

An Introduction to Gyanyoga

**Course - BA / B.Sc. Yogic Studies
Paper - 1**

Lesson Presented by-

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Gyanyoga

Gyanyoga is the path in which we experience the divine on the basis of our thought power and wisdom. It does not involve any physical activity or '*Bahirang Saadhana*' like *asanas* or *pranayams*. There is no fixed method that can guide a seeker of '*Gyana*' - the ultimate knowledge. Every person on this path is a researcher, who finds his/her own way based on his values, thoughts, abilities and instincts.

The Field of Gyanyoga

The main source of '*Gyanyoga*' is the '*Brahmasutra*' of *Badrayana*. Baarayan is also known as *Vedvyasa*. '*Brahmasutra*' is also known as '*Uttar Mimansa*'.

The first sutra of the '*Brahmasutra*' is - "*Athato Brahmajignasa*". That is to say, "Now the search for '*Brahm*' is begun". Therefore, the field of *Gyanyoga* is to analyze the '*Brahm*' or the divine. In simple words, the knowledge of *Gyanyoga* begins with some questions like these: -

- Who am 'I'?
- What is '*Aatma*' and '*Paramatma*'? Is it possible to see God?
- Is this world true, or false?
- What are happiness and sorrow?

Etc.

Efforts to find answers to these questions only takes us to the field of *Gyanyoga*. In fact, the beginning of *Gyanyoga* is only when questions of this type arise in our mind. There is definitely a time in every person's life

when such questions arise in his/her mind, that if this world is true, what is death, etc. Especially when he is in the darkness of deep sorrow.

All kinds of philosophies or religions of the world try to find answers to these questions. The thinkers of the world have been facing and analysing these questions since time immemorial.

Most people are satisfied with sense pleasure and keep running after lusts. Therefore, they never try to find out the truth behind these questions. Truth is always completely hidden for them.

Therefore, this path of *Gyanyoga* is only for those who have intense desire to know the truth. Not every person has the ability to take himself to this path of divine knowledge. If anyone finds this path inaccessible, then he should follow other paths of yoga.

Source of Gyanyoga

The main source of knowledge of *Gyanyoga* is '*Vedanta-Darshan*', also known as the '*Brahmasutra*'. It is composed by *Maharshi Badarayan*. Its period is believed to be of the sixth century BC. Its *sutras* are so cryptic that it is impossible for the public to understand. Therefore, other later sages and *sannyasins* have written commentaries on it. Of these, the '*Bhashya*' written by *Adi Shankaracharya* is considered to be excellent and authentic.

'*Gaudapada*' first wrote a commentary on the '*Advaita Vedanta*' philosophy. He was Guru of *Adi Shankaracharya*'s Guru *Govind*. After this, many scholars wrote scriptures on *Advaita Vedanta* and *Gyanyoga*. The lectures on *Gyayoga* given by *Swami Vivekananda* is available in book form, which is in simple language and is accessible to the students.

Who am I ?

Who am 'I', or am I a flesh-made body? If one part of my body is severed, am 'I' not left? Even if all the organs are removed one by one, I remain, until the soul leaves this body. Then what is the existence of 'I'? The form of 'I' we understand is very narrow. If we become aware, we find that we have not found the 'I'. If you want to know, you have to develop an understanding that the 'I' I want to know is the bounded form of an infinite power. We have taken the body to be its limits. We keep this 'I' closed by the desires of the body. This is why we fear death. There is fear of losing the lusts from which we have tied ourselves throughout our life. It is caused by our ignorance.

Our body is formed of atoms in the same way as other living or inanimate objects of the world. It is proven that what we consider to be the inanimate does not really exist but it is in a special state of energy. In all the scriptures, this energy is considered to be a divine energy, which remains even when this body is gone. This power has been addressed in the name of soul or *Aatma*. This is the basis of mind. It acts on the body through the mind, directs and controls it. There is an astral (*sukshma*) body inside every physical gross body (*sthoola*). We do earthly work with gross body. But this gross body is guided by the astral body, and is thus connected to the soul.

