

The Spiritual Journey

by

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Introduction

Swāmi Paramārthānanda has been teaching the Vedāntik scriptures for the last three decades in the form of regular classes at various centres in Chennai. All these classes are based on whatever knowledge Swāmiji has received from His Guru and also whatever He has gathered from various commentaries written by Āchāryas belonging to this holy tradition, the tradition which we still are worshipping today.

As Swāmiji was sharing this knowledge through these classes, he found that He had to develop his own methodology of presentation or communication to suit the modern times and also students who are attending these classes. And as Swāmiji was evolving this methodology, gradually he found himself using several words and expressions, phrases, principles, acronyms etc. These words are very useful for communication and therefore have been used very frequently. Though these words are very useful tools for those students who know these words, but these very expressions will become an obstacle for those students who do not understand those expressions. Unfortunately, these phrases cannot be found in any dictionary also. Therefore in this talk, Swāmiji has collected those expressions and phrases, at least the prominent ones and has presented them in the form of a talk. And since Guru Pūrnimā will be a nice day, this method is dedicated to the Guru Paramparā and their blessings are sought.

These words have been arranged in such a way that they will form a spiritual scheme of Sādhanā or a progressive scheme. Of course all these phrases cannot be dealt with elaborately, because this is the essence of over 30 years of teaching. Therefore the aim is to only give notes and assuming that for most of the students, it will ring a bell and help in revising later.

Topic 1 — Karma Yoga (R-I-D-E)

The spiritual journey beings with Karma Yoga which has been elaborated described in the third chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā. And Karma Yoga is generally presented in the

form of a simple expression.

Proper action + proper attitude = Karma Yoga.

This is presented in the form of the word RIDE, alphabetically standing for ...

- R - Reduce Adhārmik activities
- I - Increase Dhārmik activities
- D - Dedicate all actions to the Lord
- E - Experience everything as Prasāda

R – Reduce Adhārmik activities

By reduction of Adhārmik activities, what is meant is the gradual reduction of all the Adhārmik activities with an intention to make them either minimum or zero if possible.

And what are Adhārmik activities ? They are nothing but all those actions and responses in life which become obstacles to our spiritual growth. In Sanskrit, actions means Karma and responses mean Pratikarma. Karma and Pratikarma can later become Pratibandha or obstacles to spiritual growth and hence should be reduced. A list of such activities are given in the 16th chapter of the Gītā in the form of Āsurī Sampat.

In simple language, we can say that reduction of Karma and Pratikarma is avoidance of all those activities and responses which I do not want to encounter myself. I should not do to others what I do not want others to do to me. That means that I should watch my actions and responses and then I should identify those which are inappropriate.

After identifying them as inappropriate, I may find some of them unavoidable or necessary. You ignore them but initially identify avoidable inappropriate actions and responses. And if we are sincere and honest, we can always identify many inappropriate actions and responses which we can avoid. And once we avoid the avoidable, the unavoidable will also become avoidable by the Grace of the Lord. And sooner or later, all the inappropriate behaviours will come down – this is the very significant discipline “R”.

I – Increase Dhārmik activities

Then "I" represents increase of Dhārmik activities. And as a part of Dhārmik activities, the Pañcha Mahā Yajñāha have been emphasised. The Pañcha Mahā Yajñāha are extremely versatile set of religious cum spiritual disciplines. These Pañcha Mahā Yajñāha are:

- Deva Yajñāha
- Bhūta Yajñāha
- Manushya Yajñāha
- Brahma Yajñāha
- Pitru Yajñāha

And these five Yajñāha have got both ritualistic versions and non-ritualistic versions.

What are the ritualistic Yajñāha versions ?

- ◆ **Deva Yajñāha** is regular worship of God either in the form of Agnihotram or Aupāsanam or Sandhyāvandanam or Pañchāyatana Pūjā or any form of regular Pūjā.

These are ritualistic forms of Deva Yajñaha.

