

CHAPTER XVI

JNANA, BHAKTI AND KARMA¹

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I

PATH OF KNOWLEDGE

What is Jnana Yoga?

732. **Jnana Yoga** is communion with God by means of knowledge. The Jnani's object is to realise **Brahman**, the Absolute. He says "Not this," "Not this" and thus leaves out of account one unreal thing after another until he gets to a point where all **Vichara** (discrimination) between the real and the unreal ceases, and **Brahman** is realised in **Samadhi**.

733. A thief enters a dark room and feels the various articles therein. He lays his hand upon a table perhaps, and saying "Not this" passes on. Next he comes upon some other article—a chair, perhaps—and again saying "Not this" continues his search, till, leaving article after article, he finally lays his hand-on the box containing the treasure. Then he exclaims, "It. is here!" and there his search ends. Such, indeed, is the search for **Brahman**.

734. I have seen that the knowledge derived by reasoning is of quite a different kind from the knowledge derived through meditation; and quite different from this again is the Knowledge that dawns by His revelation.

735. Knowledge (**Jnana**) varies in degree and kind from person to person. There is first the **Jnana** or insight of men of the world-ordinary mortals. This knowledge is not sufficiently powerful. It may be compared to the flame of a lamp which illumines only the interior of a room. The **Jnana** of a **Bhakta** (**devotee**) is a stronger light. It may be compared to the light of the **moon** which reveals things both inside and outside a room. But the **Jnana** of the **Avatara** is still more powerful, and may be likened to the sun. He is the sun of Divine knowledge whose light dispels the accumulated ignorance of ages.

Method of Jnana Yoga

736.. If a man knows his own self, he knows other beings and God. What is my ego? Is it my hand or foot, flesh or blood, muscle or tendon? Ponder deeply, and you will know that there is no such thing as'!. As you peel off the skin of an onion, you find it consists only of skin; you cannot find any kernel in it. So too on analysing the ego, you will find that there is no real entity that you can call'!. Such an analysis of the ego convinces one that the ultimate substance is God alone. When egotism drops away, Divinity manifests Itself.

737. So long as God seems to be outside and far away, there is ignorance. But when God is realised within, there is true Knowledge.

738. Pointing to the heart, the **Master** used to say: "He who has God here, has Him also there (pointing to the external world). He, who does not find God within himself, will never find Him outside of himself. But he who sees Him in the temple of his own soul, sees Him also in the temple of the universe."

739. A man woke up at midnight and desired to smoke. Therefore he wanted some fire, for which he went to a neighbour's house and knocked at the door. Someone opened the door and asked him what he wanted. The man said: "I wish to smoke. Can you give me a little fire?" The neighbour replied: "Bah! What is the matter with you? You have taken so much trouble to come and awaken us at this hour, while in your own hand you have a lighted lantern!" What man wants is already within him but he still wanders here and there searching .for it.

740. Reasoning is of two kinds-Anuloma and Viloma. By the Anuloma process man rises from the contemplation of the creation to the Creator, in other words" from the effect to the First Cause. Then the Viloma process of reasoning commences. Having attained God, man learns to see His manifestation in every part or act of creation. One process is analytical and the other is synthetical. The former is like the peeling off of the successive layers of the plantain trunk till one reaches the pith within. The latter is like laying these layers one over another.

741. Knowledge leads to unity; ignorance to diversity.

742. To a young disciple who was much pre-occupied with the study of books on **Vedanta**, the **Master** said one day: "Well my boy, are you not nowadays deeply engaged in inquiring into the mysteries of **Vedanta**? Very good. **Brahman** is real and the world is unreal-is this not the one teaching that forms the purport of all Vedantic studies? Is it anything more than this?" The young man admitted that it was the whole of the teaching. The Master's words shed for him quite anew light on the truth of **Vedanta**. The words filled him with wonder. He saw that in fact, if one could have a firm conviction of this truth one would understand everything of **Vedanta**. The **Master** went on with his exposition: "Hearing, inquiry and meditation. That **Brahman** is real and the world is unreal, is first to be heard. Then comes inquiry; for the truth of what is heard is firmly established by reasoning. The next step is meditation; that is, withdrawing the mind from the unreal world and concentrating it on **Brahman**, the Real. This is the order of Vedantic discipline. If, on the other hand, the Truth is heard and understood intellectually but no attempt is made to renounce the unreal, of what use is that knowledge? Such knowledge is like that of the men of the world, and does not help one to attain the Truth. Firm conviction and renunciation-these are the necessary things. With these alone can one realise the Truth. Or else a person may profess in mere words that the world is unreal and non-existent, and that **Brahman** alone is existent; but the moment sense-objects--colour, taste and the rest-appear before him, he takes them to be real and gets entangled just like a man who verbally asserts that there are no thorns, but bursts out screaming as soon as his hand comes in contact with a thorn and gets pricked. Once a **Sadhu** came to the **Panchavati**. He used to talk much **Vedanta** before others. One day I heard that he had, illicit connection with a woman. After a while, when I went that side, I found him sitting there, and I said, 'You talk so glibly about **Vedanta**; but what is all this they talk about you? 'What of that?' he replied, 'I shall show you that there is no harm in it. If the whole world is unreal at all times, how can my fall alone be real? That also is equally unreal.' I said in utter disgust, 'I spit on such knowledge of **Vedanta**! It is not real Knowledge but a mere sham, falsely professed by the worldly-minded, by wiseacres with gross worldly attachment'."

Difficulties of Jnana Yoga

743. **Jnana Yoga** is exceedingly difficult in this age of **Kali**. In the first place, our life in this age depends entirely upon food (**Annagataprana**). Secondly, the term of human life now is much too short for this purpose. Thirdly, it is almost impossible in this age to get rid of the illusion that the Self is one with the body (**Dehatmabuddhi**), which clings to us. Now the conclusion which the **Jnani** must come to is: "I am not the body, I am one with the Universal Soul, the Absolute and Unconditioned Being." "As I am not the body, I am not subject to the conditions of the body, such as hunger, thirst, birth, death, disease and the rest." One subject to these physical conditions and yet calling oneself a **Jnani**, is like a person who is suffering from intense pain caused by a thorn that has run into his hand and who nevertheless says, "Why, my hand is not at all scratched or torn. It is all right." This kind of talk will not do. First of all the 'thorn' of body-consciousness has to be burnt into ashes by the fire of **Jnana**.

