

# Jyana Yoga-Lecture 20

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Om Namasri Yatirajaya Vivekananda Suraye |

Sat Chit Sukha Swaroopaya Swamine Tapa Haarine ||

## MAYA and ILLUSION

We are discussing the 3<sup>rd</sup> lecture of Swami Vivekananda in the series of Jyana Yoga. The title of this 3<sup>rd</sup> lecture is MAYA and ILLUSION. The whole lecture is a beautiful poetic expression and at the same time it abstruse the idea of Vedanta in such a simplified manner. Let me summarize this chapter so that we will have better understanding.

In my last lecture we discussed a very important point, what MAYA is NOT. It is neither Delusion nor Illusion nor Magic. Many people are under the misunderstanding that it is an illusion or delusion or kind of a magic. NO- it is none of these things. Then what exactly is that? Swami Vivekananda clarifies this point through certain illustrations.

1) **What is Maya? It is a mixture of existence and non-existence.** This is most profound idea. Let me clarify this with the classic illustration. A man walking in semi-darkness and he sees a snake. Why semi-darkness? Because if it is full light there would be no mistake. If there is total darkness, there is would be no mistake because you would not see anything. In semi-darkness, the man is seeing the snake. Is there something? Yes, there is something. If there were not to be a rope, he would not definitely see a snake or stick or anything. But is it exactly what he is looking at? It is neither what it is and it is what is not. **This peculiar mixture of there is something real and there is something unreal; something is existing and something is non-existing- that is one definition of Maya.**

And Swami Vivekananda as we know- we are all followers of Advaita Vedanta of Sankaracharya. Dashana means Sampradaya. We all are followers of Advaita Vedanta.

According to Advaita Vedanta **-This whole universe is ADHYASA- a superimposition. Superimposition means mistaking something for something else.** So what is Maya? There is a beautiful Sanskrit word called

“Adhyasa”. Adhyasa means imposing something on something else. It is not a delusion because delusion means that which does not exist. But there is something that is existing and on that something that is existing we mistake it as something else. The whole universe is like that. The rope is existing; **In that rope there are two parts- ‘THIS IS A’ is first part and ‘ROPE’ is the second part. When semi-darkness is there, we do not deny ‘THIS IS A’ but we deny only the “Snake”. There is something which is absolutely real- “THIS IS A” and there something unreal- SNAKE which is not there. Only Rope Exists. This whole life and this whole world is nothing but is a mixture of existence and non-existence. THIS IS FIRST DEFINITION OF MAYA. In Sanskrit it is called Adhyasa.**

2) Secondly, **Life is a full of contradiction.** In Life, in Intellect contradiction is there. There is tremendous contradiction is there. What is contradiction? We want to live happy life but very soon happiness disappears. In fact, it is such a brilliant idea that if you are enjoying anything, how do you know there is happiness? Behind there is an idea that there is unhappiness. If you lose the idea that there is unhappiness, you will never know what is happiness.

If I ask you who are you? Your reply would be I am a man or a woman- and suppose there are no women in this world. Would you know that you are man then? If you say you are a human being, can you understand you are a human being if you do not have the idea of what is non-human being! **That is the contradiction.** What does it mean in practical terms? **It means happiness changes into unhappiness; and unhappiness changes into happiness. Knowledge changes into ignorance and ignorance changes into knowledge.** And will it stop at any time? No it will not.

Let me give a small illustration. There is an object made out of 100 wood pieces, different shapes, different sizes and different colors. If you ask a child, he thinks every object is completely different from the other. If you ask a grow up man he will say wood is the real answer. Is the wood its real nature? You ask a woodworm about this wood, it will say it is food. Ask a human being, he will say it is wood. Ask a physicist with electronic microscope, he will say it is matter and energy. A god man like Sri Ramakrishna will say it is Brahman. The idea of food and energy, are they right ideas? No they are not because food changes into wood and wood changes into energy and energy