- ◆ **Bhūta Yajñaha** also has got a ritualistic version in the form of a ritual called Vaishva Devam or in the form of Tulasi Pūjā or in the form of Go Pūjā.
- ◆ Then **Manushya Yajñaha** is honouring guests and offering food to them.
- ◆ **Brahma Yajñaha** is the performance of a ritual called Brahma Yajñaha in which Rishīs and scriptures are honoured.
- ◆ Finally **Pitru Yajñaha** is regular offering of Namaskāra to parents and taking care of them when they are old and performance of Shrāddham Tarpanam etc after their departures.

What are the non-ritualistic Yajñaha versions ?

- ◆ **Deva Yajñaha** is our reverential attitude and worship of our Pañcha Mahā Bhūtāni - Space, Fire, Air, Water and Earth. Reverential attitude towards them will be called Deva Yajñaha in which worship the Lord in the form of Vishva Rūpa Īshvara.
- ◆ **Bhūta Yajñaha** is reverential attitude towards all the plants and animals and my reverential contribution for the protection of nature, protection of environment and protection of ecological balance. All my reverential contribution will come under Bhūta Yajñaha.
- ◆ Non-ritualistic **Manushya Yajñaha** is in the form of all kinds of social service that I do through varieties of clubs and associations available.
- ◆ **Brahma Yajñaha** is my reverential contribution to the preservation and propagation of scriptural learning by supporting those Āchāryas, those institutions which support and propagate such activities.
- ◆ Finally **Pitru Yajñaha** is whatever I do for the protection of the family and protection and honouring of our ancestors and also honouring our senior citizens in general. A society is matured only when it takes care of its senior citizens properly with reverence.

Thus, in ritualistic and non-ritualistic ways, when I follow the Pañcha Mahā Yajñaha, it will come under increase of Dhārmik activities.

D – Dedicate all actions to the Lord

The third is dedicate all the actions to the Lord. But this, we mean we inform the Lord that spiritual growth is my priority and my primary goal. All the materialistic consequences are by-products and they are subservient to my spiritual growth. Informing this to the Lord while performing all my activities, be it secular or sacred, remembering this is Īshvara Ārāadhanā Rūpam Karma comes under this topic.

E – Experience everything as Prasāda

Finally “E” is the most important thing – experience of everything as Īshvara Prasāda. There is no injustice in the world. Whatever I am going through is a just experience. I should never challenge God by raising the question – “Why me ?” I accept calmly and coolly and I look for hidden message in and through all the experience especially the

hidden messages in painful experiences. This attitude of Prasāda Bhāvanā is represented by “D”

All these ideas put together is called **RIDE**.

Topic 2 – Benefits of Karma Yoga (4“S”)

Then the next topic is benefits of Karma Yoga - called 4“S”.

- Self esteem
- Serenity
- Setup harmony
- Spiritual growth

Since Karma Yoga involves more and more contribution and less and less of consumption, I become a **contributor** rather than a consumer. And the more I contribute, I find a meaning to my life and it will remove my low self-image or inferiority complexes etc and I naturally develop **SELF-ESTEEM** or **SELF-RESPECT**. And by this word self-esteem, arrogance or superiority complex is not referred to. What is meant is freedom from inferiority complex. There is a beautiful Subhāshitam that says

*Gauravam Prāpyate Dānāt Na Tu Vittasya Sanchayāt
Sthithi Ucchaihi Payodānām Pyaadhīnām Adhasthithi*

A person gets more and more Gauravam or respect and honour by giving out and not by amassing or hoarding wealth. For this, a beautiful example is given – the rain-bearing giver-clouds have a higher stature than the ocean which receives the waters from all over. Even when Bhagavān wanted to receive something from Mahābali, Bhagavān had to take Vāhamana Rūpam, a small form when he was a receiver. Hence, reception makes me lower while contribution or charity makes me taller. Therefore Karma Yoga being contributory in nature will increase my self-esteem.

Then the second benefit is **SERENITY**. Because I accept every experience as Īshvara Prasāda, I do not react to those experience. Any Prasāda is received reverentially without judgement. It may be tasty Pāyasam or it may be a little bit of mud – whatever be the type of Prasāda, Samattvam is there. Therefore Karma Yoga promotes serenity.

