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JNANA YOGA – 15

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 Jnana Yoga of Swami Vivekananda. The point we have left off in our last class is individuality. What is **individuality**? It is bondage. What is individuality? To think we are the body and the mind. What is individuality? It is to think we are separate from everything else. That is individuality. Swamiji, as I mentioned earlier, is talking nothing else but pure upanishadic messages. The profound upanishadic teachings are being reflected in the most modern language. Swamiji is saying that people are frightened when they are told this – that what you consider as individuality is nothing but false. Again and again, they will ask you if they are not going to keep their individuality. Swamiji is making a little bit of fun now. What is individuality? I should like to see it. A baby has no moustache. When he grows to be a man perhaps he has a moustache and a beard. His individuality would be lost if it were in the body. A drunkard should not give up drinking because then he would lose his individuality. Funny thing is before he became a drunkard, he was not a drunkard. The moment he started drinking, he lost his individuality and if again in future gives up, he again loses his individuality. How many times are we going to lose our individuality? As soon as we grow up, we are losing our individuality. With every sleep, we lose our individuality. With every death, we are losing our individuality. With every birth, we are losing our individuality.

What is **spiritual life**? To get rid of this individuality and become real individual. The very English word individual means what? That which

cannot be divided. So what is it that cannot be divided? There is a Sanskrit word 'akhanda' – indivisible. What is akhanda? Infinity. People are frightened of this. No man ought to change his habits for fear of this. Swamiji declares there is no individuality except in the infinite neither can individuality can be in memory.

The next point, one of the biggest discussions or debates is about this idea. How do we know we had previous birth, let alone the next birth. How do we know that we had last birth or births? How do we know that we were babies? Swamiji counters this argument. What is the crux of this argument? If we lose our memory, we do not exist. For that time when we do not have our memory, we are no more. This is what we are thinking all the time. How do I know? Oh, from the childhood, I was like that. Ok, go back to your childhood. What time of the childhood do you still remember? Do you remember what you did when you were a 2-year-old baby? Until you were 3 years old, what were you doing and what was your mummy doing? If individuality is what you call keeping the memory and individuality is lost when memory is lost, tell me do you remember what I spoke last week? You didn't exist last week at all. How many things do we really remember? Very few things. This is where Swamiji is bringing this one. Neither can individuality be in memory. Suppose on account of a blow on the head, I forget all about my past, then I have lost all individuality. Swamiji emphasizes we are not individuals yet, we are struggling towards individuality. What is that individuality? That is the infinite, that is the real nature of man. **He alone lives whose life is in the whole universe.** When man can say I am everything, in everybody, I am in all lives, I am the universe, then alone comes the state of fearlessness.

Swamiji now progresses into the next step. We are all students of Bhagavad Gita. In the Gita, the 11th chapter is all about universal form of God. When the lord graciously reveals his real individuality, until then Arjuna was also seeing Bhagavan Krishna and he was thinking I am different and Bhagavan Krishna is different. All of a sudden, now Bhagavan had revealed to him His universal form. What did Arjuna

behold? Everything that he was experiencing before as an individual. Before we progress, we should always keep this point in mind. The moment I think I am separate from you and everything else is separate from me, not only would I think I am an individual and that everything else also is individual. You are individual, the chair is individual, the carpet is an individual, the mosquito is an individual. Only I lose the identity with this body and mind, there would be absolutely no differentiation at all. Now Arjuna saw that all the armies, not only Kourava army. This is a most beautiful chapter. It is explaining the universal idea of the Upanishads that I am everything: **Sarvam khalvidam brahma**. Everything is nothing but manifestation of brahma. There are so many points; if we go deep, you will attain Samadhi. For the fear of that, I will not go into it, not on this occasion.