changes into Brahman. And Brahman does not change. That is the final idea. What does Swamiji mean by Maya? **Contradictions in life and dualities in life-heat/cold; happiness/unhappiness; life/death; good/evil. There is not going to come a time where we can eliminate these dualities in life.** We are all hoping against hope that I will be very happy in future. Now no but in future I will be very happy. Some people say if I get married I will be happy or if I become a monk I will be happy etc. **it is the idea that this body and mind does not have real existence because it is changing.** This idea of monk or house holder belongs to the realm of style of life. Some people like to be house holders. Are there enlightened people among house holders? Millions. Are there unenlightened souls among monks among Hindus, Christians etc?? Millions. They are utterly selfish, utterly body bound and trying to kill each other-- In the name of god and religion and in the name of faith and philosophy, how many millions have been exterminated. If you meet with them or if you live with them, they are just like us but you scratch the surface and out comes the devil. Simple example, in the name of religion, 10 million Jews were eliminated in second world war. Now we don't want to talk about it. There

are people who believe that Holocaust is a myth created by Jews and other people.

This is what Swamiji says about Maya-

1) It is a mixture of existence and non-existence;  
2) Is a fact of contradiction in life-knowledge and ignorance.

3) Thirdly, what is MAYA? **Death is a fact of life**

What does that mean? We think of only one type of death. And that is when this physical body comes to an end, we call it Death. But don't we understand that even for gross minded people when childhood ends, it is not death of child? When youth ends, is it not death of youth? When middle age ends, is it not death of middle age? Only when we think old age ends, it is called death.

The great Shankaracharya divides the death into two categories: a) The Visible Death; b) The Invisible Death.

Visible death is when consciousness leaves this body. The Invisible death happening every millisecond of life. If you ever watch a plant shown in a fast moving reel from the seed to death- within a minute you can see

the whole growth. Compared to eternity what is our life? In the beginning when Swami Vivekananda was in America and giving a private talk and there he was telling “ Only the other day your ancestors were putting colors on their bodies, roaming naked and eating dead animals”. The audience were puzzled. Swami, what are you talking about? That was 500 years back. After all, when compared to infinity time what is 500yrs!!! We think 500yrs is a great lot of time. Time is very relative. Death is a fact of life. We all know we have to die and we all know everything in this world has to die.

1)The first thing that happens is we don't think about death; 2) the second thing that happens is we don't accept death for ourselves though we accept it for other people; 3) The third thing that happens is in spite of experiencing death again and again, we go on clinging to life as a super glue.

This is what Patanjali Rishi says as 'ABHINIVESHA'. Raga, Dvesha and Abhinivesha.

4)Swamiji defines what is MAYA? **Intense clinging to life in spite of repeated blow of disease and death.** At least disease we can understand. In disease suffering is there but life is still there. But in death,

have not seen our great grandfathers, grandfathers, parents and young people dying. Every single day one hundred and seventy thousand people die. When Tsunami takes place, suddenly 200,000 people seem to die, we take notice and say what a disaster. Every day is a Tsunami but we conveniently ignore that fact. **This is Maya- intense clinging to life in spite of the knowledge that death is inevitable.**

One of the Buddhist monks puts it so beautifully. “Most of us know death is going to come and we are going to die. But every single living human being believes that he is going to complete his average life span of 70yrs or 80yrs.” Is there any guarantee? Every day our news contradicts this. We might live that long or we may not. What is the point? We cannot avoid death and it is not good to go on living also. Do you know what happens if you continue to live a long time? The whole world wishes you to die. Your own people wishes you to die but they won't say that. My poor daddy is suffering, let God take him. What a beautiful way of covering up that we don't want you.

So what is Maya? A statement of fact of this universe and how it is going on. I am talking and you are listening- this is fact of life. A child is born and another



child is dead- that is fact of life. One is happy and another is unhappy- that is another fact of life. The same person is happy at one moment and weeping at another moment—that is called fact of life. This is called Maya. **Why is it called Maya? That is ‘it is a fact.’ The fact is “it is not a fact”.** It is a fact when we are under the spell of Maya; but fact is a worst type of lie when we look at it from the ultimate point of view. From Brahman point of view, there is no birth, no death, no spiritual struggle, there is no liberation, nobody who is bound, no one who is freed-- That is the ultimate truth Gaudapada declares.