Then the third benefit is **SETUP HARMONY**. Because a Karma Yogī contributes to the entire creation in the form of Pañcha Mahā Yajñāha, the infrastructure around him at the micro level (the family) and macro level (the society) and even the environment, are all maintained in harmony. Harmony of the surroundings is at the micro and macro levels. This is called setup harmony, the third “S”.

And the fourth “S” is **SPIRITUAL GROWTH**. By spiritual growth, what is meant is, getting a mind which is ready for Jñāna Yoga which is the next level of spiritual journey. Jñānam Yogyatā Prāptiḥ is spiritual growth. In technical language, this is called Sādhana Chatushtaya Sampattiḥ. And to indicate this growth, we have been using two expressions:

- FIR decrease
- CCC increase

FIR Decrease

- ◆ F – stands for frequency of emotional disturbances.
- ◆ I – means intensity of emotional disturbances. The intensity is high when it is at the level of mind, speech and body. The intensity is medium when it is at the level of mind and speech only. And the intensity is low, when it is at the level of mind only. Thus the emotional disturbance can be of highest, medium or low.
- ◆ R – refers to the recovery period. The time that is taken for coming to normalcy.

And spiritual growth is reduction in all these three – Frequency, Intensity and Recovery period – with regards to emotional disturbances gradually coming down.

What is CCC ?

- ◆ C – represents calmness
- ◆ C – represents cheerfulness. Expressed calmness is cheerfulness
- ◆ C – confidence. Self-confidence.

And when FIR comes down, CCC will gradually increase. Therefore what is spiritual growth : **Decreased FIR + increased CCC.**

Jñāna Yoga Preparation #1

And as the spiritual growth takes place, a person will gravitate towards Jñāna Yoga and he will be interested in Jñāna Yoga.

What is Jñāna Yoga ? Technically, it is defined as **Shravanam Mananam and Nididhyāsanam**. But we have been using an expression : “Consistent and systematic study of Vedāntik scriptures for a length of time under the guidance of a competent and live Āchārya”. This requires two types of preparation.

PORT — Reduction

The first preparation is called PORT-reduction

- ◆ P – represents: Possession
- ◆ O – represents: Obligations or responsibilities
- ◆ R – represents: Relationships
- ◆ T – represents: Transactions.

If you study, these four factors are inter-connected. And increase of any one will increase the other three and decrease of anyone will decrease the other three. They come as a package and they provide you with an infrastructure. This PORT infrastructure has its advantages and disadvantages.

Advantage is that is that they are ideal for doing more and more Karma and contributing to material prosperity. PORT provides an ideal infrastructure for doing more Karma and contributing to material prosperity.

But the disadvantage is that the very same PORT is an infrastructure which will be an obstacle to Jñāna Yoga or deep study and contemplation. Why is this so ? Firstly, PORT will take all your time and then one will not have time for study or contemplation.

The second reason is that PORT will create more and more mental pre-occupation. If you study any of your mental pre-occupations, it will be connected to one of these four P or O or R or T. Therefore PORT makes the mind shallow and reduces the attention span. Therefore one of the preparations for Jñāna Yoga is reducing the PORT as much as possible. The amount of reduction is a subjective decision, but the aim of a Jñāna Yogi should be PORT-reduction to get quality time and also to get a un-preoccupied deep mind for study and contemplation. Therefore the first preparation is PORT-reduction.

Jñāna Yoga Preparation #2

CLASP — Rejection / Renunciation

Then the second preparation is CLASP-rejection or CLASP-renunciation or Āntara Sanyāsa or inner Sanyāsa. What do they represent ?