What is the point here? Arjuna he himself became one with the lord, one within the lord like everybody else. People were coming. Three things were happening; creation is coming out, shrushti, sthithi, laya is happening within that personality of Bhagavan, but still Arjuna could not go beyond. He is seeing so many things, but previously everything was separate, now everything is within that one thing. He could not go beyond it. You know what is the result? He could not stand it. Why could he not stand it? Because he thought I am going mad. Why did he think I am going mad? My personality is being lost, who am I? A small drop of water if you lift it from a small place and try to drop it. Oh, don't drop it, I am going to lose me. Is it going to lose or is it going to gain? That is the idea. We are all frightened. Whenever we are thinking of change; you know old age is frightening, disease is frightening, and death is frightening. Every change is frightening, but some changes we ignore and some changes attract us too much. We are all struggling towards individuality. Now supposing we attain that individuality of the upanishadic understanding which is the universal form which is infinite, do we get any benefit. Swamiji brings in a beautiful idea. When a man can say I am in everything, I am in everybody, I am in all lives, I am the universe; when a man can say that, then alone comes the state of fearlessness. This is the English translation of the most marvelous teaching of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

There was a king called **Janaka**. He wanted to attain to the knowledge of brahman and he wanted to find out the best teacher. He did find out and his name was **Yagnavalkya**. There was a lot of discussion and then Yagnavalkya easily outdid everyone else. Janaka accepted him as his guru. I will just tell you very briefly. Janaka sat as a disciple and Yagnavalkya was teaching. Yagnavalkya:

- “*You are the combination of all these bodies and minds.*” “Oh, I realized it. My whole kingdom I give it to you.”
- “You are not the universe. You are the atman.” “Oh, I realize it. My whole kingdom, I offer it at your feet.”

Janaka was realizing / understanding step by step. What is that understanding? Giving up our individual identities is realizing what we really are. We don't attain something, that is the most important point. What Swamiji tells, what is the benefit? You become fearless. So long as there are two objects, we become fearful. Now, do not interpret the fear as heart beating fast, etc. In upanishadic language, fear means insecurity. **Insecurity** means not as what we understand it; a thief will come, a murderer will come, a terrorist will come. Insecurity means **asampoornata**. I am not complete. If I don't have that, I am not complete. Without that, I would not be complete. I should have more, I must have something more. This is called as insecurity. So long as there is a second object, why cannot I have that one also and that will be very natural. That is why spirituality expressing in a negative form is called jealousy. Similarly kama/lust is spirituality expressing in a negative form. What is kama? Kama means desire. I don't want to be an individual. I love rasagulla, so what do I do? I don't want us to be separate. So what do I do? I make it one with me. Until I achieve that state of advaita, I would not be satisfied. The moment I become one with it, then I am very happy. This is the same struggle. Every moment we are struggling. We want to be only one. Advaita state is the only state of fearlessness. Feeling that I am incomplete, I want to be complete, that is called infinity.

This is what Yajnavalkya, when Janaka realized I am the atman, he gives the certificate. The guru gives the certificate to the disciple, “you have

attained fearlessness O' Janaka." He says "*dvitiyad vai bhayam bhavati.*" It is from the second all the dissatisfaction, desire, jealousy, anger arises. What is anger? Frustration. Bhagavan Sri Krishna is a superb psychoanalyst. He says "*dhyayato vishayan pumsaha sangasteshoopajayate sangat sanjayate kamaha kamat krodhobhijayate.*" He says that going on thinking of an object even if one doesn't have attachment or desire for it, attachment means what, I want only this. I want again and again and again. I do not wish to lose this. That is called kama. Dhyayato, this desire comes. "*krodad bhavati sammohaha sammohat amriti vibhramaha smriti bramsad buddhi nash buddhi nashat pranashyati.*" Man comes to a state of most unhappiness all because of what? Kama. What is the point here? Kama or desire when it is frustrated, it leads to anger. If you analyze why am I angry with somebody. This is the zest, crux, summary: Somehow my desire has been frustrated by this event, by this person, by this object. That is the essence of it. This is what he is telling, there comes a state of fearlessness. It is the same one, undivided unit forever and this is the real individual man. That is the real man. Then what are we? The apparent man is merely a struggle to express, to manifest this individuality that is beyond. What are we all doing? Struggling to become real man, not men. Real, only one man, only one unit. In the last class I have pointed out how this happens. Before marriage he thinks I am this, after marriage me and my wife, then children, I and my family identifies itself, then with the village, then with the city, then with the state, then with the nation, then with the world, then with the whole cosmos he identifies himself with it.

