

Who is a Jnani?

July 12, 2020

GOOD MORNING... ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Status quo for the rest of July: Still too much risk in meeting physically. If you come to meet with Br. Shankara, please bring a mask. No need to wear a mask in the Chapel, when you are alone there for refuge or meditation.
- Gareth Young, founder and head of the Red Clay Buddhist Sangha, will be our guest speaker, by Zoom of course, on July 19th. We'll publish his bio and info about his topic in next week's e-news, and on website & FB.
- As usual, your Center will be closed for all activities except Arati, in August.

CHANT • SONG • WELCOME • TOPIC

Who is a Jnani?

July is a month for study of Jnana Yoga (Advaita Vedanta). As a jnana yogi, you practice discrimination, reason, detachment, and *satyagraha* (insistence on Truth).

The goal is freedom from limitation (*moksha*). Our teachers say that all miseries in life are caused by seeing *inaccurately*. An earnest and persistent jnani may break through this misapprehension (*maya*) and see only the Divine Presence everywhere, in everything and everyone.

So, Who Is a Jnani?

This isn't a trick question. Sage Vasistha, Adi Shankaracharya, and Sri Ramakrishna each gave a reasonable, specific definition for who follows the path of knowledge — Jnana Yoga. Their answers will be read and discussed this morning.

You may be surprised at what else is offered as a response.

**“We are all so much more,
but we settle for less ...”**

This is the core message of Vedanta, of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda: We are so much more than we know, but we settle for less, for second best. **We get stuck.**

“Arise, Awake!” Vivekananda thundered “... Stop not till the goal is reached.”

“Go Forward!” wrote Swami Premeshananda

Parable: Woodcutter

So, who is a Jnani, according to some of our greatest spiritual teachers? And what do we know about the path of discrimination and detachment, that we can share? That's what we'll explore this morning.

FIRST, WE'LL HEAR DEFINITIONS FROM SAGE VASISTHA, ADI SHANKARA & SRI RAMAKRISHNA

Her's Vasistha, from the YOGA VASISTHA SARA (Nectar of Supreme Knowledge):

I salute the supreme Brahman, who is beyond all qualities, tranquil, beyond the limitations of the ten directions, space, time, or objects; who alone is the embodiment of infinite consciousness, and who is to be known only through the proof of one's own experience (REALIZATION).

...

*He alone is **competent** to study this scripture, who is neither altogether ignorant nor a knower of Truth, and who has a firm resolution that, "I am bound in the worldly bondage and intend to be liberated from this state of bondage."*

...

Four means of liberation are discernment (viveka), dispassion (vairagya), the six treasures, and intense longing for liberation. The six treasures are: control of mind, control of the senses, satiety, endurance, one pointed devotion, and collectedness of the mind.

Here is Adi Shankaracharya's Definition of a Qualified Student — this is from his VIVEKACHOODAMANI (Crest Jewel of Discrimination). Some exact parallels, many 1000s of years apart!

There are three attributes necessary for success on ANY spiritual path:

- One should be born as a human being. Neither animals nor trees nor divine beings can attain self-realization.
- Secondly, one should have an intense desire for liberation.
- Lastly, one should seek refuge under a great soul for guidance.
- The disciple who approaches this great soul should also be well qualified and competent. He should possess a highly retentive memory, be capable of reasoning out the pros and cons of a subject through induction and deduction, and possess four pre-requisites:
 - First, discrimination (Viveka),
 - Second, dispassion (Vairagya),
 - Third, the six qualities like control of the mind, senses, and so on, and
 - Fourth, a strong desire for liberation.