And yet we are here struggling and hoping against hope that we will be happy. We are all struggling to be happy, we are all struggling to be healthy and we are all struggling to live for a very long time. And yet it may not be possible- because if **you don't experience the unhappiness, you will never experience the happiness.** This is a fact which people don't want to even think about. My favorite illustration is – suppose you are 50% hungry and very nice food is there, what would be the quantum of your happiness? only 50%. If you are 100% hungry, your happiness will be 100%. Apply this to every type of happiness. It is not that you are healthy or it is not that you have objects of

happiness. But what is your NEED? That dictates how much happiness we get in life.

A statement of the fact of this universe and how it is going on – when Swamiji attacks, certain type of people called scientists, philosophers and evolutionists. If you ask them- the first thing they say is that there is no God; the second thing they say that the cause of this universe is nature; the third they say is the most horrible belief that science is progressing and it is discovering ever new facts in nature and a day will come when science will solve all the problems of life- there would be no old age; there would be no death. we will know the cause of the universe; Evolution will solve every single problem will be solved given proper time. Swamiji is attacking the idea that all negativity will be eliminated and only the happy, pleasant and positive alone will remain- this is Maya- which means what? it is not going to happen. The belief that the senses will know the ultimate reality- the limited will manifest the unlimited – that is Maya. All scientific knowledge is knowledge through the five senses aided by intellect, aided by hypothesis, aided by imagination. It is nothing but based upon the concrete experience based upon concrete experience of the five sense organs. As we know, the five sense organs are limited

and the mind is limited. Through the limited we will cross the limited only. That is never ever going to happen.

But then why did God create Maya? This is the greatest question that comes. Vedanta's answer is we don't know but it has a function. What is that function of Maya?

- The first function is to LEAD US TO RENUNCIATION;
- The second is to AWAKEN US TO OUR OWN TRUE NATURE.

Man goes through eons and axons as we say in Hindi "Turasi Lak Janam" . And what is the lesson we learn? That in this world there is only one reality. **This world is not a reality. I and the World or between Me and the World, what is the reality? Only ME not the WORLD!** It awakens us to the real nature. The real function of Maya is to make us realize that we are the Pure, we are Perfect and that we are Purnam. **We are the Supreme or the Brahman.** This is the essence or summary of this 3<sup>rd</sup> lecture of Swami Vivekananda.

## Now I am going to read some of the quotations:

- Death- Death is staking day and night. A question was once asked of king Yudhistara, what is the most wonderful thing on this earth? Every time I remember this, I remember that most wonderful Sanskrit Sloka “Hahanya Hani Bhutani Gaschanti Yama Mandiram; Seshaha Stavara Mischanti, Kima Acharyam mata param?”. Yudhistara was asked by Yaksha. That’s why that particular chapter is called ‘Yaksha Prashna’. It is asked what is the most wonderful thing in this world? Yudhistara says “Every single day, day after day, millions of beings die and enter into abode of death. But those are not dead think that death is never ever going to come to them. What could be more wonderful than this?”. There is a tremendous contradiction in our intellect, in our knowledge and all the facts of our life which faces us on all sides. And that is Maya. After giving an illustration Swamiji added that THIS IS MAYA. Nineteen times he uses this word in this particular lecture. He says Death is staking, kings will die,

paupers will die, scholar will die, illiterate people will die, saints die, sinner die, and every single creature in this world dies, living and non-living. Everything will die yet we cling on to Life. This is Maya.

- There is a false view of certain evolutionists that they think if we become prosperous we will be very happy. These are called charvakas. If I have little more money, little more wealth, little more position, little more power and everything, they think the evil will become less proportionately. That is further from truth. I will give you an illustration. There was a man who wrote a book called 'Dynamic Thinking'. He starts in the very first chapter itself, he cites the names of 7 people who were leaders in the world, who were the richest people in the world and they control the finance of the whole world. Fast forward 7 years and some of them committed suicide, some of them ended up in jail and some of them became insane, some became drunkards and drug addicts without exception. If prosperity, power etc. could really bring us happiness, then they should have been the happiest people on earth.