744. Very few persons are fit for the attainment of **Jnana**. The **Gita** declares: "One among thousands desires to know Him, and even among thousands of those who are desirous to know, one perhaps can actually know Him." The less one's attachment to the world, *i.e.*, for 'woman and gold', the more will be one's **Jnana** (knowledge of God).

745. The **Jnana Yogi** says, "I am He." But as long as one has the idea of the Self as body, this egotism is injurious. It does not help one's progress, and it brings about one's ruin. Such a person deceives himself and others.

746. A certain **Brahmachari** (religious aspirant) named **Ramachandra** one day visited **Sri Ramakrishna** at the temple of **Dakshineswar**. The aspirant had allowed his hair to grow into long matted tresses after the way of ascetics. Having taken his seat, he began to exclaim from time to time, "Sivoham! Sivoham!" (I am the Lord **Siva**!), but was dumb otherwise. **Sri Ramakrishna** observed him silently for some time and then remarked: "What is the good of merely repeating the word 'Sivoham'? It is only when one, by perfect meditation on the Lord in the temple of one's heart, has lost all idea of self and realised the Lord **Siva** within, that one is entitled to utter this sacred word. What good can the mere repetition of the formula do without the realisation? So long as the stage of realisation is not reached, it is better to regard the Lord as the **Master** and oneself as His humble servant." The aspirant came to see his mistake, and became wiser by this advice and other similar teachings. Before he left the place, he wrote down on the wall of **Sri Ramakrishna's** room: "Taught by the **Swami**, from this day forward **Ramachandra Brahmachari** regards the Lord as his **Master** and himself as His humble servant."

II PATH OF LOVE

Bhakti and the Conditions of its Growth

747. Nothing can be impressed on smooth glass, but when the surface is coated with proper chemicals, pictures can be impressed upon it, as in photography. In the same way, on the human heart coated with the chemicals of **Bhakti**, the image of Divinity can be impressed.

748. It is a rare thing—this love of God. **Bhakti** can arise only when there is whole-hearted devotion to God like the devotion of a chaste wife to her husband. Pure **Bhakti** is very difficult to obtain. Through **Bhakti** the mind and soul must be absorbed in God. Then comes **Bhava** (the higher form of **Bhakti**). In **Bhava** a man becomes speechless, his breath is stilled and the **Kumbhaka** (suspension of breath in **Yoga** practice) sets in of itself, just as, when one shoots at an aim, one becomes speechless and the breath is stopped.

749. Devotion to God increases in the same proportion as attachment to the objects of the senses decreases.

750. Verily these customers (worldly men) seek for Kalai pulse, (a worthless commodity, *i.e.*, sensuous enjoyments). It is given to pure souls alone, uncontaminated by the world, to love God and to have a single aim, namely, to have the mind fixed wholly upon the Lord.

751. Unless one screens the eyes of unbroken horses, they will not move a single step. Is it possible to realise God unless one's passions have already been controlled? In a sense not. But that is true only of **Jnana Yoga**, the path of Knowledge. The knowing one says, "One must first be pure if he desires to see God. One must first control one's passions. First self-discipline, then knowledge of God." There is, however, another path leading to God—the path of devotion (**Bhakti Yoga**). If once man gains love of God, if once the chanting of His holy 'name' begins to thrill the devotee with joy, what effort is needed for the control of passions afterwards? The control comes of itself. Can a man suffering from intense grief be in a mood to enter into a quarrel, or to enjoy a feast, or to give his mind up to the pleasures of the senses? So one absorbed in the love of God cannot think of sense-pleasures.

752. As **Srimati (Radha)** was nearing **Sri Krishna**, she was feeling more and more the fragrance of his hallowed person. The more one approaches God, the more becomes one's love of Him; the nearer the river approaches the sea, the more is it subject to ebb and flow.

753. On one occasion the **Master** said to **Keshab** and his followers with regard to their mode of worship: "Why do you dwell upon the glory and powers of the Lord so much? Does the son, seated in front of the father, think, 'My father has so many houses, so many horses and cows, so many gardens and orchards'? Or, does he think fondly how very, very dear his father has been to him, and how much he has been loving him? Is it anything strange that a father feeds and clothes his children and makes their life happy? We are all the children of God, and His protecting care has ensured our safety. What is there in it to wonder at? Therefore a real devotee of the Lord, instead of indulging in such thoughts, enters into the most intimate relation with the Lord, makes Him his own, teases Him with importunities, takes pride in Him, and presses Him with the entreaty: 'You must fulfill my prayer and reveal Yourself to me.' If you reflect upon His glorious majesty so much, it won't be possible to think of Him as your own or as one close to you; nor will it be possible for you then to press and compel Him. How great He is! How far removed from us! Such thoughts alone will come to you. Consider Him your own as much as you can, and then you will get Him."

754. You must make Him your own by firmly adhering to one particular attitude. Then only will He be compelled to yield to your prayers. As for example, when two persons are only superficially acquainted with each other, they observe all the rules of formality in their conversation. But with the growth of intimacy all formal terms of respect completely disappear, and they speak to each other in the most familiar language. Similarly we must have the closest relation with God. An unchaste woman in the beginning of her liaison feels extremely shy, proceeds with great apprehension and keeps her love affair a strict secret.

But when her love matures, all such feelings disappear. She then boldly leaves her hearth and home, and appears in public with her lover. If afterwards the lover does not take interest in her and wants to avoid her, she holds him by the neck and asks in a peremptory tone, "I have left my roof for your sake; now let me know whether you will provide for my maintenance or not!"

Bhakti and Worldly Love

755. J-'s mother grew old. She thought it was high time that she should retire from the world and spend the evening of her life peacefully in **Brindavan**. She expressed her intention to **Sri Ramakrishna**. But the **Master** knew the condition of her mind too well to endorse her proposal, and answered as follows: "You are very fond of your son's daughter. The thought of the child will force itself upon you and make you restless, wherever you go. You may live in **Brindavan** if you like, but your mind will always hover about your home. On the other hand, all the good of living in **Brindavan** will come of its own accord to you, if you cultivate the feeling of sweet affection for your grand daughter, in the thought that she is **Sri Radhika** herself. Fondle her just as much as you are wont to do; feed and dress her to your heart's content; but always think within yourself that through those acts you are offering your worship to the goddess of **Brindavan**."

