

Chapter 4: JNANA YOGA

Introduction - part 2

As we go through the various chapters of the Gita, we will realise that this chapter is only the preliminary or primary course in understanding the Supreme. Real Jnana Yoga is taught by the Lord later on in Chapter 13, Kshetra Kshetrajna Yoga. Initially the Lord takes Arjuna through the comparison of life in an external battlefield of Kurukshetra with the battle between Kauravas and Pandavas. As He unfolds the entire Gita, we find that He reverts back to individual human body and makes us realise that the human mind is the true battlefield between divine and un-divine qualities. Victory for the divine qualities with the assistance of the Supreme knowledge over the un-divine qualities leads to Liberation which the Hindu scriptures say is “Moksha”.

Let me conclude the introduction with a definition of knowledge as given by Swamy Vivekananda. He defines it as follows:

“Knowledge is finding association about things.”

The association of the physical body with the Atman within on an individual basis and the association of the Pancha Maha Bhootas with the divine un-manifest energy with reference to the nature (prakriti) is the knowledge the Vedas and the Gita talk about.

The scriptures talk about “Lighting the light of knowledge.” What does it mean?

When we go to a temple we see the priest lighting the lamp and offering the light to the deity in the temple. This light is to illumine the God inside the inner sanctum sanctorum. (The old traditional temples in India are built in such a way that the inner sanctum sanctorum is totally dark and the installed deity is not seen. The deity is seen only on lighting the lamp.)

Similarly, we are expected to illumine the Atman within and make it visible by lighting the lamp of knowledge. This is possible only by developing the divine virtues, destroying the animal tendencies within and by dropping the “Ego” in all actions. We are expected to understand clearly the “Karma Yoga” and put the same into practice with “Sraddha and Bhakti.” Meditation on what has been taught by the Lord not only on what we have read so far but the contents of the subsequent chapters will assist the seeker in attaining the Liberation.

Sri Krishna, by incarnating on earth has set an example and shown us the way to act on the principle of true “Karma Yoga” and given us the knowledge to understand the principle of correct actions.

So before we embark on sloka after sloka in this chapter, here’s the joyful message we’re heading to:

Sloka 39:

The man of faith having knowledge as his supreme goal, having controlled the senses, obtains the knowledge of the Atman and having obtained that, enjoys the peace for ever.