This point in practice. Once you know Swami Vijnanananda got up at midnight and suddenly he heard sobbing from Swami Vivekananda's room, which was next to his room in Belur Math. He did not dare, Swami Vivekananda sobbing at midnight uncontrollably. Next day, he went and asked him "Swamiji, yesterday I heard this, why were you sobbing.?" Swamiji's face was still gloomy. He said "I don't know, but somewhere a terrible disaster had taken place." He doesn't know where it had taken place or what happened, but he felt the misery. Later on the news came that there was an earthquake where more than 50,000 people had perished. Suppose we fall into the earth opening, you remember the description in the Valmiki Ramayana? Sita could not bear any longer Rama. She goes there and even then he refuses to accept her. Then she says "O' mother you have given me the birth." By the way, you have to remember, Sita is born of earth. "O' mother you receive me in your arms."

Immediately the whole earth opens up and slowly she goes down. Imagine the whole earth is opening up and huge buildings and rivers and mountains, everything is crumbling and disappearing. Just imagine how frightening it is. Interesting point: when if such a thing really happens, first point, do you remember anybody else? Think over it. Do you remember I have a family? Do you remember me? I have a guru. What has happened to him? You know every gopi when she is dancing along with Krishna, you know the picture how many Krishnas is each gopi is really beholding? Only one; she and Bhagavan Krishna. So, when any such thing happens, we will not remember anything else.

Simple illustration you know. If you are walking in the street and suddenly 2 cars they just crash. Even it happened to me and it could have happened to some of you also. When that moment of crash happened, where is your memory? Whom do you really remember? Now the point is there are a few blessed people and they remember only God. Like you know that funny story about Swami Sharadanandaji. He was travelling in a boat with another devotee and suddenly a huge storm had come and the boat was being tossed and it was almost on the point of getting drowned. Then Swami Sharadanandaji happily took his hookah/guduguda and started smoking. The other devotee could not tolerate it. He snatched it and threw it into the river. Fortunately nothing happened and by that time the devotee also became very calm and quiet. Then he asked "Maharaj, what were you thoughts when the boat was about to be drowned?" Then he said "anyway death is going to come, let me have the last enjoyment of the hookah." Only a great mahapurusha could think like that because they are free from fear. They know they have achieved God. There is nothing to worry about. The important point is we are all devotees and we are imagining, planning, and praying. Oh! Lord when death comes let me remember you. Is it going to happen? We don't know unless we practice from now.

There was a great Alwar, Raja Kulashekara. He wrote one Mukundamala Stotram and Sri Krishna Karanamritham. There he says :

*krishna tvadiya-pada-pankaja-panjarantam
adyaiva me visatu manasa-raja-hamsah
prana-prayana-samaye kapha-vata-pittaih
kanthavarodhana-vidhau smaranam kutas te*

Lord let my mind enter into the cage of your lotus feet right now because when kapha, vata, and pittah, when the throat and whole body is being

constricted by these diseases and when death is about to come, smaranam kutas te. Who is going to remember you? Yes, when I get a big blow, what do I remember? Only the pain. I am not going to remember God unless we have practiced it for such a long time. You see Sri Ramakrishna's last days, he remembered Kali, Kali, Kali.

His father, he was dying in his nephew's house at Medhinipur and the time has come. See I am giving you some beautiful incidents. Kshudiram had gone to witness Durga pooja and he took ill. That was Durga pooja time and he did not pass away. He was enquiring what is the condition of the pooja. The last day, Vijayadashami had come, the immersion time had come and everybody was anxious because if he passes away, the festival could not be continued, but he did not because he was a devotee of God. He might have prayed also, oh! Lord let me die after everything is over. That is exactly what happened. As soon as they immersed and came, Kshudiram was very weak and everyone understood, and they made him sit down, and then Kshudiram uttered thrice "Raghuveer, Raghuveer, Raghuveer" and then passed away peacefully.

Swami Madhavanandaji was severely ill and he was admitted in the Seva Pratishtan. Durga pooja was going on and he was enquiring is the Durga pooja over? No, maharaj it will be over tomorrow or day after tomorrow. Every day he was enquiring. The last day had come, vijayadashami had come. Then he enquired and they said "yes maharaj, immersion is over" Then he looked at Sri Ramakrishna, took a little charanamritha. They have that kind of control. How did they get it? Last moment you won't get it. Practice from now onwards. Pray earnestly to the lord and only by His grace we would be able to do that.