756. Finding a certain **devotee** inordinately attached to one of his relatives and unable to steady his mind on that, account, the **Master** instructed him to look upon the object of his love as an image of God, and serve him in that attitude. In the course of explaining this point, sometimes the **Master** would thus refer to the similar views' of Vaishnavacharan: "Vaishnavacharan would hold, 'If one looks upon the beloved as the Chosen Deity, the mind easily turns Godward.' "

Effects of Bhakti

757. A **devotee**: Is it necessary, Sir, that one should first get one's senses controlled by right discrimination (**Vichara**) ?

The **Master**: Well, that is one path the path of right discrimination. In the path of **Bhakti**, self-control comes of itself-and it comes very easily. The more one's love of God increases, the more insipid become the pleasures of the senses, even as parents cannot think of physical enjoyment on the day they have lost a child.

758. Devotional practices are necessary only so long as tears of ecstasy do not flow at once on hearing the 'name' of **Hari**. He needs no devotional practices whose heart is moved to tears at the mere mention of the 'name' of God.

759. A poet has compared devotion (to God) to a tiger. As the tiger devours animals, devotion also swallows up all the 'arch-enemies' of man, such as lust, passion and the rest. Once the devotion to God is fully awakened, all evil passions like lust and anger are completely destroyed. The Gopis of **Brindavan** attained that state through their strong devotion to **Krishna**.

760. Devotion is compared to collyrium. **Srimati (Radha)** once declared, "Lo, friends, I see my **Krishna** everywhere!" To that the other Gopis replied, "You have applied the collyrium of Love to your eyes; hence you see so!"

761. Q, Why does a **Bhakta** forsake everything for the sake of God?

A. The insect flies from darkness as soon as it sees a light; the ant loses its life in the syrup without leaving it. So does the **Bhakta** cling to God for ever, and leaves all else.

762. The **Master**: Does the moth seek darkness once it has seen a light?

The doctor (smiling): Oh! it does not-it will rather rush into the flame and perish.

The **Master**: But such is not the case with the true worshipper of God. The Divine Light to which he is drawn does not burn and cause death. It is like the lustre of a gem, shining yet soft, cool and soothing. It burns not, but illumines the heart with peace and joy.

763. It may be that one does not know the right path and yet has **Bhakti** for God, the intense desire to know Him. Such a **devotee** gains Him through the sheer force of that **Bhakti**. There was a great **devotee** who started to see **Jagannath**, but not knowing the way to **Puri** (where the temple of **Jagannath** is situated), he went away from the city instead of going towards it. With an anxious heart he asked everybody he met on the way about the road. They all told him, "This is not the way; take that path." And the **devotee** reached **Puri** at last, and had his wish fulfilled. Thus even if one is ignorant of the path, one is sure to get somebody to show the path provided one has the will. One may err at first, but in the end one gets set 'on the right road.

764. Devotion effloresces into right discrimination, renunciation, love of all creatures, service to pious men, keeping company with the devoted, singing the praises of the Lord, truthfulness and other virtues.

765. There are sure signs of coming God-realisation. Know that there will be no more delay in a man's realising God when you see in him the efflorescence of devotion.

766. The magnetic rock under the sea attracts the ship sailing over it, draws out all its iron nails, separates plank from plank and sinks the vessel in the deep. In the same way when the human soul is attracted by the magnet that is God, that attraction destroys in a moment man's selfishness and sense of individuality, and plunges the soul into the ocean of God's Infinite love.

Stages and Aspects of Bhakti

767. Love is of three kinds: unselfish (Samartha), reciprocal (Samanjasa) and ordinary or selfish (Sadharana). Unselfish love is of the highest kind. The unselfish lover seeks only the welfare of the beloved, and does not care even if he suffers pain and hardship in consequence. The second kind of love is mutual love in which the lover desires not only the happiness of his beloved, but has an eye to his own happiness also. Selfish love is the lowest. It makes a man only care for his own happiness without having any regard for the weal or woe of the beloved.

768. As there are shades of **Sattva**, **Rajas** and **Tamas** in worldliness, so **Bhakti** has its corresponding aspects. There is one type of **Bhakti** that partakes of the humility of **Sattva**, another that is characterised by the ostentation of **Rajas**, and a third that is marked by the brute force of **Tamas**.

The **Sattvic devotee** performs his devotions in secret. He meditates in the night in his bed inside the mosquito curtain, and therefore rises late in the morning which is believed by his friends to be due to want of good sleep at night. The care he bestows on the body is just his providing it with plain food perhaps a little rice and vegetables. Of luxury he has none, either in food or in dress. There is no show of fittings and furniture in his house, and he never seeks to rise in the world through flattery.

The **Rajasic devotee** has perhaps distinctive sectarian marks on his body and a string of beads round his neck, with perhaps a few golden ones interspersed. He is particular about outward observances such as wearing silk at the time of worship and celebrating the worship of the Deity with pomp and splendour.

The **Tamasic devotee** has a fiery faith. He applies force to God like a robber seizing things by force. "What!" he says, "I have uttered His 'name' and yet I am to remain sinful! I am His son! I am duly entitled to the inheritance of His wealth!" Such is the vehemence in his ardour.

769. Q. What is the violent form of devotion?

A. It is becoming mad with the constant and terrific uttering of 'Jai Kali' (Glory to the Divine Mother), or dancing like a maniac with arms upraised and shouting praise of **Hari** (**Hari-bol**). In this iron age (**Kali Yuga**) the violent form of devotion is more suitable than other forms; it brings about speedier fruition than do milder forms of contemplation. The citadel of God must be taken by storm.

