

[JNANIS AND THE PATH THEY TEACH](#)

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Eloha and good morning, everyone! We are all so blessed to be here together today, worshipping our Supreme God Siva in the ancient ways in the temple here and seeking Him within ourselves through quiet devotion and contemplation. So many in the world are unaware of the great joys that are the reward of a religious life lived well. They seek their fulfillment outside of themselves and fall short time and time again. One day they will conclude, as you all have, that it is the inner life, the spiritual life that alone brings eternal, unchanging happiness. This outer world and consciousness can never bring the soul real contentment, real fulfillment. Oh, you can find a temporary happiness, but it will be followed by its opposite in due course. The outer consciousness of the material world is by its very nature a bondage. It binds one through karma. It binds one through maya. It binds one through anava or ego identity and ignorance. That is the nature of the world, to bind us.

When the soul has had enough experience, it naturally seeks to be liberated, to unravel the bonds. That begins the most wonderful process in the world as the seeker steps for the first time onto the spiritual path. Of course, the whole time, through all those births and lives and deaths, the soul was undergoing a spiritual evolution, but unconsciously. Now it seeks to know God consciously. That is the difference. It's a big difference. By this conscious process of purification, of inner striving, of refining and maturing, the karmas come more swiftly, evolution speeds up and things can and usually do get more intense. Don't worry, though. That is natural and necessary. That intensity is the way the mind experiences the added cosmic energies that begin to flow through the nervous system.

So, here is the soul seeking intentionally to know Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going? A path must be found, a path that others have successfully followed, a path that has answers equally as profound as the seeker's questions. In Saivite Hinduism we have such a path. It is called the Saiva Neri, the Path of Siva. It is a wide and unobstructed path that leads man to himself, to his true Self that lies within and beyond his personality, lies at the very core of his being.

I want to speak a little about this inner path today. You all know that it is a mystical path, full of mystery. You cannot learn much of it from books. Then where to look? Look to the holy scriptures where the straight path to God is described by our saints. Look to the great masters, the siddhars or perfected ones. Look to the Sat Gurus who have themselves met and overcome the challenges that still lie ahead for you. Look to them and ask them to help you to look within yourself.

Much of the mysticism that is the greatest wealth of Hinduism is locked within these masters who in our tradition are known as the Sat Gurus, the sages and the siddhars. There is much to say on this. As Yogaswami told us, "The subject is vast and the time is short!"

However, let me begin with something that may at first come as a surprise to you. All men and women on the earth are doing exactly as they should and must do. People complain, "I wish I were rich. I wish I lived somewhere else. I really should be a doctor. If only things were different." But in the final analysis, we are all doing exactly as we want, as we must, doing what is next on our personal path of evolution. Nothing is wrong. Nothing should be that is not. Even the drunk, even the thief are part of the cosmic dance of God Siva. Not that you should ever think of being a thief, for there is much difficult karma there. Just realize that he, too, is evolving. He, too, is Siva's creation, and what he does is, for him, somehow necessary.

Just look at the world. Warriors have to fight their battles. Priests have to take care of their temples. Businessmen must sell their goods. Farmers must grow their crops and tend their flocks. Teachers must pass on knowledge. Each one has to do what he has to do in the great cosmic dance of Siva. Each one follows the path of service leading to devotion which leads to spiritual disciplines of yoga. Finally, that yoga culminates in the attainment of Truth or God-Realization. These are the four margas leading the soul to its very Self.

DISCIPLE: Can you define more about these four stages of the spiritual path, what they are and, more importantly, what they are not?

Gurudeva: For Hindus the path is seen as divided into four stages or phases of inner development. Some say bhakti, karma yoga, raja yoga and jnana; others say

chariya, kriya, yoga and jnana. Either way, it is basically the same - stages followed by the soul in its quest for God.

We are speaking here of the way the ancients attained their realizations, how they lived their lives, suffered, went through mental pain in their tapas, walked the San Marga path through life - chariya, kriya, yoga and jnana - and in that process unwound the karmas of past, learned to live fully in the present, a-bashed the person of themselves to be the soul of themselves. They practiced true yoga to obtain release from rebirth - moksha - that only the realization of the Absolute Truth, can give. There is, of course, no action too great to render to persist on the path of enlightenment, once the path has clearly been defined.

Jnana is the last stage. Most people don't understand jnana. They think it is little more than intellectual study of the path, a simple kind of wisdom. Jnana does not mean simplistic reading of scriptures or understanding of philosophical books and knowing pat answers to stereotyped questions. Jnana is the blossoming of wisdom, of enlightened consciousness, of true being. Jnana is the state of the realized soul who knows Absolute Reality through personal experience, who has reached the end of the spiritual path after many, many lifetimes.

Yoga is the path of sadhana or discipline leading the advanced soul toward jnana. Yoga is divided into eight parts, ranging from the simple physical disciplines and diet up to the deepest contemplation gained through perfect control of mind. Yoga does not mean just sitting in lotus for a half hour each day in a penthouse or doing Hatha Yoga asanas for health and beauty. It means yoga as performed by the yogis of yore, the renegades from society, tapasvins ready to face the fire of sadhana, brave souls who have given up all else in their search for Truth, persevering with an iron will until they accomplish what they seek.

