of literature, this kind of usage of the words, they create a different kind of feeling for those who are trained in that language. You know, there is a Japanese poetry called Haiku? You know, just two sentences - "The bird is flying in the sky, and the shadows are long on the ground". Japanese poetry. What will you understand by that? This is called Evocative language. It evokes something but not in everybody; only in those who are trained for that. This is the third type of language. To the Vedic Aryans, the Sun, the Sky, the Wind, Fire, Water meant something quite different from what they mean to modern people. Very simple example: You look at the Thames River. What is the idea you have? You look at it and think "Oh! Nice Water..." If you go to India, you look at Ganges water. That is also nothing but H₂O. But the way a Hindu is trained to look at it, what does he see there? Something totally different. This is not water. This is Goddess. Say, for example Tulasi for Vaishnavas. For Shiva bhaktas, Bilva leaf. All these evoke something tremendously different. When you look at the sun, when the scientist looks at the Sun, what is the idea? It is a burning gas. But when a brahmin looks at the same Sun, what is he doing? He is worshipping Savitha, he is worshipping Gayatri, he is worshipping Saraswati - morning, afternoon and evening. It is a Goddess, God. The Moon is a Devata. The stars are Devatas. All the five elements are Devatas. Everything is a evocative language.

The fourth type of language is called Analogy which places two different types of experiences side by side. It is the language of parables and allegories frequently used by Jesus Christ and by Sri Ramakrishna in modern times. I'll give you some examples also. What is called allegories, metaphors, etc, analogies? Sri Ramakrishna gives an example: When I call upon God, he gives an example - Here is a fool who is wanting to take bath in the sea. So, he walks up to the shore of the sea and then thinks, "Let all the waves subside and आराम से, I'll take a

bath when he leisurely takes a bath. When will he take a bath? Never! This is an analogy. If anybody thinks that I will retire at some point of time, I will have no other work, and then I will nicely sit and only think about God especially, in my Vedantic stage. When I reach the state of Vedanta, then I will think about God. It is never going to happen for two reasons - one reason is, there is no guarantee that you will reach that old age. Second reason is that even if you reach, if you don't have that habit right now, you are not going to start a new habit at that age. Very difficult. Maybe possible but very difficult. This is the, what is called language of Analogy.

The fifth type of language is the language of Paradox. Paradox means two opposite ideas are juxtaposed side by side. The Atman. In the Ishavasya Upanishad, the Atman is near; it is very far. It is inside; it is outside. It is moving; it is not moving. In our experience, what is moving is moving, not non-moving. At the same time, it is moving and not-moving. At the same time, it is dark and light. At the same time, it is good and it is evil. That is the idea of Mother Kali, any God or Goddess. This is called Paradoxical language. What is the purpose? It's purpose is to break the logical conditioning of the mind, to stop its constant attempt to conceptualize and to make it encounter reality a fresh. The Koan puzzles of Zen, etc are examples.

Lastly, we come to the language of Myth. What is Myth? Until the end of the first quarter of the century, myths were regarded as cock and bull stories. But there was a great intellectual, a great scholar and a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, called Joseph Campbell. And he had researched it and he came up with wonderful conclusions. A Myth is a re-enactment of our original nature. I will not pound upon it now but I will give an example. We have got Puranas, called Indian Mythologies. We all know the story of Prahlada. Prahlada was a devotee of God and his father was also a devotee of God but pursuing the path of emotional... negative emotion called Enmity with God. Then, what happened? One day, there was a conversation. The Father made many attempts to kill Prahlada and it was an allegory. Once there is devotion, you cannot kill it. You can try to suppress it for sometime. Once you have devotion, for eternity you'll have devotion. Sometimes, it may be obscured, sometimes it may be shining. But you can never... once you are a devotee, you are bound forever. So, Hiranyakashipu is asking, "Where is your God?" What does Prahlada? "Where is NOT God?". "Is He in this pillar?". "Yes, He is in the pillar?". Then, Hiranyakashipu takes a weapon and breaks the pillar. And out comes God in a particular way. I'm not interested in the particularities of the story. But I'm interested in the allegory of the story. So, immediately Hiranyakashipu was killed. This is the story. What is the allegory? The allegory is what is the pillar? The pillar is that which obstructs our vision of God. What is it? Egotism. The moment the egotism is broken, and that can be done through our self-effort. Then, out comes God and the remnant of the Egoism, He will destroy. This is the allegory. What is the allegory? What stands between us and God? Only Ego. The pillar. Pillar is called representing egotism. If you don't understand the allegory, "Oh! This demon destroyed, tortured, etc. etc." is nonsense. The important point here is, behind every mythological story, there is an allegory. And we have to go to that allegory to really extract and enjoy the reality of it. And our religious books use this language.

To conclude today's topic, different types of languages are there. And Advaita or Jnana marga employs one particular type of language. What is it called? The language of negation - "Not this! Not this!" And we are not prepared to accept it. This is what pushes off. I want somebody about whom I can think of, to whom I can pray, I can meditate on, and I can interact. A loving master, I'm a loving servant, etc. But he's not a loving master, "No! No". Is he a master? No no! Not at all a master. Has He got a form? No. Where does He live? He doesn't live anywhere. If you go on talking like this, whatever devotion I have towards you, it will disappear. Not towards God. Then, I will go to some other Guru who can tell me what I want to hear about. This is what puts off so many people off the path of knowledge. But what I wanted to emphasize, before going to some other topic, is, without knowledge of the reality, with some amount of intellectual understanding, and with faith and devotion, you can't progress even in the path of devotion. We'll talk about these things in our future classes. Om Shanti Shanti Shantih ||