What is soul (*Aatma*) and divine (*Paramatma*)? Is it possible to see God?

There are different views in different philosophies regarding the nature of the soul, but there is a consensus on the fact that the soul has no shape. There is nothing like my soul or your soul or the soul of another. 'He' is prevalent in all living beings. By saying my soul or your soul, we give it a limited form.

In search of God, man visits temples, mosques, churches and other places. Through the practice of enlightenment, as the darkness of ignorance fades, we come to know that what we were searching for in the whole world is not only near us, but within us. Its form, which is omnipresent, is infinite, has enlightened nature, is divine. *Swami Vivekananda* has given an example for that. Imagine that there is a curtain in front of me which has a small hole. I can see some faces through that hole. The larger this hole becomes, the more visible the other side becomes. And if the hole is spread to all over the screen, then the scene is completely exposed. You remain the same, only the hole continues to grow in sequence. And finally the truth comes out. It turned out that the other side was part of me and I was part of it. Similarly, there is only a veil between the 'I' and the pervading God. As the curtain goes away, we get an idea of the divine. At the end we have the experience of God.

Is this world true or false?

There has been special curiosity to this question. It has also been said that '*Brahm*' (*Paramatma*) is true and '*Jagat*' (the world) is false. In fact, they are not two, but two forms of the same existence.

As a matter of fact nothing new can be created. Only the place changes or the shape changes. In this universe, we cannot increase or

decrease even a fraction of an atom or energy. Everything we see, hear, experience is the creation of what we call *God* or *Almighty* or *Brahma*. It is the same with the sun and stars. He is the earth, He is the sea, He is the cloud, He is the rain, He is the wind, He is the storm. He is working as a soul in our body. He is the 'reason' for the world, which becomes compressed and takes the form of a molecule, and develops from the same sequence to become a complete *God*. This is the secret or summary of the world. We are born in it, live in it and return to it at the end.

What are happiness and sorrow?

Happiness and sorrow are our emotions associated with the physical world. We attach ourselves to lusts through our senses. The satisfaction of lust gives us pleasure. That is our happiness. At that time we forget that this happiness is not permanent. If we indulge deep in it, it becomes disgusting in future. Attachment to lust never gives freedom from lust. Just as the addition of ghee increases the flame of fire, similarly consumption increases lust. Even a thought of staying away from lusts, makes us unhappy. That is why we are afraid of death. In our view death takes away all the worldly pleasures.

All the worldly pleasures coming through senses are '*Maya*'. Another fact is that no one is completely happy in the world and no one is completely sad. All this is comparative. Everything is physical. Every person is sad to see the one above him. He does not try to look down. In this way, the whole society is full of sorrow from top to bottom. There are also people who cannot get enough food, cannot get clothes, do not have a home to live. Service to such people is the best way to get rid of sorrow. On

the other hand, there are people who have all the comforts, yet they are unhappy. To the extent they also commit suicide sometimes.

A knowledgeable person is never sad. He knows that neither happiness is permanent nor suffering is permanent. Their order continues. The source of endless happiness is to control your desires. Use whatever God has given, to those who need it. Give them love. Consider them as *Brahm*. There is no greater service to God than this. There is no greater form of love. It is such a love that never diminishes. Therefore, those whose ego is dead, they see God everywhere and in every person. They continue to serve the needy even after sacrificing everything. Pleasure or sorrow is gone for them. They get so much power that they can make the whole world dance at their behest.

Possible questions: -

1. On the basis of Vedanta philosophy, explain the nature of '*Aatma*' and '*Paramatma*'.
2. Give an introduction to '*Gyanyoga*'.
3. Explain the subject matter of '*Gyanyoga*' in detail.

Proposed text:

1. Swami Vivekananda: *Gyanayoga*, Advaita Ashram, Kolkata.
2. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan: Indian Philosophy, Rajpal & Sons, Kashmiri Gate, Delhi.
3. Maharshi Vedvyasa : *Vedanta Darshan* , Geeta Press, Gorakhpur.