770. These are the stages of **Sadhana** (devotional practice) for the purification of the soul:

(1) **Sadhu-sanga** or the company of holy men; (2) **Sraddha** or faith in, and devotion to things relating to the Spirit; (3) **Nishtha** or single-minded devotion to one's ideal; (4) **Bhakti** or intense love of God; (5) **Bhava** or the state of speechless absorption in the thought of God; and (6) **Mahabhava** - When **Bhava** is intensified, it is called **Mahabhava**. The **devotee** sometimes laughs and sometimes weeps like a mad man. He has completely conquered the flesh and has no consciousness of his body. This stage is not generally attained by ordinary souls but is attained only by Mahapurushas or Incarnations of God. (7) **Prema** or the most intense love of God. This goes hand in hand with **Mahabhava**. The two marks of this stage are: first, forgetfulness of the world; second, forgetfulness of self, which includes one's own body. This brings the **devotee** face to face with God, and he thus attains the goal of life.

771. "This much of pious duty has been enjoined by the scriptures, so I am doing it" - this sort of attitude is called **Vaidhi-bhakti**. There is another kind of devotion known as **Raga-bhakti**, which comes through extreme love of God as was the case with **Prahlada**. When that **Raga-bhakti** comes it is no longer necessary to do the "enjoined works" (**Vaidhi-karma**).

772. There is the kind of **Bhakti** which is called **Vaidhi bhakti** (devotion as enjoined by the scriptures). Repeating the 'name' of God a certain number of times, fasting on certain occasions, making pilgrimages to certain shrines, worshipping with certain articles - these and other observances constitute **Vaidhi-bhakti**. Practice of this for a long time leads one to the higher aspect of devotion known as **Raga-bhakti**. Love is the one thing needful. Worldly ideas must be discarded completely; the mind should be set on Him "in all its sixteen annas" (*i.e.*, wholly) and only then you can reach Him. Without **Raga-bhakti** one cannot attain Him.

773. Love of God is of two kinds: First, the **Bhakti** which is enjoined by the scriptures. We are to worship in a certain way or repeat the 'name' of the Lord so many times, and so on. All this belongs to what

is known as **Vaidhi-bhakti**, *i.e.*, devotion according to the Law. It may lead to pure devotion and Knowledge of the Absolute in **Samadhi**. The self is then merged in the Universal Soul, never to come back. This is the case with ordinary devotees. But quite different is the case with Divine Incarnations and those that are the Lord's own. Their love of God is not made up of mere scriptural formulas. It springs from within. It wells up from the soul. Divine Incarnations (like **Sri Chaitanya**) and those that are nearest to Him, have within their reach the Knowledge of the Absolute attainable in **Samadhi**, and at the same time they may come down from that height, retaining their self and loving the Lord as Father, Mother, and so on. Saying, 'Not this,' 'Not this,' they leave behind them the steps of the staircase one after another until they get to the roof. Reaching there, they say, 'It is this.' But soon they find out that the staircase is made up of the same materials as the roof itself-brick, lime and brick-dust. So they walk up and down, resting sometimes on the roof and sometimes on the steps; of the staircase.

The roof symbolises the Absolute realised in **Samadhi**, in which the self responding to the sense-world is blotted out. The staircase is the phenomenal world, the world of name and form. When one has attained that roof of **Samadhi**, one sees the world as a manifestation to the human senses, of the Absolute.

Prema or Para-Bhakti (Ecstatic Love)

774. **Prema** or ecstatic Love comes not before the realisation of God.

775. In the Persian books it is written that within the flesh are the bones, within the bones is the marrow" and so on, and within them all is **Prema**.

776. **Prema** is like a string in the hands of the ,devotee, with which he binds to himself that Sachchidananda *viz.*, God. The devotee holds the Lord, so to speak, under his control. God comes to him whenever he calls.

777. The stage of devotion called **Bhava** (speechless absorption in God) is like an unripe mango; **Prema** or ecstatic Love is like the ripe fruit.

778. The worship from fear of hell-fire and the like is intended for the beginner. Some people look upon the sense of sin as the whole of religion. They forget that it marks only the earliest and the lowest stage of spirituality. There is yet a higher ideal, a higher stage of spirituality, *viz.*, the loving of God as our own Father or Mother.

779. What is Para-**bhakti** or the supreme ecstatic love of God? In the stage of ecstatic Love the worshipper contemplates God as his dearest and nearest relative. It is like the love of the Gopis for Lord **Krishna**. They always knew Him and addressed Him as the Lord of the Gopis and not as the Lord of the universe.

780. There is such a thing as loving God without knowing why. If this is attained, there is nothing more to desire. One endowed with such **Bhakti** says, "O Lord, I do not want riches, fame, health, happiness or anything else. Grant that I may have pure devotion to Thy **lotus** feet!"

781. The two characteristics of **Prema** are: (1) forgetfulness of the external world; (2) forgetfulness of one's own body.

782. There are two elements in this **Prema-bhakti**, *viz.*, 'I-ness' and 'my-ness' (*i.e.*, 'I am the devotee and my God is wholly mine'). **Yasoda** used to think that except herself none else could look after her **Gopala**; but for her care, her **Gopala** would fall ill. **Yasoda** never liked to perceive her **Krishna** as the Lord of the universe. And the 'my-ness' of the devotee makes him feel, "He is mine, my own; he is my **Gopala**!" **Uddhava** said to **Yasoda**, "Mother, your **Krishna** is the Lord Himself. He is the **Chintamani** (the wish yielding gem) of the whole universe. He is not an ordinary person." To that **Yasoda** replied, "No, no, I am not asking about your **Chintamani**, I am asking how my **Gopala** is. Not **Chintamani**, but my **Gopala**!"

783. **Prema** or ecstatic Love is attainable only by a few. These few are men of extraordinary powers, entrusted with a Divine commission. Being heirs to Divine powers and glory, they form a class of their own. To this class belong Incarnations of God like **Chaitanya Deva** and their devotees of the highest order, who are parts of the Lord.

784. There are a few who have this ecstatic Love inherent in them, perhaps even from their boyhood. Yes, like **Prahlada** they weep and long for God even in their childhood. They belong to the class of Nityasiddhas or men perfect from their very birth.