If you see someone who is very wealthy, you might become little jealous but you may not express it. This is the most stupid way of becoming jealous. Find out

is he happy or you are happy? If he is more happy then become jealous. Find out what makes that person more happy? Which should remind you the story of the king. There was a king who had everything-he was handsome, he had money, he was intelligent, powerful, efficient and he had beautiful wife and beautiful children but he was very unhappy. So he called his ministers and told them 'Go and find out a remedy for how I can be happy'. All the ministers and wise people got together and said 'Oh king, there is one way to make yourself happy. Find out the happiest man on earth and get his clothes and put them on and you will be also happy'. Immediately the king sent the whole army to the four corners of the earth and after 6 months they all came back. He asked them 'did you find the happiest man on earth?' they all said 'Yes'. Did you bring his clothes? They said no. The king asked why not and they replied he had no clothes on him. Yes we have to think deeply about it. Of all the people that we know at the present moment, Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda, Ramana Maharishi and the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, they were the happiest people. Happiest persons on earth- what did they have? Did they have bank balance? Did they have beauty? Did

they have power? Did they have position? And yet they were the happiest people. Ask yourself, why are you worshipping Sri Ramakrishna? What is it that attracts you to Sri Ramakrishna or Swami Vivekananda. After all they were monks!! Holy mother was a nun and all the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna were monks. Ramana Maharishi, though he formerly did not take sannyasa, he lived the purest life of a monk. You know he only had 2 pieces of lion cloth. Yet people suffering so much and the moment they enter into his presence, they were the happiest people, the most peaceful people on earth. People' with terrible restless of the mind, the moment they enter into his presence, their minds automatically becomes absolutely peaceful. Why? These are synonymous terms- quietness of mind and peace. That's why people used to run to Krudhiram's house (23:44) as Sri Ramakrishna, the great master tells. So there are people who mistakenly believe, that the least amount of material prosperity that we enjoy is goal of life. So we go on increasing the prosperity. Swami Vivekananda brings a most scientific counter argument and says" if anyone has acquired the least amount of material prosperity and he is enjoying, he is causing the same amount of misery elsewhere. This is the law." Why is this a

law? Just imagine there is a balloon and it is blown and you press it on one side, it goes to other side and if you press it on other side, it will go to this side. So it is just shifting positions and it is not going anywhere. What is the idea? **The amount of prosperity or the amount of happiness we have in this world is fixed and limited. And if someone is appropriating more of that, then someone else is having less of that.**

Someone asks Swami Vivekananda, 'how come I earn my money and wealth through hard work. How does it reduce someone else's?'. Simply it is like this- say there is bucket full of water and someone takes some water out of that. Does it remain same or less? If ten people take, it becomes even less, isn't it?

- 1) **The amount of happiness and unhappiness are first of all not two different things.**
- 2) **If someone is more wealthy, that means someone else is less wealthy. It is a thought you have to think deeply. This is the Law.**

If you do not see it clearly but those who have lived long enough and those who have struggled enough



will understand it. And this is Maya. These things are going on day and night and to find a solution of this problem is impossible. It is because the question cannot be logically formulated. There is neither how nor why in fact. We only know it is and we cannot help it or even to grasp it or draw an exact image of it in our mind. It is beyond our thought. How can we solve it then? No salvation. **Maya is a statement of fact of this universe of how it is going on.**