Kriya is basically worship and devotion, or the expression of our love of the Divine through various ceremonies and rituals. Kriya does not mean mindlessly or superstitiously attending temple services to look good in the community, to be with all your friends, to gossip or talk of politics and other human affairs. It is a genuine communion with the inner worlds, a profound stage in which the heart swells and eyes overflow with internalized worship, love and surrender.

Chariya is service, but it does not mean empty service, unthinking performance of traditional rites or just marrying off daughters before premarital affairs. It is service done selflessly, it is dharma performed consciously, it is worship offered wholly and it is goodness in thought, word and deed.

Of course, our most cherished theology is monistic Saiva Siddhanta, the advaitic teachings inherited from our Guru Paramparai who outlined the course we are on. This teaches us that god and man are, ultimately, one. This teaches us that our Supreme God Siva is the Creator of the universe, and He is also the creation. He is not different from it.

We must go to the temple and worship with all our heart God in form before our karmas are cleared, our responsibilities paid, and we realize the formless perfection of God Siva. The guha, the cave of consciousness, opens its doors for us to sit comfortably, mentally undistracted within the cavity within the head, there to begin the yoga of union for personal, spiritual, everlasting attainment. Saiva Siddhanta outlines the path that we are on. It tells us how to attain these goals. The saints who sang the hymns of Tirumurai inspire us onward and inward.

The grand, great old rishi Tirumular captured the essence of the Vedas and the Agamas in his epistles, announcing the rules and regulations that we must follow, telling of the attainments that we may expect. Over two thousand years ago the great siddhar Saint Tirumular taught, "Offer oblations in love. Light the golden lamps. Spread incense of fragrant wood and lighted camphor in all directions. Forget your worldly worries and meditate. Truly, you shall attain rapturous Liberation."

Disciple: Can you speak for a moment on what part the guru plays in this process?

Gurudeva: It is said in our Hindu scriptures that it is necessary to have a guru. However, it is also possible for an individual to accomplish all of this himself without a guru. Possible, but most difficult and exceedingly rare. There may be four or five in a hundred years, or less. Scriptures explain that perhaps in past lives such a soul would have been well-disciplined by some guru and is helped inwardly by God in this life. With rare exceptions, a guru is necessary to guide the aspirant on the path as far as he is willing and able to go in his current incarnation. Few will

reach the Ultimate. The guru is needed because the mind is cunning and the ego is a self-perpetuating mechanism. It is unable and unwilling to transcend itself by itself. Therefore, one needs the guidance of another who has gone through the same process, who has faithfully followed the path to its natural end and therefore can gently lead us to God within ourselves. Remember, the Sat Guru will keep you on the path, but you have to walk the path yourself.

Disciple: Can you say more about the guru/disciple relationship, how it helps the seeker to know God?

Gurudeva: All gurus differ one from another depending on their paramparai, their lineage, as well as on their individual nature, awakening and attainments. Basically, the only thing that a guru can give you is yourself to yourself. That is all, and this is done in many ways. The guru would only be limited by his philosophy which outlines the ultimate attainment and by his own experience. He cannot take you where he has not himself been. It is the guru's job to inspire, to assist, to guide and sometimes even impel the disciple to move a little further toward the Self of himself than he has been able to go by himself.

It is the disciple's duty to understand the sometimes subtle guidance offered by the guru, to take the suggestions and make the best use of them in fulfilling the sadhana given. Being with a guru is an intensification on the path of enlightenment - always challenging, for growth is a challenge to the instinctive mind. If guru does not provide this intensification, we could relegate him to more of a philosophical teacher. Not all gurus are Sat Gurus. Not all gurus have realized God themselves.

The idea is to change the patterns of life, not to perpetuate them. That would be the only reason one would want to find a guru. Otherwise, he is little more than another part of the bondage that keeps the seeker from his goal of Siva Jnana.

Some teachers will teach ethics. Others will teach philosophy, language, worship and scriptures. Some will teach by example, by an inner guidance, others will teach from books. Some will be silent while others will lecture and have classes. Some will be orthodox, while others may not. The form of the teaching is not the most essential matter. What matters is that there be a true and fully realized Sat Guru, that there be a true and fully dedicated disciple. Under such conditions, spiritual

progress will be swift and certain, though not necessarily easy.

Of course, in our tradition the siddhars have always taught of Siva and only Siva. They have taught the Saiva Dharma which seeks to serve and know Siva in three ways: as Personal Lord and Creator of all that exists; as Existence, Knowledge and Bliss, the Love that flows through all form; and finally as the timeless, formless, causeless Self of all.

Disciple: What is the enlightened man like? How does he experience life from his realized state that is different from how we experience life?

Gurudeva: When we go to school, we are expected to learn our lessons and then to graduate. Having graduated, we are expected to enter society, take a position comparable to our level of education. We are expected to know more when we leave than when we entered, and we naturally do. When we perform sadhana, we are expected to mature inwardly, to grow and to discipline ourselves. And in fact we do become a better, more productive, more compassionate, more refined person.

