

PODCAST 209: HOW TO BE ESTABLISHED IN JNANA?

Om Sri Sai Ram

Prasanthi Sandesh, 209th episode.

It is often our experience that we have glimpses of *jnana*, supreme knowledge, but that *jnana* is not stable. It doesn't remain for a long time. The glimpses of *jnana* appear and vanish. Why don't they remain stable? Why can't they be stabilized, established? That is the question. Let us try to answer according to Adi Shankara's Advaitic interpretation.

There are a few steps needed to make *jnana* stable. What are they? As it is, what we do is called the practice of *karma* or *karmanushtana*. *Karmanushtana* means the practice of daily *karma* or activity like worship, or *japa*, which is repeating God's name, and reading a scripture, which is called *parayana*. Like this, we have so many spiritual activities that we perform scrupulously and most regularly. This is called the practice of *karma* or *karmanushtana*.

Well, we don't say that these activities are useless. No! *Karmanushtana* gives you a disciplined life because you meditate at a certain time, and you worship at a certain time. You repeat God's name, you read the scriptures, and you conduct *yagna* and *yagas*, or whatever the ritual may be. You do all these rituals in a most regular manner and in a disciplined way.

In addition to that, we have got *shastra*, the scripture, that comes forward with do's and don'ts: "Do these things! Do not do these things!"

As a result, the practitioner of *karma* will be taking into consideration his course of action on one hand, and on the other hand, he will also be bound by the scriptural dictation.

The point here is that all this *karmanushtana* or practice, all this *karma*, is no doubt useful in making us lead a disciplined life. But its purpose is to attain heaven, to attain paradise, and to acquire some merit. These are all the goals of *karmanushtana*: "I want to go to heaven. I want to go to paradise."

But one has to keep in mind that our stay in paradise or heaven is for a stipulated period only. Ours is not an eternal stay there. The moment our period is over, we have to return and come back to earth. We have to take human form again. That's how birth and rebirth happens. So, the practice of *karma* will certainly make you born and reborn, while giving you the pleasure of staying for a certain time in paradise or heaven. It happens like that.

But, according to Adi Shankara, this *karmanushtana* should be transformed into *karma yoga*. *Karma yoga* is a little higher step. *Karmanushtana* can be transformed into *karma yoga*, can be converted into *karma yoga*. How is it possible?

One condition is to never have a feeling that 'I am doing'. This is *ahankara* (ego). Number two, never feel that the fruits of this action should come to me only, should

belong to me only. That is what is called possessiveness or attachment. Therefore, when you think you are the doer, it is ego or *ahankara*. Then secondly, number two is the feeling that the fruits of my action should come to me only. That's called *mamakara* or attachment. These two have to be given up.

Number three, we should do selfless action. And number four, this action should be undertaken to satisfy our Lord, to be acceptable to Him, to please Him. That's all. So with these points, the *karmanushtana* or practice of *karma* can be converted into *karma yoga*.

Then the question arises, what will happen? What is the use of *karma yoga*?

Karma yoga will purify your heart, which is called *chitta suddhi* or *satva suddhi*. By this purification of our heart, the ground is ready. Just as in the field of agriculture, the ground must be made ready so that you will be able to sow the seeds there, in the field of agriculture. You should plough the land, then water the soil, and then sow the seeds. These things happen in a sequential manner.

In a similar way, *satva suddhi* means 'purity of the heart'. It means 'getting ready'. Okay, we are ready now. What should we do? You should start listening, *sravana*, S R A V A N A, start listening to sacred texts, to the Holy Scripture, listening with rapt attention. That leads to *manana*, M A N A N A. That's 'recapitulation, repetition'. That should take you to the experience of a pure heart. That's what is called *nididhyasa*, N I D I D H Y A S A . So, constant contemplation, continuous thought on this, will give you that experience, which is called *nididhyasa*.

So by these three -- *sravana*, *manana*, *nididhyasa*, you are now ready to receive *jnana*. The heart is ready, just like the land is ready, to receive *jnana*, not until then. That's called *jnana prapti*.