What is the point here? Only the person who knows that I belong to God and I am God, only he can become fearless and nobody else. Swamiji raises the question if I become spiritual, what do I get? What is the utility? Swamiji says what is the utility, the effect, the result of this knowledge that I am the universe, I am Brahman? In these days we have to measure everything by utility. Nevertheless, there is the highest utility in this. The highest utility for mankind is to find the happiness in the spirit. What is the benefit of seeking happiness in the spirit? This is a wonderful point we have to understand. We can get happiness in any sense object. We can also get happiness in spirit. Spirit means what? God. Do not think of spirits and bhootas and all those things. Spirit means only God.

Happiness could be got, but what is the difference between them? Because the happiness with every object comes to an end but the happiness in God never comes to an end. He is the ocean of bliss, Sachidananda Sagara. Because to see God really, you know we use peculiar words, many times we have discussed this point. We say I see God and that doesn't mean I see a table, I see you, and I see God; are they equal statements? When a person says I see God, it means I know I am He.

In English language, this word 'see' has two meanings. You see a wall, you see a flower, but when giving a lecture you become thoughtful and say 'I see.' You mean I understand what you are saying. So, when Sri Ramakrishna said to the question of Swami Vivekananda "have you seen God?" He says "I see God." He didn't say I have seen God. This is beautiful you know play in language, enjoy it. Whenever you have seen something, did you see that? Yes. There are past, present, and future. Suppose you have seen a car, next second, did you see the car? You don't say I see the car. What do you say? I have seen the car. But when you say I see God, there is no past, present, and future. I see God because he is the seer. He is not an object. All these ideas Swamiji is bringing. When we see God, when we realize God, then what is the realization? I know I am God.

When I say I enjoy something, that object disappears and the happiness also disappears. Not strictly true, the happiness may be there and that very object will become a source of misery the next moment. Simplest example; suppose you have a first class cup of coffee. Will you be happy or not? Most of the time, yes. If by seeing the happiness on your face, I press upon you the second cup of coffee. What happens? It will be much less happier than the first cup of coffee. If I press you a third cup of coffee, positively I can see the opposite expression on your face. If I offer you fourth cup of coffee, I should be one mile away from you. Yes, there is a limit. God means limitlessness.

Interesting point is to enjoy limitlessness, the enjoyer also should be limitless only. Our whole problem is unlimited objects of happiness, but unfortunately my stomach is limited, my eyes are limited, my ears are limited, my mind also is limited. What is the greatest benefit? The highest happiness will come. What is the greatest benefit? There will be no fear at all. Actually if you analyze this sentence, absence of fear is called absence of unhappiness. Fear is incompleteness, asantrupti. When I feel

incomplete, then I feel unhappy. What is God? Just the opposite because He is infinite. If He is infinite, who am I? if God is infinite, who am I? Are we not saying all the time, oh! God anantaya namaha, you are infinite. While worshipping God, what do we say? Salutations to the infinity and then we say Lord, what is going to happen to me. If he is ananta, you are infinite. What is my status? If he is Ananta, will I go to Vaikunta and Kailasa? The lord who is everywhere, I want to go and see in Vaikunta. What does that statement mean really? It is a meaningless statement. That is why the great Vedavyasa has written a hymn, it is called parapooja, the supreme adoration. He says “oh! Lord please forgive me for the three crimes I have committed. I praised you with hymns even though I know that you are beyond mind and speech. I went on pilgrimage, even though every day I am saying you are ananta, you are infinite. The worst thing is I always meditate upon you even after saying you are beyond body and mind. Please forgive my three crimes. Really it is not a crime. What is it? We are trying to attain that state and that is all.