There are some people especially Christians who say that “Your Hindu religion is non-sense and useless”. Why? Because if there is a religion, what is its criteria? It must bring prosperity. Swamiji counter it by saying that “Suppose here is a Christian nation and it is prospering. Then how did it prosper? By killing, robbing and so many other countries. United Kingdom- how did it become so prosperous? It went to India, Africa and so many other countries and robbed them”. So Swami Vivekananda advocates or comes up with a beautiful argument. Alright, Christianity is a religion which brings prosperity- alright. Supposing everybody in the whole world becomes a Christian, what happens to Christianity then? Will everyone be happy and prosperous? No, it is impossible because men are preying on men,

animals are preying upon animals, plants are preying upon plants etc. The stronger is oppressing the weaker. It is ever going on- whether it is in the spiritual world or artistic world or scientific world. This is the law. Strong ever suppress the weak and bring forth untold unhappiness and misery upon everyone. Christian nations are prosperous but that assertion contradicts itself. The prosperity of Christian nation depends on the misfortune of the Non-Christian nations. There must be someone to prey on. Suppose the whole world becomes Christians, then the Christian nations will become poor because there would be no Non-Christian nations to prey upon. Thus the argument kills itself.

## **EVOLUTION**

Now about Evolution which I already summarized. Again we often hear that it is one of the features of evolution:

- 1) That it eliminates Evil and this Evil is continually eliminated from the world and at last only Good will remain. What is the problem here? It takes for granted in the first place that manifested good and evil are two absolute realities. Good is separate and Evil is separate- so if you eliminate Evil, only Good remain.

2) In the second place, it makes the worst assumption that the amount of good is an increasing quantity and the amount of evil is decreasing in quantity.

Swami Vivekananda summarized later on that this is not going to happen. Why? Because good and evil are two sides of the same coin. Did you ever come across a coin which has only one side. So what is Good? Absence of Evil. What is Evil? Absence of Good. Have you ever seen dimmer switch? You pull that to the highest level and what happens? The brightness increases. Go on pulling down, what happens, it gets dimmer and dimmer. As light decreases, darkness increases. Supposing you destroy the bulb itself- there would not be anything at all.

**So Good and Evil, Happiness and Unhappiness, life and death- extend it- any and every duality belongs to this category. You cannot destroy one- if you destroy good, you will destroy evil also. If you want destroy unhappiness, go beyond happiness.**

And it is wonderful to understand one important point. **When are we happiest people in our day to day life? when? When we are in deep sleep. In deep sleep, are you happy or unhappy? You are neither happy nor unhappy because that instrument which distinguishes happiness and unhappiness, good and evil is totally absent. What is that instrument? MIND- It is not there.** So that is why you don't know. Its like a person who wakes up from a coma gets up and says 'I was so happy'. Why? Because I did not know anything. So you did not know happiness and you did not know unhappiness. You did not know good and you did not know evil. You did not know friend and you did not know foe. You did not know you are a man and you did not know you are a woman. And that is why you are so happy.

Next, there is an assumption and it is very easily understood now as we are progressing, sophisticated machinery or computers are being invented. Better computers etc. and it is going to do two things:

1. It reduces human physical external work;
2. It gives tremendous leisure to human beings so that they can devote their lives to more creative activities.

That was the assumption at least 30 years ago. But what is fact? What is it now? Are people working physically less or more? Someone told me this morning a wonderful truth that GM company wanted to completely eliminate human labor and use robots at a very high cost- thousands of Robots. Then they found out cost of car would be almost 600 dollars because of the simple fact that these robots were breaking down. They had to employ more number of people to repair and maintain those robots. Hope they learned their lesson. The fact today is that every human being is working 12-14 hours minimum. The tragic part of it is those who have employment, they are slaves. They are most miserable people on earth. Why? Because there are super normal human beings- like Sri Ramakrishna, Jesus Christ, Budha etc. They are in a higher plane and their requirements are very minimal. To work and to create is a faculty of every single human being. Tell me really when does your meditation become really fruitful? The day you worked normally and happily did your duties and on that day did you meditate well or on a day when you did not have any work and the whole day you spent idle. Can you give an honest and rational answer? If no work, the mind becomes absolutely scattered and when you sit for meditation, what little concentration you had also

goes away. This is a very interesting consequence- that is anybody who thinks that now I am working and I don't have that much time and when I retire I will concentrate on reading the most wonderful books and I will sit for long hours in meditation. One will never achieve this. In fact they will die very early. A retired person is likely to die sooner than a working person. Yes, it is a fact- unless the person is found out something creative to occupy him and to make him very contented person. What is the reason? Two reasons:

**A) What we cannot habituate at an earlier age is never going to come suddenly.** You retire at 65 years of age and then suddenly from sky an angel comes and says 'from now onwards I will give you a certificate that you are wonderful spiritual person.' Is it ever going to happen? Never going to happen. If you want that state, start from now onwards to struggle.