Love of the Gopis

785. It is immaterial whether one believes or not that **Radha** and **Krishna** were Incarnations of God. One may believe (like the Hindu or the Christian) in God's Incarnation. Or one may not believe (like the modern Brahmos) in His assuming form, human or otherwise. But let all have a yearning for this Anuraga or intense love for the Lord. This intense Love is the one thing needful.

786. Speaking about the Gopis' love of God, the **Master** said to M., one of his disciples: "How wonderful was the intensity of their Love! At the very sight of the **Tamala** tree, they were seized with the madness of Love (Premonmada). (For the dark colour of the **Tamala** tree reminded them of **Sri Krishna**). This was also the case with **Gauranga**. Looking at a forest before him, he thought it was **Brindavan**. Oh! If one is favoured with but a particle of this ecstatic love! What devotion! This devotion the Gopis had, not only full to the brim but in overflowing super abundance."

787. The unflinching devotion (**Nishtha**) of the Gopis is

wonderful. When the Gopis went to see **Krishna** in Mathura they got admission into the audience chamber after begging the sentinel at the gate several times. But when they saw **Krishna** there, with a turban on, they bent their heads and began to whisper among themselves, "Who is this turbaned man? We won't talk with him lest we should be culpable of infidelity to our **Krishna**. Dh, where is our Lord, that supremely Beloved, who wears yellow cloth and a crest of peacock tail!" Ah! mark the single-hearted devotion of the Gopis.

788. The devotion of the Gopis is **Prema-bhakti** (devotion of ecstatic Love). It is also called absolutely constant devotion (**Avyabhicharini-bhakti**), or passionate devotion (**Nishtha-bhakti**). And what is inconstant devotion (**Vyabhicharini-bhakti**)? It is devotion blended with knowledge; for instance, the knowledge, that **Krishna** has become all, that He is the supreme **Brahman**, that He is Rama, **Siva** and **Sakti**, that He is the Divine Energy, etc. But you will not find this element of knowledge mixed up in ecstatic Love. When **Hanuman** went to Dvaraka, he said that he would see only **Sita** and Rama. So Lord **Krishna** asked **Rukmini** to assume the form of **Sita**, for otherwise **Hanuman** would not be satisfied. When the Pandavas celebrated the great **Rajasuya** sacrifice, Yudhishtira was seated on the throne and all the kings prostrated before him, but Vibhishana among them said that he would not prostrate to anybody save **Narayana**. So the Lord Himself began to prostrate before Yudhishtira, whereupon Vibhishana, too, did obeisance to Yudhishtira, falling flat and touching the ground with his crowned head.

Viraha and Mahabhava

789. Oh! immense is the suffering that arises from Viraha or the feeling of separation from God. It is said that when **Rupa and Sanatana**¹ used to sit under a tree in such a state, the very leaves would get scorched! I was almost unconscious for three days while in that state! I could not move, I lay in one spot. When I would become a little conscious, the **Brahmani**² would take me to bathe, but she would not touch my skin. My whole body was covered with a thick cloth, and she held me by placing her hands over the cloth: The earth with which the body was smeared got burnt! When that state came, I used to feel as if a big spear had been passed through my spine. I would cry-out at times that I was dying. But it was always followed by an intense beatific feeling

790. **Mahabhava** is the supreme God-consciousness; it brings about a terrible commotion in both the body and the mind, as when a mighty -elephant enters a small hut and shakes it furiously, sometimes even breaking it to pieces. There is as much bliss after that state, as there is suffering before it.

BHAKTI AND JNANA

Bhakti and Jnana the same in the end

791. Pure Knowledge and pure Love are both one and the same.

792. The same Being whom the Vedantins call **Brahman**, is called **Atman** by the Yogis and **Bhagavan** by the Bhaktas. The same **Brahman** is called priest when he conducts worship, and cook when he is employed in the kitchen.

793. What is **Jnana** (Knowledge) in the highest sense? Says the **Jnani**, "O Lord, Thou alone dost act in all this universe. I am but the smallest of tools in Thy hands. Nothing is mine. Everything is Thine. Myself, my family, my riches, my virtues-all are Thine."

794. A **devotee**: How can one know that one has attained **Jnana**, even while leading a family life?

The **Master**: By the tears and the thrill of the hair at the name of **Hari**. When, at the very mention of the sweet 'name' of the Lord, tears trickle down from a person's eyes and his hairs stand on end, truly he has attained **Jnana**.

795. Here is a Puranic story which reconciles **Jnana** and **Bhakti**. Once **Ramachandra**, God-incarnate, said to his great **devotee Hanuman**, "My son, tell Me in what relation you regard Me, and how you meditate upon Me." **Hanuman** replied: "O Rama, at times I worship Thee as Purna, the undivided one. Then I look upon myself as an Amsa, a part, a fragment as it were, of Divinity. At other times I meditate upon Thee, O

Rama, as my Divine **Master** and think of myself only as Thy servant. When, however, I am blessed, O Rama, with Tattva **Jnana**, or true Knowledge, I realise that I am Thou and Thou art I."

796. If the-scum on the surface of a tank is pushed aside a little, it spreads out again covering the water, but if it is well kept away with bamboo frames, it cannot come back any more. So if **Maya** is forced back merely once in a way, it comes again to trouble us; but when the heart is hedged in with **Bhakti** and **Jnana**, it is permanently kept away. Indeed, it is only thus that God becomes manifest to human vision.

How **Bhakti** leads to **Jnana**

797. Knowledge of Non-duality is 'the highest; but God should be worshipped first as a **master** is worshipped by his servant, as the adored by the adorer. This is the easiest path; it soon leads to the highest knowledge of unity.

798. Though the non-dualistic Knowledge is the highest, you should proceed in your devotion first with the idea of the worshipper and the worshipped (*i.e.*, with the feeling, "God is the object of worship and I am his worshipper"); then you will easily attain Knowledge.