The third pre-requisite is this group of six virtues:

- **Sama** (control of the mind)

- **Dama** (control of senses)
- The third virtue is forbearance or tolerance — **Titiksha**
- The fourth treasure is **Shraddha**
- The fifth pre-requisite is one-pointed devotion to your goal — **Samadhanam'**
- And the sixth requirement is **constant collectedness** of the mind

GOSPEL OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

Chapter 5 - The Master and Keshab

Master: *"He who is called Brahman by the jnanis is known as Atman by the yogis and as Bhagavan by the bhaktas. The same brahmin is called priest, when worshipping in the temple, and cook, when preparing a meal in the kitchen.*

The jnani, sticking to the path of knowledge, always reasons about the Reality, saying, 'Not this, not this'. Brahman is neither 'this' nor 'that'; It is neither the universe nor its living beings. Reasoning in this way, the mind becomes steady. Then it disappears and the aspirant goes into samadhi.

This is the Knowledge of Brahman. It is the unwavering conviction of the jnani that Brahman alone is real and the world illusory. All these names and forms are illusory, like a dream. What Brahman is cannot be described. One cannot even say that Brahman is a Person. This is the opinion of the jnanis, the followers of Vedanta philosophy.

...

"The jnanis, who adhere to the non-dualistic philosophy of Vedanta, say that the acts of creation, preservation, and destruction, the universe itself and all its living beings, are the manifestations of Sakti, the Divine Power. (Known as maya in the Vedanta philosophy.)

If you reason it out, you will realize that all these are as illusory as a dream. Brahman alone is the Reality, and all else is unreal. Even this very Sakti is unsubstantial, like a dream.

*"But though you reason all your life, unless you are **established** in samadhi, you cannot go beyond the jurisdiction of Sakti. Even when you say, 'I am meditating', or 'I am contemplating', still you are moving in the realm of Sakti, within Its power.*

"Thus Brahman and Sakti are identical. If you accept the one, you must accept the other. It is like fire and its power to burn. If you see the fire, you must recognize its power to burn also. You cannot think of fire without its power to burn, nor can you think of the power to burn without fire. You cannot conceive of the sun's rays without the sun, nor can you conceive of the sun without its rays."

Segway: the journey as we manifest these attributes, qualities, virtues:
Prabhavananda-Turiyananda story...

In a sense, we are ALL jnanis: As we move through the journey of life we quite naturally leave behind many activities, attractions, and aversions.

Yet, when we hit a certain point in life — the timeline varies for everyone — we may conclude that, “I have to keep doing what I’m doing now, to be a success. It’s just too risky to change my way of life at this point.”

We get stuck ...

LISTEN TO A POEM; THE TITLE IS —

Lion of the Spirit

I don’t roar much, do I?
Though I’m told time and again
I am a lion of the spirit,
I don’t want to hear it.
I shrink away from wilderness
and the open sea. Instead, I’ll sail
the bay or walk a well marked trail,
then text a friend, “a stsfyng day.”

Returning home to my familiar
cul de sac, I’m happy to be back,
to sink into a favorite chair,
to sip a drink and drift into a nap.
Perchance to dream: I’m in a forest
glade — ahead I see a huge brown bear
tied standing upright to a tree,
bound securely with a seaman’s line.

Then suddenly the bear’s released, the rope
is gone. Falling forward onto all four
paws, he shakes his head and stretches
every bone and sinew all along his spine.
On his right there is a well worn path
into the woods — wide near the glade,
narrowing and quickly fainter as it
winds away among the close-grown trees.

Still stiff, the bear’s first steps are shaky
as he shuffles from where he’s fallen,
toward the path — yet soon he’s supple,
moving smoothly out of the sunlit
Glade and into the dappled shadows

among the trees. Ten yards in he stops,
twitches his stubby tail, turns his head,
looks back to the tree where he'd been tied.

And then the bear roars — a roar so loud
it shakes the dreamer half-awake. I
watch as the bear trots deeper into
the woods and the dream dwindles away.
Fully awake now I take in the dim
room around me and see so clearly
every rope that binds me. Tears come. I
stand and roar and roar and roar, at last.

DISCUSSION AND COMMENTS

Regular closing prayer