**B) Second reason, as we age the powers of our faculties, body and mind, become less.** The powers of our faculties, do they increase or decrease? That is why our wise teachers always tell us "Make Hay While the Sun Shines". Whether

it is making money or progress in life or progress in spiritual life- the best time is when you are young. When you are old, you will be suffering from romantic pains- means first rheumatic pain, then regretting why I should I be living in some other country, I should have married some other person, I should have done a different job etc. This is what I call romantic pains.

Swami Vivekananda is telling “Machines are making things cheap, making for progress and evolution. But millions are crushed that one may become rich. One may become rich but the other becoming poorer and poorer. The whole of human beings are made slaves. It is going on that way. And THIS IS MAYA. What a beautiful statement. Can machine’s make men ever happy? Never. Can wealth make a person happy? Can health make a person happy? Never. So what is the secret of happiness? **The secret of happiness is the MIND. If the mind is trained to be content and happy, then it will be happy. Otherwise, no. Thus, as we emerge out of the senses, we develop higher powers of enjoyment and at the same time we have to develop higher powers of suffering too!!. The nerves become finer and capable of more suffering.** We are becoming extremely

sophisticated. What does that mean? Our nerves are becoming very fine”. What is the point that Swamiji was telling is that **“The more refined our nerves become, the more we acquire the capacity to enjoy whether it intellectual enjoyment or ascetic enjoyment, moral enjoyment or spiritual enjoyment.”** But the same nerves also can experience the opposite.

Swamiji says ‘If you scold an ordinary person, he does not mind it at all. If you scold a gentleman just one word, he can go and commit suicide’. In Japan, many students fall under the train and give up their life. do you know why? Because their parents and neighbors were expecting a higher scores or rank in the education and they could not achieve it. It is a shame. This is a horrible thing that is happening here.

**Swamiji is trying to tell that the finer our nerves become, they become finer for both enjoyment and as well as suffering also in equal proportions. Thus it is that as we emerge out of these senses we develop higher powers of enjoyment and at the same time we have to develop higher powers of suffering too. If do not develop, we become the most miserable people in the world. Thus we find that Maya is not a theory for explanation of the**



**world. It is simply a statement of facts as they exists. These are the fact of life.**

The basis for OUR BEING is a contradiction- and everywhere we have to move through this tremendous contradiction. Where ever there is good, there also must be evil. Where ever there is evil, there must be some good. Where ever there is life, death must follow as its shadow. Everyone who smiles will have to weep and vice versa. Nor can the state of these things be remedied. This is a tremendous statement. Every scripture tells us you can remedy the world or you cannot change the world because that is the nature of the world. But what can you do? You get out of the world. If you get out of the world, what remains? Only One thing. What is that? GOD. What is the way to get rid of the world? Does it mean you commit suicide? Or after death post mortem you go to some other place? **NO. It means if you change your outlook, the way we are looking at the world needs to be changed.** That is why we call- here are the worldly people and here are the spiritual people. What changes? Does Sri Ramakrishna see the same Ganges? Does he experience summer heat and winter cold? Exactly like anyone else-there is no difference, **But the way they look at these things- they look not only at the facts**

**of life and not only do they accept the facts of life, but they could see beyond the facts of life and say beyond this snake there is a rope. And beyond this rope there is an Existence. Yes, Pure Existence- Sat, Chit, and Ananda. That is what we have to see.**

But how to reach that state? We have not even started the quest. Thus Vedanta philosophy is neither optimistic nor pessimistic. It vices both these views. It admits this world is mixture of good and evil, happiness and misery, and to increase the one, one must have necessity to increase the other. There will never be a perfectly good or bad world.