799. **Brahman** Itself sheds tears of grief, being caught in the trap of the five elements. You may close your eyes and convince yourself saying again and again, "There is no thorn, there is no thorn." But the moment you touch it, you feel the prick, and you draw your hand away in pain. Likewise, however much you may reason within yourself that you are beyond birth and death, virtue and vice, joy and sorrow, hunger and thirst-that you are the immutable **Atman**, the Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute-nevertheless, the moment the body is subject to ailments or the mind encounters the temptations of the world and is overwhelmed by the transient pleasures of wealth and sex, and in consequence you happen to commit sin, you become subject to delusion, pain and misery-become deprived of discrimination and good conduct, and get overwhelmed by utter perplexity. Know therefore that none can have Self-realisation and liberation from all miseries unless God Himself shows mercy to him, and **Maya** unbars the door. Have you not heard it stated in the **Chandi**, "This same Goddess, the bestower of boons, when propitiated, removes the bondage of human beings." Nothing can be achieved unless the Divine Mother removes the obstacles from the path. The aspirant can never realise God unless **Maya** takes pity on him, and moves aside from his path. The moment She bestows Her mercy on the aspirant, he becomes blessed with the vision of God and escapes from all miseries. Otherwise, however much you may go on with your discrimination and other spiritual practices, they will be of little use. They say that each grain of Ajowan (Ptychotis) helps one to digest a hundred grains of rice. But when the digestive organ goes out of order, even a hundred grains of Ajowan cannot make one assimilate a single grain of rice.

800. The Juana **Yogi** longs to realise **Brahman**-God the Impersonal, the Absolute and the Unconditioned. But, as a general rule, a soul would do better, in this present age, to love, pray and surrender himself entirely to God. The Lord will save His **devotee** and will vouchsafe to him even **Brahma-jnana** if the **devotee** hungers and thirsts after it. Thus the **Jnana Yogi** will attain **Jnana** as well as **Bhakti**. It will be given to him to realise **Brahman**; the Lord willing, he will also realise the Personal God of the **Bhakta**. The **Bhakta**, on the other hand, is generally content to see and realise the Personal God, the **Saguna Brahman** of the **Upanishads**. Yet the Lord makes him heir to His infinite glory and grants him **Bhakti** as well as **Jnana**, and the realisation of God, Personal as well as Impersonal. For if a man can manage to reach Calcutta, can he not succeed in finding his way to the **Maidan**, the Ochterlony Monument, the Museum and other objects of interest, and know which is which?

801. Q, Does a **devotee** ever attain to the state of absolute union with GOG? If so, how?

A. It is possible for the human soul to attain the condition of absolute union with God; and it is then only that a person can feel and say, "He is the same as myself." An old servant of the house, in course of time, may come to be counted as one of the family, and the **master** of the house, being extremely pleased with his work, may one day seat him in his own seat of honour, saying to all around him that from that day forward there will be no difference between him and the servant. The **master** may say, "He and I are one; obey his commands as you do mine. Whosoever will not do so will be punished." Though the servant may hesitate through modesty to be thus honoured, the **master** will by force raise him *to* the seat of honour. Such is the condition of those souls who realise the state of oneness with God by serving Him for a long time. He graciously endows them with all His glory and attributes, and raises them to His own seat of universal sovereignty.

802. The **Bhakta**, as a rule, does not long for **Brahma jnana** (the realisation of the Impersonal), but remains content with realising the Divine Person alone-my Divine Mother, or any of Her infinite forms of glory, such as the Divine Incarnations like **Sri Krishna** and **Chaitanya Deva**, the visible revelations of God.

He is anxious to ensure that the whole of his ego is not effaced in **Samadhi**. He would fain have sufficient individuality left to enjoy the vision Divine as a Person. He would fain taste sugar, rather than become sugar!

803. My Divine Mother (the personal phase of **Brahman**) has declared that She is the **Brahman** of the **Vedanta**. It is within Her power to give **Brahma-jnana**, which she does by causing the effacement of the lower self. Thus, in the first place, you may, my Mother willing, come to **Brahman** through right discrimination (**Vichara**). Again you may come to it through **Bhakti**. The essence of **Bhakti** consists in unceasing prayer for light and love, and self-surrender to Her. First, come to my Divine Mother (the Personal God) through these. Take my word for it that, if your prayer is really heartfelt, my Mother will respond to it, if you will only wait. Pray to Her again if you want to realise Her Impersonal Self. Should She deign to grant your prayer for She is omnipotent-you will be in a position to realise Her Impersonal Self in **Samadhi**. This is precisely the same thing as **Brahma-jnana**.

Difference in the Temperaments of the Jnani and the Bhakta

804. One meets with two classes of spiritual aspirants. One of them resembles the young of a monkey and the other may be likened to a kitten. The young one of the monkey strongly clasps its mother_ while the young one of the cat cannot do so, but mews piteously, staying wherever it is placed by her. If the young monkey lets go the hold on its mother, it falls down and gets hurt. This is because it has to depend upon its own strength. But the kitten runs no such risk, for the mother herself carries it about from place to place. Similarly, the aspirant who follows the path of Knowledge or the path of selfless work depends upon his own effort to attain salvation. On the other hand, the aspirant who follows the path of Love knows that the Lord is the disposer of everything; so with perfect confidence he resigns himself entirely to His mercy. The former is like the young of a monkey and the latter like the kitten.

805. The **Jnani** says, "I am He, I am that pure **Atman**;" but the **Bhakta** declares, "Ah, all these are His glory!"

806. God is attained only when man gets established in one or other of these three attitudes: (1) All this am I; (2) All this art Thou; (3) Thou art the **Master** and I am the servant.

807. When a person is born of the spirit of **Siva**, he becomes a **Jnani**. His constant tendency is towards the consciousness that **Brahman** alone is true and this world is false. But when a person is born of the spirit of **Vishnu**, in him faith and devotion never fail. Even if, for a time, these virtues shrink by the strong influx of reason or dialectic knowledge, in the fulness of time they increase copiously like the **Musala** (a pestle) that brought ruin to the **Yadava** dynasty.

808. The **Ganges** of Knowledge, flowing in the heart of a **Jnani**, runs only in one direction. To him the whole universe is a dream. He always lives in his own Self. But the **Ganges** of Love in: a devotee's heart does not always run in the same direction; it has its ebb and flow. The **devotee** laughs, weeps, dances and sings. He loves to live in and enjoy God's presence; in that ocean of bliss he loves to cast himself, sometimes swimming, sometimes sinking, and again floating, as a block of ice dances in water, tossing up and down.