- ◆ **Cl** — represents the sense of **ownership** and **controllershship** which is called **Abhimāna**. The sense of ownership and controllershship with regards to body-mind-complex is called **Ahankāra**. And the sense of ownership and controllershship with regards to the family and possession is called **Mamakāra**. Therefore Cl stands for Aham Mama Abhimāna [sense of mine-ness]. And the moment Cl comes, the next one automatically comes, which is...
- ◆ **A** — **anxiety**. All our anxieties are connected with either **Aham** ['I'] or **Mama** [my]. We don't have any anxiety with the local auto-rickshaw driver. Therefore Cl and A go together. And once Cl and A comes...
- ◆ **SP** — is a natural consequence. SP means **special prayers** or Sakāma Prārthanā. Different forms of prayers which are Sakāma are instead of Nishkāma Bhakti or Prārthanā. Nishkāma Prārthanā is all forms of prayers meant for Loka Kshema and spiritual growth. Any prayer meant for the wellbeing of the world or the spiritual growth is called Nishkāma Prārthanā and any prayer for anything other than these two, come under Sakāma Prārthanā. Sakāma Prārthanā will increase when Cl and A will increase.

Therefore CLASP go together as a package. And if Jñāna Yoga should succeed, one has to take to the CLASP rejection which Krishna presents in the Gītā as:

*jñeyasya nityā sanyāsi yo na dvesti na kānkshati
nirdvandvo hi mahā bāho sukham bandhāt pramuchyate*

Kāshāya Vastram represents CLASP rejection. We cannot avoid the arrival of anxiety because it is very natural to human beings. CLASP rejection refers to not encouraging, supporting and nourishing the arrived anxiety. This can be done by dropping the Ahankāra Mamakāra Abhimānam [sense of mine-ness] by remembering that everything belongs to Īshvara alone, including the body and family. I am not an owner of anything and I am not a controller of anything. I am only a **contributor** and I never own or control anything.

Bhagavān can give anything at any time and Bhagavān can take away anything including the breath that I have. This awareness is CLASP rejection. I consider this also as an extremely important preparation for Jñāna Yoga.

Jñāna Yoga

Then comes the actual Jñāna Yoga which is going through the spiritual education program by exposing myself to consistent and systematic study. When I go through a spiritual education program for a length of time, I get the message from the Vedāntic scriptures.

Five Capsules of Vedanta

And what is the message from Vedāntic scriptures ? This is in the form of five capsules of Vedānta. Without elaborating, the five capsules are:

- ◆ I am of the nature of eternal and all pervading consciousness.
- ◆ I am the only source of permanent, peace, security and happiness.
- ◆ By my mere presence, I give life to the material body and through the body, I experience the material universe. The word “body” includes the mind because the mind is also a subtle form of body.
- ◆ I am not affected by anything that takes place in the material world and in the material body, including the material mind.
- ◆ By forgetting my nature, I convert life into a struggle and by remembering my nature, I convert life into a sport or entertainment.

These are the five capsules which I am supposed to receive and assimilate through Shravanam [Listening], Mananam [Reflection] and Nididhyāsanam [Assimilation], namely Jñāna Yoga.

Five Features of Consciousness

What is the meaning of the word ‘consciousness’ ? The five features are given:

- ◆ Consciousness is not part, product or property of the body.
- ◆ Consciousness is an independent entity or principle which pervades and enlivens the body.
- ◆ Consciousness is not limited by the boundaries of the body.
- ◆ Consciousness continues to exist or survive even after the death of the body.
- ◆ The surviving consciousness is not accessible because of the absence of the body medium.

I have to understand these five features of the principle of consciousness and later I should learn to use the word “I” in the meaning of this consciousness. And when I can do these two together, I can call myself a Jñāna Yogī. Jñāna Yogi is one who learns these five features and trains his mind to use the word “I”, not in the meaning of the body or even in the meaning of mind, but “I” as this consciousness principle. The one who practices this is called a Jñāna Yoga Abhyāsaha [Jñāna Yoga practitioner].

Format Conversion: Karma Yoga + Jñāna Yoga = Bhakti Yoga

And then comes the final topic. Every spiritual seeker, first has to go through the

Karma Yoga Sādhana which is compulsory for all and every spiritual seeker has to go through Jñāna Yoga Sādhana later. Both are compulsory for all. Bhakti Yoga is the name of the combined Karma Yoga and Jñāna Yoga.