The next point is that ignorance is the great mother of all misery. Swamiji has brought one of the greatest doctrines of Vedanta, what is it? Everything is Brahman, but why we don't perceive Brahman everywhere? Even to ask that question, if Brahman is everything, why I don't perceive Brahman? Is it not a contradiction? If everything is Brahman, then who am I?

there is a beautiful story you know, a funny kind of illustration. A small fish from a small river by mistake or whatever fell into an ocean and it met the fish from the ocean. “Oh! This ocean, what a marvelous thing.” Then the fish from the ocean said “yes, this is marvelous, but what is the meaning of that word ocean? I don't understand.” How can the fish from the ocean understand? Because it was born there and it doesn't know anything else. It is like saying good morning to the sun. You go and say good morning to the sun, he will say yes I also wish you well, but what do you mean by good morning? If you say good morning to the sun, he will be puzzled, you understand? There is no morning there, there is no night there for the sun. But for us, yes. There are called universal illusions. We all experience though we know it is not correct information. What is it? The sun rises, does the sun really rise? Does the sun really set? Very interesting.

In the yaksha prashna, Yudishtira was asked by yaksha – “what is it that causes the sun to rise?” The answer is Brahman. It is because of

Brahman the sun does his duty, but it is not meant that sun rises and sun sets. It is true experience, but in fact we all know that it is not true. Ignorance is a great mother. What is the name for ignorance here? Maya.

The next talk that Swamiji gave was on this concept of Maya. The fundamental ignorance is to think that infinite cries and weeps that he is finite. We are all weeping and crying, day and night we are crying. Again, these words should not mislead us. What does it mean? You may not be crying. You may be eating a good sweet and you may be even happy, but inside the moment you eat the sweet I wish I always have this happiness. That wishing that I always have this, that wanting, that lack, and that is called weeping. What is this? That I am the finite, this is the basis of all ignorance that we the immortal, the ever pure, the perfect spirit think that we are little minds, that we are little bodies. This is the mother of all selfishness. Ignorance leads to individuality. Individuality means what? Selfishness. As soon as I think that I am a little body, I want to preserve it, to protect it, to keep it nice at the expense of other bodies. Then you and I become separate. As soon as this idea of separation comes, it opens the doors to all mischief and leads to all misery. What is the goal? To get rid of the ignorance. What happens when ignorance is gone? Then I know that I am not this individual, but I am that individual – ***Tat tvam asi***. What is tat? Tat means that infinity. Tvam means what? You miserable little creature now you are thinking but in fact you are not, you are really that infinity. Through spiritual practice one day we realize it and we know that this is what I am. The moment we come to know this is what I am, not only we know that I am this but the whole universe is nothing but Brahman in human language.

Then Swamiji moves on to one of the greatest prophetic utterances he ever gave – ***Machines only increase misery***. You know Swamiji was born in an age when science was on the increase and science was in its adolescent age and it was having a golden hopeful optimistic attitude that given time science will solve all problems. The result of scientific knowledge is the creation of what we call machines gadgets technology. The moment you hear the word 'science', you have to add technology. What is the difference between science and technology? Science is the discovery of knowledge. Technology is its byproduct. All the machines that we are having are byproducts. I am speaking with you, you are able to hear me, is it not, or you are here but you do not hear. The point is I am speaking only through the microphone. Machines only increase misery.

This is called upanishadic vakya/aadesha. These machines, only increase misery as oil poured on fire increases the flame all the more. Without the knowledge of the spirit, all material knowledge is only adding fuel to fire. Then Swamiji specifies something – mahavakya – listen. What happens? These machines are only giving into the hands of selfish man as one more instrument to take what belongs to others, to live upon the life of others instead of giving up his life for them. All the people who are being hacked day and night, they know what it means. Yes, this is what technology is giving. It has both beneficial side also, positive side and negative side. We must never forget because there are people who are blind admirers of technology saying that it is going to bring heaven. In fact, this statement of Swamiji is from Shvetashvatara Upanishad. There is a statement there – When man can reach to that state of knowledge where he can roll the sky just as we roll a normal mat without knowing the spirit, then he attains perfection. Means what? Is there any time we are going to roll sky like a mat? No. Therefore, without the knowledge of spirit, man can never be happy. At least if it doesn't make us unhappy, ok accept it, but it does make us unhappy. This is what he is telling. The same instrument in the hands of the selfish man is one more instrument to take what belongs to others. This is what you call business ethics or you call whatever it is. There is a global competition going on. What is the competition for? Competition means what? How much can I take away from others what belongs to others, it doesn't matter. Previously, it was between country and country. Now it is global. One country against the other country. This is one of the greatest statements we have to remember. This is not to denigrate that we should not use machines or take all the advantage, but happiness doesn't come from machines. Happiness doesn't come from objects. Happiness comes only from spirit/God/our atman. That is what the message Swamiji wanted to convey. Now we can understand Swamiji's words much better because of the distance. At that time, how many people knew about e-mail and other things? Now we know all those things.