809. According to the **Puranas**, the **devotee** is separate from God. Man is one entity and He is another. This body is like a vessel; the mind, the intellect and "the ego are, as it were, the water in it; and **Brahman** is like the sun. He is being reflected in that water. So the devotees witness the various Divine manifestations. But according to the **Vedanta**, **Brahman** alone is the reality, the substance; and everything else is **Maya**, unreal like dreams. There is this stick of 'I' lying on the surface of the sea of **Brahman**. If you take away the stick, there is one undivided sheet of water; but when the stick is there, it divides the water into two parts, one on each side. When one falls into **Samadhi** the knowledge of **Brahman** dawns. Then the ego is blotted out. According to the **Vedanta** the waking state also is not real.

810. **Narada** and other teachers took to **Bhakti** for the good of the world, even after gaining Knowledge.

811. The **Master: Bhakti** is the **moon**, while **Jnana** is the sun. I have heard that there are oceans in the extreme north and south, where it is so cold that the waters in them freeze in part, forming masses of ice in which ships are caught and held fast.

A **devotee**: Are men likewise caught half-way in the path of **Bhakti** ?

The **Master**: Yes, they are, indeed. But it matters nothing; for the ice in which one is held is the solidified water of the ocean of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. If you reason, "**Brahman** alone is real, the universe is false," the ice will thaw in the sun of **Jnana**, and what will remain? Only the formless water of that ocean of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss.

812. **Jnana** is like a man and **Bhakti** is like a woman. Knowledge has entry only up to the drawing-room of God, but Love can enter His inner apartments.

813. A **Jnani** and a **Bhakta** were once passing through a forest. On the way they saw a tiger. The **Jnani** said: "There is no reason why we should flee; the Almighty God will certainly protect us." The **Bhakta** said: "No, brother, no, let us run away. Why should we trouble the Lord when we can accomplish a thing by our own exertion?"

IV PATH OF WORK What is **Karma Yoga**?

814. **Karma Yoga** is communion with God by means of Work. Ashtanga **Yoga** or Raja **Yoga** is also **Karma Yoga**, if practised without attachment. It leads to communion through meditation and concentration. The performance of the duties of householders (*i.e.*, self-regarding as well as altruistic work, social and political)-doing them without attachment to the end that God may be glorified-is **Karma Yoga**. Again, worship according to the scriptures, silent repetition of the 'name' of God and other pious duties of this kind, are **Karma Yoga** if done without attachment and for the glorification of God. The end of **Karma Yoga** is the same (as of other **Yogas**), namely, the realisation of God, impersonal or personal or both.

815. In the case of a person endowed with the quality of **Sattva** (purity of being), action naturally falls off. Even if he tries, he cannot engage himself in action. God would not allow him to act. For example, the daughter-in-law who is with child is gradually relieved of her household work, and when the child is actually born, she is given nothing to do and is left exclusively to attend to the child. Those who are not endowed with the quality of **Sattva** have to attend to all worldly duties. With complete dedication to the Lord, they should behave like the servants in the house of a rich man. This is what is called **Karma Yoga**. Its secret consists in repeating the 'name' of the Lord and meditating on Him as much as one can, and at the-same time attending to one's duties in the spirit- of dedication described above.

816. Whatever you offer to God will return to you a thousand fold. So at the end of all **Karma** (sacrifice), one has to pour a handful of water, dedicating the fruit of the **Karma** to **Krishna**.

817. When Yudhishtira was about to offer even his sins to **Krishna**, Bhima warned him saying, "No, no, you should not do so; whatever you offer to **Krishna** will come back to you a thousand fold."

Devotion as a Safeguard in the Path of Work

818. Work without attachment, however, is exceedingly difficult, especially in this age. Hence communion by prayer, devotion and Love has been enjoined as better adapted to this age than communion by Work or Knowledge and philosophy. No one, however, can avoid work. Every mental operation is work. The consciousness, 'I feel', or 'I think', involves work. What is meant by the path of devotion in its relation to Work is that work is simplified by devotion to, or love of, God. In the first place, this love of God reduces the quantity of one's work by fixing one's mind upon one's own ideal, that is, God. Secondly it helps one to work unattached. One cannot love God and at the same time love riches, pleasure, fame, or power. He who has once tasted the drink prepared with the Ola sugar candy does not care for that made with molasses.

819. In this age Work without devotion to God has no legs to stand upon. It is like a foundation on sand. First cultivate devotion. All the other things-schools, dispensaries, etc.-will, if you like, be added to you. First devotion, then work. Work, apart from devotion or love of God, is helpless and cannot stand.

820. For this **Kali Yuga**, **Naradiya-Bhakti**, or communion with God by love, devotion and self-surrender as practised and preached by the **Rishi Narada**, is enjoined. There is now hardly any time for **Karma Yoga**, *i.e.*, for doing the various ritualistic duties laid on man by the scriptures. Don't you see that the well-known decoction of the medicinal roots known as Dashamula-pachana, is not the remedy for fevers of the present day? The patient runs the risk of being carried off before the medicine has had time to take effect. 'Fever mixture' is therefore the order of the day.

821. A disciple: The pressure of work stands in the way of giving one's mind to God, does it not?

The **Master**: O yes, no doubt, that is so; but a **Jnani** may work unattached, and then work will not harm him. If you sincerely desire it the Lord will help you, and the bondage of work will gradually fall away.

822. **Sri Ramakrishna** once said addressing Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, the great philanthropist of India: "Your nature is made of the **Sattva** *i.e.*, the pure element which leads to illumination or true Knowledge.

Only your **Sattva** is in that phase- which makes you active and devoted to the doing of good works. Charity, compassion, kindness towards others, etc., are good if practised without attachment. If they are so practised, and are accompanied with **Bhakti** (devotion to the Supreme), they will lead to God." .

823. Should you think of God only at the time of meditation and remain forgetful of Him at all other times? Have you not noticed how during **Durga Puja** a lamp is kept constantly burning near the image? It should never be allowed to go out. If ever it is extinguished, the house-holder meets with some mishap. Similarly, after installing the Deity on the **lotus** of your heart, you must keep the lamp of remembering Him ever burning. While engaged in the affairs of the world, you should constantly turn your gaze inwards and see whether the lamp is burning or not. up all work until we have seen God?