But when we perform yoga, we are expected to go within, in and in, deep within ourselves, deep within the mind. If yoga is truly performed, we graduate with knowledge based on personal experience, not on what someone else has said. We then take our place among the jnanis - the wise ones who know and who know what they know - to uplift others with understanding in sadhana and in yoga.

In other words, the practice of yoga well-performed produces the jnani. The yogi has the same experiences, if he is successful, and comes out with the same independent knowledge which when reviewed corresponds perfectly with what other jnanis discovered and taught as the outcome of their yogic practices. This kind of knowledge surpasses all other knowing and is the basis of all Hindu scriptures. The jnani is a rare soul, a highly evolved soul. He speaks of Truth from his experience of it and gives it a personal touch. As Ramakrishna said, you go into yourself a fool but through the practices of yoga you come out a wise man. That is the jnani - the knower of the Unknowable.

Disciple: Is there any difference between a realized yogi and a jnani? Does one become a jnani the moment he realizes God?

Gurudeva: The yogi who is in the process of yoga, who has not graduated to God-realization, is not yet a jnani, though he has all kinds of realizations along the way, some sustained, others yet to be sustained. The yogi is seeking, striving, changing, unfolding, trying with all his heart to become, to know his ultimate goal. When the merger has become complete, when two have become one, he is no longer a yogi, he is a jnani. When the student graduates from college, he is no longer a student, he is a graduate. The merger of which I speak is Parasivam, to be experienced by the sannyasin who has turned from the world and into himself.

There is yet another realization which can be described as experiencing God Siva as Satchidananda, as light and love and consciousness. This also may be achieved through yoga. Family people can attain this second state through diligent effort. It is even attainable through the use of drugs. When one experiences this expanded state of being, this cosmic consciousness, he comes back knowing he has had a fantastic experience, but no jnana persists for he has yet to attain the Ultimate.

Disciple: Even so, can there be a practice of yoga which is not related to any particular form of God or any particular name, like Siva or Vishnu? I mean, could a member of another religion just take the pure yoga practices and use them to help with the inner, spiritual quest?

Gurudeva: Unfortunately, in some but not all of the Christian/Judaic sects, the fear of God is prevalent. The distinction between good and bad, heaven and hell, is predominant, causing fears, apprehension and deep mental conflict. Hence, this psychological set-up is not conducive to the practice of yoga, for it arbitrates against the very idea of oneness of man and god which the yogi seeks. Those who have been so indoctrinated often try to meditate but necessarily do not succeed in its deepest attainments because of subconscious barriers placed there by a dualistic philosophy.

In order to really meditate to the depth of contemplation and not merely to quiet mind and emotion and feel a little serenity, you have to be a member of a religion that gives the hope of non-dual union with God, that teaches that God is within

man only to be realized. Meditation, if it is to lead to jnana, must begin with a belief that there is no intrinsic evil and encompass the truth of karma, that we are responsible for our own actions. Such meditation must be undertaken by a member of a religion that gives a hope of a future life, and does not threaten failure with eternal suffering should failure be the result. Such meditation is possible, in fact required, of those who follow the Hindu Dharma. Hence, the practice of yoga is the highest pinnacle within our most ancient faith.

If you go through the entire Holy Scriptures of Saivism, you will not find our saints singing hymns to Buddha or Jesus or Jehova. Our Saints told us to worship God Siva, the Supreme God, to worship Ganesha first before worshipping Siva, to worship Lord Muruga.

In the old days, there were millions of Siva temples from the north to the south of India. Everyone was of one mind, worshipping Siva together, singing His praises with a one voice. As a result, India was unified. It was then the wealthiest nation in the world. The worship of Siva will give you wealth. The worship of Siva will give you health. The worship of Siva will give you knowledge. The worship of Siva will fill your heart with love and compassion.

The Saiva Samayam is the greatest religion in the world. The Saiva Samayam is the oldest religion in the world. The Saiva Samayam has yoga. It has great temples, great pundits, rishis and scriptures. All the saints, who sang the songs of Siva, told us how to worship Siva and how we should live our Saivite lives. We must all follow those instructions. In singing those songs to Siva, Siva will give you everything that you ask for. He will give you everything that you ask for because Siva is the God of Love. Our saints have sung that Siva is within us, and we are within Siva. Knowing that, fear and worry and doubt are forever gone from our mind.

We only see opposites when our vision is limited, when we have not experienced totally. There is a point of view which resolves all contradictions and answers all questions. Yet to be experienced is yet to be understood. Once experienced and understood, the Quiet comes. The karmas are quiet. This is the arduous path of charya, kriya and yoga resulting in jnana. This is the path of not only endeavoring to unfold the higher nature but, at the same time and toward the same end, dealing positively and consciously with the remnants of the lower nature. Following this spiritual path, we find ourselves effortlessly replacing charity for greed and dealing with, rather than merely suppressing the instinctive feelings of jealousy,

hatred, desire and anger.

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