Ok swami wonderful teachings they have given us, but is it practical? Is it practical is another question. Can it be practiced in modern society? Swamiji's emphatic answer is yes it can be practiced. Not only that he says if don't practice it, then you will be the loser. There is not an option either to practice or not to practice. Either you practice or you die, you become miserable. That is what he says.

Then he gives the beautiful story: The emperor and the sage. There was an emperor. He came to India and someone told him about a sage who was a God-realized soul. The emperor goes to him and speaks to him. He is very highly pleased. Then the emperor says “O! sage I am going back to my country. I am so pleased with you. Please come along with me. I will take you and I will honor you. I will give you the highest position. I will give you money. I will give you this and that, and other things.” The sage says “Thank you very much.” There is a funny story you know. The emperor came and stood and it was cold season/winter season and he was standing and then the emperor asked “can I do something?” “Yes, get out of the path of the sun, I am feeling cold, you are blocking the sunlight.” Anyway that may be another story. But then the sage says “I am quite happy. I do not wish to go.” Then the emperor says “do you know who I am? I can kill you.” The sage laughs and says “This is the biggest lie I ever heard in my life. I am birthless, I am deathless, I am the atman. Who is going to kill me?” So, that is the story.

An emperor who invaded India was told by his teacher to go and see some of the sages there. The emperor met one such sage and he was very happy. He offered to take this sage along with him to his country. The emperor said “If you do not go, I will kill you.” The sage smiled serenely and said “That is the most foolish thing you ever said, O! emperor. You cannot kill me who the sun cannot dry, fire cannot burn, sword cannot kill.” In Bhagavad Gita we are talking you know;

achchedyo 'yam adāhyo 'yam akledyo 'śhoṣhya eva cha
nityaḥ sarva-gataḥ sthāṇur achalo 'yaṁ sanātanaḥ

अच्छेद्योऽयमदाह्योऽयमक्लेद्योऽशोष्य एव च ।
नित्यः सर्वगतः स्थाणुरचलोऽयं सनातनः ॥ 24॥

In the second chapter we have discussed just now. So, I am birthless, deathless, omnipotent deathless spirit. Then Swamiji gives a living example, an incident. In the mutiny of 1857, you know there was a mutiny when so many soldiers heard the rumor that the British government was greasing the bullets with the cow's fat, then that was the breaking point. They rebelled against it. There was a fight. There was a swami, a very great soul, whom a mohammedan mutineer stabbed severely. The Hindu mutineers caught and brought the man to swami offering to kill him. But the swami looked up calmly and said “my brother, thou art he, thou art he” and expired. This is another incident.

Is it practical? Yes it is practical. How do I know that it is practical? These are the examples. What are the examples in our time, Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swamiji, direct disciples, our own great gurus. Even now so many swamis, not only in the Ramakrishna order, outside living very good, pure, sincere, holy life. If you believe in God, you cannot kill. You remember the Hindu mythology, Prahlada's story. His father wanted to kill him. This is the idea. Who can kill Prahlada? Who was Prahlada? He was none other than God. Prahlada of course doesn't say I am God. He says I am your child, but that is a human language. I am your child you say to God, then the child of God becomes what? God only. His father tried to burn him, to pierce him with weapons, to put him underground and bury him, threw him into a deep ocean from the peak of a mountain. He did all possible things. Even the most virulent poison also he had given. What happened? Nothing happened to him, why? Because Prahlada was not the body. Prahlada is the spirit. This is the thing you have to understand. I am making a little fun of it you know. Supposing his father threw him down and immediately the body falls into pieces, then what would be our question? What is this useless God doing? He did not protect his devotee. What is the implication? If he did not protect such a great devotee as Prahlada, what hope have I got that he is going to save me? What is the point here? It is practical and not only practical, this is the only practical thing in this world. When we mean something practical, it means something is there today which will remain beneficial to me for long time or for all time. There is nothing in this world which will be for all time. That is why anything we do is really impractical. It is only a temporary patch. You are hungry, you give some food; so once if you eat food forever is it going to make you hungerless? No. Any sensual experience is exactly like that, but there is one experience which will be practical and will result for all time. What is it? **You realize that I am the spirit and nothing can harm you. You will be happy for ever. That is the Swamiji's main message.** What is the way? Ok, fine philosophy, excellent, I am convinced, but how can I progress in spiritual life? Swamiji is telling and what is it? **The way is atman is to be heard. This atman is first to be heard and then thought about and then meditated upon. Talk not about impurity but say that we are pure. We have hypnotized ourselves into this thought that we are little, that we are born, that we are going to die, and into a constant state of fear.**

