

The Science of Upanishads – Part 33: Jñāna Marga (Jñāna Yoga) To Attain Moksha

(November 1-November 7, 2017)

Jñāna Marga (The Path of Knowledge or The Path of Self-Realization), also called **Jñāna Yoga**, is one of the three spiritual paths of Hinduism to attain **Moksha** (Liberation from Cycles of Birth and Death), the other two being **Karma Marga** (or Karma Yoga, the Path of Action), and **Bhakti Marga** (or Bhakti Yoga, the Path of Devotion). Later, new promotional Yoga movements within Hinduism added the fourth yoga, called **Raja Yoga**, but this is not universally accepted as distinct from the original three.

To know Brahman as one's own Self is Jñāna (Knowledge). To identify oneself with the illusory objects of mind, body, and the senses is Ajñāna (Ignorance). This is the most difficult of the three paths to Moksha mentioned earlier, requiring tremendous strength of will, endurance, and intellect. Taking the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, one uses one's mind to inquire into its own nature and to transcend the mind's identification with its thoughts and ego. The fundamental goal of Jñāna Marga is to become liberated from the illusionary world of Maya (thoughts and perceptions) and to achieve union of the inner Self (Atman) with the ultimate reality (Brahman). **Adi Shankaracharya** summarized the essence of **Jñāna Marga** into three concise phrases: **Brahma Satyam. Jagat Mithyam. Jivo Brahmaiva Na Parah.** [God (Brahman) is the only one real, the world is unreal, and the individual is none other than God]. So, Jñāna Yoga is the science of the Self, and is not a subject that can be understood and realized through mere intellectual study, reasoning, ratiocination, discussion or arguments. This is achieved by steadfastly practicing the mental techniques of self-questioning, reflection and conscious illumination that are defined in the Four Pillars of Knowledge.

The Four Pillars of Knowledge (*sadhana chatushtaya*) are the prescribed steps toward achieving liberation in Jñāna Marga. These practices build upon each other and thus should be practiced in sequential order. Even if one does not have the goal of achieving liberation, practicing these techniques will cultivate spiritual insight and understanding as well as reduce one's suffering and dissatisfaction of life. (A) **Viveka** (discernment, discrimination) is a deliberate, continuous intellectual effort to distinguish between the real and the unreal, the permanent and the temporary, and the Self and the non-Self. (B) **Vairagya** (dispassion, detachment) is cultivating non-attachment or indifference toward the temporal objects of worldly possessions and the ego mind. "It is only when the mind is absolutely free from the

attachment of all sorts that the true knowledge begins to dawn.” – Swami Sivananda. (C) **Shatsampat** (six virtues) are six mental practices to stabilize the mind and emotions, and to further develop the ability to see beyond the illusions of Maya. These six virtues include (1) *Shama* (tranquility, calmness), which is the ability to keep the mind peaceful, through moderating its reaction to external stimuli, (2) *Dama* (restraint, control), which is the strengthening of the mind to be able to resist the control of the senses, and the training of the senses to be used only as instruments of the mind, (3) *Uparati*(withdrawal, renunciation) is the abandonment of all activities that are not one’s Dharma (Duty). A simple lifestyle is followed that contains no worldly distractions from the spiritual path, (4) *Titiksha* (endurance, forbearance) is the tolerance of external non-conducive situations that are commonly considered to produce suffering, especially in extreme opposite states (success and failure, hot and cold, pleasure and pain), (5) *Shraddha* (faith, trust) is a sense of certainty and belief in one’s guru (teacher), the scriptures and the yogic path, and (6) *Samadhana* (focus, concentration) is the complete focus of the mind. (D) **Mumukshutva** (longing, yearning) is an intense and passionate desire for achieving the liberation from suffering. In order to achieve liberation one must be completely committed to the path, with such longing that all other desires fade away. It is easy to become entangled in the constructs and thoughts of the mind and lose sight of the goal of Jñāna (Knowledge), which is to realize the divine oneness inherent in all beings.

[Read Here for More on Jñāna Marga \(Jñāna Yoga\)](#)