Work as Service Equal to Worship

824. **Sri Ramakrishna** was one day expounding the gist of **Sri** Gauranga's cult in the following words: "This faith insists that man should at all times try to cultivate three things-delight in the 'name' of the Lord, loving sympathy for all living beings, and service to devotees. God and His 'name' are identical. Knowing this, one should take the 'name' of the Lord with great Love and fervour. The devotees of God should be respected and adored in the conviction that there is no difference between the Lord and his worshippers, between **Krishna** and the **Vaishnava**. With the knowledge that the whole universe is the household of the Lord, one should show pity to all creatures. . ." Uttering the last words 'pity to all creatures' in a rather abrupt fashion, the **Master** went into **Samadhi**. Sometime after returning to a semi-conscious state-the **Master** exclaimed, "Pity to creatures! Pity to creatures! Sirrah! you who are lower than even a worm, how dare you speak of showing pity to creatures! Who are you to show pity to them? No, no, it is not pity to creatures, but service to them in the consciousness that they are verily God Himself."

Work, a Means and not an End

825. Addressing a group of enthusiastic social reformers, the **Master** said: "You talk glibly of doing good to the world. The world to which you desire to do good-is it so small a thing? In the next place, pray, who are you to do good to the world? First, go through devotional practices and see God. Then it is that inspiration and power will come to you, and you may talk of doing good. Not till then."

A **devotee**: Sir, do you mean to say that we are to give up all work until we have seen God?

The **Master**: No, my dear sir. Why should you give up all work? Meditation, chanting of hymns, repetition of His holy 'names', and other devotional exercises-these you must go through.

The **devotee**: I mean work connected with the world. Should we give up all worldly affairs?

The **Master**: You may attend to them too, just as much as you cannot do without, in order to live in this world. But you should, at the same time, pray to the Lord with tears in your eyes for His grace, and for strength to do your duties without the expectation of any reward or fear of punishment in this world or the next.

826. You cannot get rid of work, because Nature will lead you on to it. That being so, let all work- be done as . it ought to be. If work is done unattached, it will lead to God. To work without any attachment is to work without the expectation of any reward or fear of any punishment in this world or the next. Work so done is a means to the end, and God is the end.

827. Work is a means, if done unattached; but the end of life is to see God. Let me repeat that .the means should not be ,confounded with the end-that the first stage on a road should not be taken for the goal. No, do not regard work as the be-all and the end-all, the ideal of human existence. Pray for devotion to God. Suppose you are fortunate enough to see God. Then what would you pray for? Would you pray for dispensaries and hospitals, tanks and wells, roads and alms-houses? No, these are realities to us so long as we do not see God. But once brought face to face with the Divine vision, we see them as they are-transitory things no better than dreams. And then we would pray for more light-more knowledge in the highest sense, more Divine love-the love which lifts us up from man to God, the love which makes us realise that we are really sons of the Supreme Being of Whom all that can be said is that He exists, that He is Knowledge itself in the highest sense, and that He is the eternal fountain of love and bliss:"

828. Referring to a **devotee** of his the **Master** once said: "**Sambhu** Mallick once talked of founding hospitals and dispensaries, schools and colleges-of laying roads, sinking wells and digging tanks for the good of all. I said to him: 'Yes, but you must be unattached while doing good to others, and you must be careful to take up only such works as come in your way-such works, again, as appear to be of a pressing need. Do not seek them--do not seek more work than you can well manage. If you do, you will lose sight of the Lord.' "

Work and Worklessness

829. When the pure **Sattva** arises in a man, he only meditates on God, and does not find pleasure in any other work. Some are born with this pure **Sattva** on account of their past actions. But one can develop this pure quality if one continues to perform unselfish work in a spirit of devotion and dedication to God. If there be **Sattva** with an admixture of **Rajas**, the mind slowly gets distracted in several directions and brings in its wake the egoistic feeling, "I shall do good to the world." It is highly hazardous for ordinary Jivas to attempt to do good to the world. But it is good if a man works, without motive, for the benefit of others; there is no danger in it. This kind of work is called Nishkama **Karma**. It is quite desirable to do such works. But all cannot do it! for it is very difficult !

830. All have to do work; only a few can renounce it. That kind of pure **Sattva** is found only in a very few persons. If a person continues to perform his work with devotion and non-attachment, **Sattva** becomes purged of its **Rajas** element. And' by virtue of this attainment of pure **Sattva**, he realises God. Ordinary persons cannot understand this state of pure **Sattva**.

831. Renunciation of work comes of itself when intense love of God swells up in the heart. Let them work who are made to do so by God. When the time is ripe, one must renounce everything and say, "Come, O my mind, let us watch together the Divinity installed in the heart."

832. **Sandhya** loses herself in **Gayatri**; **Gayatri** loses herself in **Pranava**; **Pranava** in the end loses itself in **Samadhi**. So every **Karma** (**Sandhya** or the like) ultimately loses itself in **Samadhi**.¹

833. As long as the mind is not absorbed in Sachchidananda, man has to do both--call upon the Lord and attend to work in the world. But when the mind is absorbed in Him, there is no more need of any work. For example, let us take the illustration of the Kirtan. A man sings: "**Nitai** amar mata hati (My **Nityananda** is an elephant in rut)." When this is sung first, the singer pays attention to all details--the tune, time, melody, etc. But when his mind is a little absorbed in the song, he says simply "Mata hati, mata hati." At a further stage of absorption he says only, "Hati, hati." At a still further stage, he says simply "Ha, ha," and no further.

834. So I say, in the beginning there is much fuss of **Karma**. But the more you proceed towards God, the less will it grow. Finally comes the complete renunciation of work and the attainment of **Samadhi**. Generally the body does not remain long after the attainment of **Samadhi**. But in 'the case of some it remains for the work of teaching the world. Sages like **Narada** and Divine Incarnations like **Sri Chaitanya** are examples of this. After a well is dug some throwaway all the spades and baskets, but others preserve them with the idea that they may be of some use to any of their neighbours. Such great souls are moved with pity at the sight of the sufferings of the world. They are not so selfish as to care only for the attainment of **Jnana** for themselves.