What is the way? Our upanishadic way. Yajnavalkya was teaching his wife, his disciple actually, Maitreyi.

are ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śhrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyaḥ

This is the greatest teaching of that particular chapter. The conversation/dialogue between Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi. You know what is it? He gave all the teachings earlier and says 4 sentences; like Swami Vivekananda's summarization: Each soul is potentially divine. ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ . God has to be realized. The soul/atman has to be realized. How? **Shrotavyah**, you have to hear. **Mantavyaha**, you have to think deeply and nothing else until all doubts are totally eliminated forever and then realize that I am that atman. This is the way. The atman is first to be heard, then thought about, and then meditated upon. Talk not about impurity, but say that we are pure. We have hypnotized ourselves into this thought that we are little, that we are born, that we are going to die, and working ourselves into a constant state of fear. **Two messages: Always think of atman. Never think of non-atman.** That is the message.

Then Swamiji gives an illustration of it. How to think, how to hear, how to meditate upon. What we are now is because of what we are constantly hearing and also repeating it. The whole society is forcing us to think you are a man, you are a woman, you are this, you are that, you have to behave like this, you have to behave like that. This 24 hours we are hearing excepting when you come here to the Vedanta Center, reading Gospel or Swamiji's teachings, etc, then that is a totally different thing. This is illustrated and all of you know that story. The parable of lioness and sheep. The lioness gave birth to a cub and then died. There were a flock of sheep and this lion cub followed the sheep. It bleated like sheep, it ate like sheep, it slept like a sheep, and it started thinking I am the sheep. One day a grown up lion came and was astonished to see it. It caught hold of its scruff and then took it to a river and said "you are not a sheep, you are a lion." Then it bleated. Then that fellow looked and said "look into this water. The pot face of mine and the pot face of yours is exactly the same." Then it took a piece of meat and this one didn't want to eat. It thrust it into its mouth and then it got the taste. Then it roared and ran after the other lion to kill it. This is how every teacher is. His goal is that you and me, we are not different. I will not leave you until you know who you really are. **Sri Ramakrishna's words: Don't forget you have not been bitten by an ordinary earthworm-eating snake, you have been bitten by a cobra, at best I am very generous and allow you three croaks. After that you will die.**

Yes, we must have that faith that our guru is there to give us liberation. Some devotee asked me – really our guru comes and gives us liberation? I said “Yes, definitely he will give you liberation.” He said “why? I don’t deserve it.” I said “not because you deserve it but because your guru deserves it.” He doesn’t want any more of your burden. The only way is to give you liberation and finish it.

Then Swamiji says the next point – why do we see wickedness? You know we are supposed to see divinity. Wickedness means what? Separateness. Wickedness means what? Individuality. Wickedness means what? Not always wickedness, that means to see that you are not the atman, that is the greatest wickedness. Swamiji gives a beautiful illustration. There was a stump of the tree and in the dark a thief came that way and said that is a policeman. A young man waiting for his beloved saw it and thought that it was his sweetheart. A child who had been told ghost stories took it for a ghost and began to shriek. But all the time it was the stump of a tree. What is the moral? We see the world as we are. If we do not bring that enlightenment within us, that change within us, we are not going to see any change in the world. This is the greatest lesson we have to learn.