So Karma Yoga + Jñāna Yoga = Bhakti Yogaha.

This is handled in the 12th chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā. And when a spiritual seeker travels from Karma Yoga to Jñāna Yoga, when a Karma Yogi becomes a Jñāna Yogi, his mindset is totally changed. A Karma Yoga mindset is transformed into Jñāna Yoga mindset, and we have been seeing this in the form of “Format Conversion”. This is a loaded expression. Format Conversion is transition of Karma Yoga mindset to Jñāna Yoga mindset.

A Karma Yogi has a world view which can be presented in a **triangular format** of Jīva, Jagat and Īshvara.

- ◆ Component #1 : This means I am an individual **Jīva**.
- ◆ Component #2 : I look upon the world as **Jagat** which I confront in front of me, a world which gives me varieties of problems.
- ◆ Component #3 : **God** is someone who is other than Jīva and Jagat, who is separate from and who is a creator. This is the world a Karma Yogi has.

And naturally a Karma Yogi looks upon **Moksha** [liberation] as a future event which he intensely yearns for. He thinks that one day he will get Moksha and then all his sufferings will go away. He also thinks that Moksha will give him the freedom from the cycle of birth and death. Thus freedom from suffering and freedom from the cycle of birth and death, which has to happen in the future is the Moksha that a Karma Yogi looks forward to.

And when a person enters Jñāna Yoga, this triangular format is totally changed. A Jñāna Yogi has a world-view which can be presented in a **binary format**: of Ātmā and An-ātmā. This means that I am not an individual Jīva but I am the consciousness principle. All those five features and five capsules should flash in our mind and I am the Ātmā of the above description – the knowledge which I have received through Jñāna Yoga training.

And once I **practice** to claim this fact, my attitude towards Moksha has to totally change. No more is Moksha a future event because I the consciousness am the illuminator of the sufferings of the body-mind-complex. But “I” the Ātmā myself do not have any sufferings in all the three periods of time. Therefore there is no question of freedom from sufferings. Therefore I remove that mindset consistently. Since I have practiced and developed these Vāsanā [tendencies] as a Karma Yogi. As a Jñāna Yogī, I eliminate that. There is no question of freedom from suffering because I the Ātmā do not have any sufferings to be free from. All the so-called pains and pleasures belong to the material body and world, the Anātmā, and I am the non-material Ātmā.

Thus claiming the Moksha as my Svarūpam [original nature] is a new mindset. Also, as a Karma Yogi, I wanted “freedom from the cycle of birth and death”. And when I offer Namaskāra to the Lord or the Guru, I prayed for this all along. This is all fine as a Karma

Yogi. As a Jñāna Yogi, I should never use the word, “freedom from the cycle of birth and death” because “I” the Ātmā, being of the nature of eternal and all pervading consciousness, I do not have the cycle. The cycles of Anātmā are going on inside of me. Therefore I am Nitya Mukta, ever free from birth and death.

Practicing this kind of Nitya Muktatvam, is called the nourishment of the binary format. A Karma Yogi nourishes triangular format. And for a Jñāna Yogī, Moksha is freedom from triangular format and claiming that I am Nitya Mukta.

And on the auspicious Guru Pūrṇima day, we will pray to the entire Guru Paramparā, that according to our level, we should be able to go through the entire spiritual journey, come to binary format and claim that I am Nitya Mukta. With these words we will conclude this Guru Pūrṇima speech.



Saturday, 18 July 2009

This blog contains the TRANSCRIPTION of lectures of Swami Paramarthananda of Madras.

Please note that there is no substitute for Guru Mukha Dvara Shravanam and this is the best way to appreciate the beauty of the topics and relish the clarity of delivery.

But for the benefit of others, these lectures are available in text format. Every attempt has been made to transcribe the lecture as accurately as possible. Any inadvertent errors are purely attributable to the blog owner.

Hari Om

About Me
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I am a student of Vedanta. Through this blog, I want everyone to benefit from the wonderful teachings of Swāmi Paramārthānanda.

Hari Om

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