

Chapter 4: JNANA YOGA

Introduction

Jnana yoga is the study of knowledge that leads to ultimate union with the Parabrahman. The subject of “knowledge” is very vast and covers so many different branches. We can broadly divide the subject into:

a)

Knowledge of the Atman and the physical body composed of the mind, intellect and gross physical body and the knowledge of the constituents of the nature with its working mechanism. In brief it is the knowledge of the Purusha (the creator) and Prakriti (created). This is the spiritual science.

b)

Knowledge of the material world.

The knowledge of the material world has its benefit of bringing success and happiness but only in relation to the material possessions. This, the scholars say is momentary happiness as it leads eventually to the state of no more happiness or even to sorrow. This is because none of the possessions in one’s life are permanent and we learn the same by the experiences in our own lives or by witnessing the lives of others. Without the knowledge of the spiritual world, the success in the knowledge of the material world leads to development of “Ego” which is the main cause of downfall of the individual or of the society.

On the other hand, the knowledge of the spiritual science teaches one the art of contentment and the art of detachment in attachment towards the material possessions in life and at the same time guides one towards the ultimate purpose of human birth, namely “Moksha.”

To say the same in a different way, we can say that the knowledge in any field gives one a certain amount of power. The power obtained from the knowledge of the material world makes one develop a sense of “Ego.” On the other hand, the knowledge of the spiritual world gives the power to overcome the “ego” and the power to withstand the turbulences in one’s life.

Spiritual knowledge assists the individual in conducting actions for the welfare of the society because it teaches the art of realising the presence of Atman in oneself and understanding the presence of the same Atman in all forms of life. This is the only means of not developing the ego which is the root cause of destruction not only of the individual but also that of the society.

We can understand this by comparison to that of the car. The car has various parts like the engine, gear box etc. We see various types of cars ranging from simple basic ones to super luxury cars. There is one thing common in all of them. None of them can work without the presence of the fuel inside. The same fuel is needed to run all the cars. The car stops running after the exhaustion of petrol in it. Petrol is the energy that is needed to make the car move.

Similarly, we must realise the presence of divine energy within us in the form of the Atman and the presence of the same Atman in all forms of life.

Of course, we must also learn the art of using the car so that we do not hurt ourselves or the others on the road. Similarly we must use our physical body in a way that does not harm us or harm others around us.

This Jnana is the main gate of entry into the temple of knowledge. The temple with the idol of Atman inside is the living physical body. We block the ever effulgent light of knowledge of the Atman by our ego and Jnana yoga is to assist us in unblocking the ego and letting the light of Atman shine forth.

Our body is like a microcosmic representation of the nature. It is constituted of the Atman and the physical body made up of the Pancha Maha Bhootas. (Space, Air, Light, Water and Earth.) The nature around us, both the known and unknown parts is a macrocosm with the unmanifest energy and the five gross elements.

The subject matter of investigation that leads to ultimate understanding of the Supreme Parabrahman is Jnana Yoga.

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