We are always trying to find out why can’t you change, nobody is going to change, only we have to change. The change must come from within ourselves. Why do we see wickedness? Because we are wicked. Swamiji gives an illustration. A child is sleeping in a room. Suddenly at midnight through the window a man enters and his parents are shrieking that this is a thief, but the child doesn’t shriek. He is frightened that he is a stranger. Why? Until that time there is no idea of thieving in the mind of the child. This is the greatest psychological truth. If we see something good in others, that means that goodness is also within us. If we see any wickedness in others, that means that wickedness is also within us. It doesn’t mean that we should not see. Only a great soul like Pavhari Baba, he can say.

You know that wonderful story. We all know it, but we need to recollect it every now and then. Once a thief came and collected some materials at midnight and in that process there was some noise and Pavhari Baba was sleeping and he woke up. Then the thief got frightened, threw that bundle and then ran away. Pavhari Baba ran after him with that bundle and then caught up with him, kept that bundle at the feet and said “lord, forgive me

for interrupting your work.” What a vision! With that vision, that thief was very fortunate, he became transformed at that moment. He became one of the greatest sadhus whom Swami Vivekananda had met in North India and he asked him how did the desire come to you to become a monk. He narrated “I was a thief and now a monk all because of the grace.” Why did he become a thief? Because those ideas are already within us. What is the way out? That is called spiritual practice.

Here Swamiji says power of positive thinking. Now-a-days you know any number of books are coming on self-help, power of positive thinking. The first man who was a great man, who believed in it, and his life reflected what he believed, Norman Vincent Peale, ‘**The Power of Positive Thinking.**’ That man’s book has sold in millions. Some people definitely got the benefit. What is the point? That we have to practice positive thinking even amidst circumstances which do not warrant positive thoughts. Men are taught from childhood that they are weak and sinners. Teach them that they are all glorious children of immortality. Let positive, strong, helpful thoughts enter into their brains from very childhood. Say to your own minds – ‘**I am H, I am He.**’ Let it ring day and night in your minds like a song and at the point of death declare I am He. That is the truth. **The infinite strength of the world is yours. The goal may be distant, but awake, arise, and stop not till the goal is reached.** Swami Vivekananda’s constant repetition of this mantra.

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत,

Uttisthata Jagrata Prapya Varannibodhata

This is the greatest inspirational saying from Katha Upanishad, Yama Dharmaraja says, and Swami Vivekananda always used to say this. He used to illustrate each of these teachings with a story and this is the story of Queen Madalasa. I am sure most of you are aware of this tale, but if not I will you very briefly. There was a queen and her name was Madalasa. She had some children. The moment a child is born to her, she will put the child in a rocking cradle and goes on rocking singing “Thou art the pure infinite atman my child.” Beautiful Sanskrit song is there, I do not remember. She goes on rocking day and night and dinned it into each one of her children. As soon as the first child grew up, this teaching worked and he renounced the world and went away. Same thing happened to the second child. Same thing happened to the third child. For the fourth child,

her husband intervened and said at least let there be one child. Then she also brought him up but the dosage has been reduced to homeopathic level. Then the mother was dying and she gave one small amulet. She wrote it and put it “my son, I am dying but don’t worry. When you are in the greatest difficulty, then you open this one. This is my commandment for you.” He said “Yes.” Later on, he was in great difficulties. One day idly he was doing this one and then his mother’s words came and he opened it. It was written “Thou art He. Everything passes away.” The moment he read that all the old childhood memories came flooding back and he got strength. Then he got his army and went and fought and regained his kingdom. This is a story Swami Vivekananda was very fond of telling many times. In vedantic literature, there are certain number of books and title of these books ends with the word ‘siddhi’ and one of this is ‘swarajya siddhi’ – attainment of one’s own kingdom. This is the message of the Upanishads.

Swamiji is talking nothing but about the Upanishads. But one of the greatest problems not only we do not understand but we do not understand that we do not understand. What is the cause for that? What we call as ‘**avidya**’ or ‘**maya**.’ This is the greatest vedantic doctrine. Without understanding this doctrine of maya, nobody can understand the teachings of the Upanishads. This is what Swami Vivekananda is going to focus upon for the next 3 lectures – ‘maya and freedom’, ‘maya and illusion’, etc. We will start this in our next class.

Om shanti shanti shanti