Prapti means 'deservedness'. That deservedness of *jnana* is obtained after we have achieved *satva suddhi* or *chitta suddhi*, or purity of heart. Then, we deserve *jnana*. *Jnana* enters just like sunlight enters. Just as sunlight gets into our house through the window in the form of rays, *jnana* also gets into our heart in the form of rays.

Then, what should be done? Once you deserve this *jnana prapti*, once you deserve this *jnana*, what should be done is *karma sanyasa*, S A N Y A S A. *Karma sanyasa* means once you receive this *jnana*, you can give up all other rituals. They are not necessary because that period is over. You passed through *karma yoga* and you attained *satva suddhi*. Now you are ready for *jnana prapti*.

After *jnana prapti*, the next step is *karma sanyasa*, which means giving up all these activities, including the scriptural activities. Here is an example: Suppose I give you silver and in return you give me gold. Do I hesitate? No! Gold is more valuable than silver. In a similar way, in *karma sanyasa*, you'll be getting something more than this *jnana prapti*. That is what is called *jnana siddhi*. This means that *jnana siddhi* will be established there. It will be established there, and it will not vanish.

In other words, *karmanushtana* should get converted into *karma yoga*. Then *karma yoga* takes you to *satva suddhi*, and this *satva suddhi* makes you deserve *jnana*,

which is *jnana prapti*. Then we should be ready for *karma sanyasa*, and finally end in stabilisation or establishment in *jnana*. That's what is called *jnana nishta*. This is the sequence that Adi Shankara explains as the way to keep our *jnana* firmly established in our heart.

Let us have a study of a few more things here.

There are two important components in our body system which are responsible for any kind of movement. One is the mind which moves, while the second component is life or *prana*.

Manas or mind is the centre of *jnana* while life or *prana* is the centre of *karma* or action. All actions are due to life. Because of life, my limbs function and my senses function. So, life is the cause for action and the mind is the centre for all the thoughts and *jnana*.

What has to be done is the mind has to direct. The mind has to guide the *prana* or life to undertake activities which are acceptable, which are scripturally-sanctioned and which would help us to lead an ideal divine life.

But unfortunately, we are leading a mechanical life with no meaning at all, where most of our activities are totally selfish. Thus, we lead almost the life of a beast or a bestial life. Therefore, all our actions are selfish as they are, so these actions should be spiritualised. They should all be spiritualised at one time or another. Plus we should always keep in mind the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal is *jnana*, which should remain firm, which should be established and which should be what we call, 'stable'.

How is this possible? There's one great scholar, a saint by the name of *Vidyaranya*. *Vidyaranya* is a great sage. He has written a book by the name '*Vedantha Panchadashi*'. He has written so many chapters. Of these chapters, two are important. One is titled, *Trupti Dwipam*, which means 'Satisfaction'. The second is *Jnana Dwipam*, which means 'Meditation'. These two chapters are enough to know the quintessence of his whole composition. Besides that, he has written another book by the name, '*Ananda Panchakam*,' which is also a very prominent book.

Now, *Vidyaranya* suggests these techniques in order to be established in *jnana*: One is *chintanam*, constant contemplation or meditation. *Chintanam* means meditation and *kathanam*, means contemplation.

Next is *anyonyam tat prabodhanam*. *Anyonyam tat prabodhanam* means that whenever we meet people, we should not indulge in vain talk or rumours or gossip. We should only think of *jnana*, the ultimate. If we happen to sit all alone, then we should keep *jnana* or *atman* in our mind and meditate on that. *Vidyaranya* calls this *Brahmabhyasa*. *Abhyasa* means the practice and *Brahmabhyasa* means the practice of Brahma.

Therefore in this brief talk, I believe that an answer has been provided to the question that often comes to our mind, "Why is *jnana* not stable? Why do I

experience only glimpses that vanish like clouds? I want this *jnana* to be established.”

For that, Adi Shankara suggests these steps, as I said earlier: *Karmanushtana* should transform into *karma* yoga. That will give you *satva suddhi*, which will make you deserving of *jnana* or *jnana prapti*. Next, you renounce all kinds of activities, which is *karma sanyasa*, because you are going to get something more valuable. That's what is called *jnana nishta*, meaning to be established firmly in *jnana*.

These are the things which I have brought to your attention in this session. We'll meet again later.

Sai Ram.