This is a good point. There are many people who say that the world is becoming worse. During my grandfather's time it was a golden period. The problem with this belief is "if you go to your grandfather and say what do you think about your father's time?"- he will say that was a golden period. If by chance you meet your great grandfather, he will say exactly the same thing. **The essence is it is neither a good world nor a bad world. It is exactly as it is.**

Another point- when we say it is good and bad- do we always see as good or bad? Our views continuously go

on changing it. But if you ask the same to a god man, or a realized soul “what is this world?”. He will say it is nothing but Pure Brahman, Divine Mother and nothing else. What a beautiful statement it is!! **The great secret revealed by this analysis is that Good and Bad are not to cut and dry two separate existences. The only way therefore is to stop evil, stop good also. There is other way. To stop death, we have to stop life also. Vedanta says there must come a time when we shall look back and laugh at the ideals which make us afraid, giving up our view of the world and our individuality.**

The whole world is good or bad depending upon what? It has nothing to do with good or bad **The central focus is on our body and mind which we call “ME-the individual”**. So if you want to go beyond them, **you have to go beyond your individuality. This is the real purpose of Maya.** Why did GOD create Maya? It makes us think deeply after taking us through the heroin experiences and then it opens the eye of wisdom and then it tells – **look back that the world you tried to change, it never changed nor will it change. Then we become wise people.**

**What is the first step- the world will never change- it will be exactly same.** If we cannot change the world, then what can we change and how can we change? **We have to change ourselves!! That is the purpose of Maya.**

What then is the use of Vedanta and all other philosophies and religions? And above all what is the use of doing good work in this world which never changes? you think by doing good to others you are changing someone else's fate- it is one of the greatest delusions in the world!! **The law of Karma says you cannot change anyone- unless that person is ready to receive your help and change inside.** It is not going to help.

It reminds me of a story which illustrates this point- there was a great devotee of Narayana- Vishnu- who was a great devotee but extremely poor. Then one day Mother Lakshmi was talking with Narayana and tells Lord Vishnu- "do you know he is a great devotee of yours; why don't you give him a little bit of wealth, he is suffering; his family and children are suffering. Why don't you give him some wealth.' Then Lord Vishnu says "he is not fated and his karma does not allow it". Lakshmi said "what, you are the lord of the universe

and saying that you are not able to do anything". Then he looked at mother Lakshmi and said "you are the goddess of wealth, why don't you try". She said yes I will try. So created very precious stones in a handkerchief and came to where this man was. At that time this man was walking a very narrow path and there was absolutely no one else there. So Lakshmi thought "I would give the wealth, I will put it in the middle of the road and he will notice it and he knows it does not belong to anyone. So he will take it and he will be very happy." She was wondering why did Lord say such a thing, The man was walking and he came nearer to the wealth and suddenly a thought came to him that he never walked in his life with closed eyes. So he closed his eyes and walked past the bundle. After a while he opened his eyes and he patted himself that he did it with closed eyes. Lakshmi Devi saw this and quietly collected her bundle and disappeared.

The point is - **not only a giver should be ready but also the receiver should be ready too.** So apply this to not only to physical poverty etc. it could be applied to intellectual poverty, aesthetic poverty, spiritual poverty. That's why so many people have come to Sri Ramakrishna. Many people have witnessed marvelous things right in front of their eyes. The whole cinematic

life of Sri Ramakrishna spiritual struggle has taken place in front of those very priests. What was their opinion about Sri Ramakrishna- that he was a mad cap. Completely mad. Did they derive any benefit? Absolutely not!! **The point is the giver must be ready and receiver also must be ready.** What does that mean? It means our karma dictates how much we can receive. So what should we do? **Maya gives us sufficient opportunity so that we can do the right type of karma so we become the recipients either in the form of physical things, intellectual things, moral things, aesthetic things or spiritual things. That is the very purpose of Maya.** It is not destructive, it is like a mother leading a child, looking after him so that- slowly he will grow into the most marvelous human being. And ultimately realizes who he is.

In simple words, **Maya's function is to make us awaken to the fact that we are divine and help us to realize the divinity. That is the purpose of Maya.**

OM SHANTI, SHANTI, SHANTIHI.

