

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION,

Q. 276: WHAT IS JNANA?

Om Sri Sai Ram

Welcome to the Question and Answer session.

Q. 276:

The question today is: ***What is Jnana, J N A N A, Jnana?***

Jnana as per the scriptures is different from education and from knowledge. Education and knowledge are formally acquired and learnt over a period of time. However, *jnana* exists as an inborn, innate, latent quality in every being.

So let us learn about *jnana* from the Vedanta point of view. According to the Vedanta, *Jnana* is the self or *atma*. Self, *atma* and *jnana* are one and the same. The whole purpose of our *sadhana*, our spiritual practice, is to remind ourselves that we are the self and not the body or the mind. In reality, everyone is the embodiment of Divine *Atma*. We have forgotten this fact and so our spiritual practice (*sadhana*) is done in order to remind ourselves of our true nature.

The *Atma* or the Self is referred to by different names or titles. One name is *Sarvatma*, SARVATMA. *Sarvatma* means 'all-pervasive' or 'being everywhere'.

Jnana is also called *Ekathma*, E K A T H M A means oneness, which is the only thing that is present in the universe. Only the One, the supreme self, is present and nothing else. *Eka* means only one.

The third name is *Satchithananda*. *Sat* means existence and *chith* means awareness. *Ananda* means bliss. *Sat*, S A T, *chith*, C H I T H, *ananda*, bliss, *Satchithananda* means existence-awareness-bliss. *Satchithananda* is the third name.

The fourth one is the actual 'awareness' of existence. Here is a simple example. There is a pen. The pen exists here, and at this moment, I have become aware of the pen which exists here. This awareness of the existent (the existing item) is what is called *Atma*.

In the same way, we are aware of all the existing objects, such as the table, the chair and all the beings around us. This awareness of everything which exists, (existence) is called *satchithananda*.

Now, here are a few points about *jnana*. *Jnana* cannot be produced or generated or manufactured or made. We call *Utpathi*, U T P A T H I, *utpathi*, something which is manufactured, produced. *Jnana* is not at all like that. It is not produced. It is not generated.

Also, *jnana* is not something which is present elsewhere, but it could be brought from there to here. If the chair is there, I can bring it here. If the table is there, I can bring it here; but *jnana* is not somewhere else from where it could be brought here.

Bringing something from somewhere else is called *Prapthi*, P R A P T H I. However, *jnana* cannot be produced and it cannot be obtained or brought from somewhere else. Also, It cannot be created anew, afresh, because *jnana* is an innate, inborn, latent Divine gift, as has been already pointed out.

The *Bhagavad Gita* clearly states that none of the spiritual practices would confer *moksha* or liberation or *nirvana*. It is only through *Jnana yagna* that we can attain *moksha* or liberation. *Yagna* means sacrificial spiritual activity and this *Jnana yagna* is the only kind of spiritual activity which confers *moksha* or liberation.

The question may arise, ***if the self is jnana, if both self and jnana are one and the same, then where is the need to attain it? Where is the need to remember it? Why should we even think about it when our true nature is jnana?***

The answer is simple. Though *jnana* is there already, though it has not been produced nor brought from somewhere else, it has not yet become our experience. It is already in you, but you have not yet experienced it.

Vasthu siddham, *vasthu*, V A S T H U, *siddham*, S I D D H A M, *vasthu siddham* means it is already there and *Buddhi siddham*, B U D D H I, *siddham*, S I D D H means It has not yet been experienced. What I want to emphasize is the fact that this *jnana* is there, but it has not yet become our experience. That is the problem.

There are saints and seers who have experienced *Brahma jnana* or divine knowledge or divine wisdom, and some of them have even explained how it became possible for them to acquire this knowledge.

They said that It was possible for them, so that whatever they consumed, whatever they heard and whatever they saw, they observed all of these things as being totally divine, as Brahman. They experience Brahman, the Divine, in everything they do, see or hear.

In other words, anything and everything is divine. That is the experience of the saints and seers and that is also the reality. They don't see anything as being different from the self. The self is the only thing in existence, there's nothing else. And this self is all-pervasive, meaning it is spread everywhere.

I repeat again, that although this *jnana* is there already, (*vashtu siddham*), however it has not yet come to our experience, (*buddhi siddham*).

Now let me give you one example. I see a table there. The table is outside. The table will not come to me and say, "I am a table," because the table is inert, (*jada*, J A D A.) Inert matter won't come to you and introduce itself because no material is mobile. However, I have in me an awareness which is mobile. Unlike the inert matter, awareness can move.

Next, what happens when I see the table over there, I realize that this table has four legs and a flat surface above and I can keep my books and anything else on that surface. So all these qualities of the table which is in front of me have been gathered and have entered into me and then, they are projected on the screen of my mind.

It is obvious that the table did not enter into me. I reached the table through my awareness, which has gone to the table, collected all its qualities and then projected these qualities on the screen of my mind.

It's also our experience that nothing can be seen without light. So an inner light, a divine light or *atma jyothi*, A T M A J Y O T H I, *atma jyothi*, exists within us. It is this inner light which will enable the photo of the table to be seen and to be projected on the screen of the mind.

Therefore, the mind is the screen on which this photo is projected and can be seen with the help of the inner light. This image is what we call *vruthi*, *jnana vruthi*, V R U T H I *jnana*. *Vruthi jnana* means that kind of knowledge or information, which relates to the image projected on the mind.

Next what happens is this photo or image will now come out of our mind and it is only now that we will be able to identify the table, not beforehand.

First the qualities of the objects, the table or chair, or whatever may be the object are all collected. Secondly, they are projected on the mind, and thirdly, the information comes out of the mind. At this time, we are able to identify the objects and we can know whether this is a table or a chair and so on.

So, the identification happens in the second phase. First phase is the projection on the mind. In the second phase this image projected on the mind comes out and then awareness, identification of the objects happens. This is *jnana*. This is *jnana*, please understand.

The object is outside and something relating to the object, the idea of it, is inside. The photo projected on the mind is the idea which is inside. The table or chair which are outside are things, objects. The object is projected as an idea in the mind. We call that projection or image. I think I am clear. That is the connection between the image and the thing or object.

There is a connection, a correspondence between the thing outside and the idea inside. Through our awareness we are able to identify these objects or materials. We are able to recognise immediately what everything is, whether they are objects, plants, animals or individuals.

This is called *prathyaksha*, P R A T H Y A K S H A, *prathyaksha*. *Prathyaksha jnana vruthi*, V R U T H I.

Prathyaksha jnana vruthi means the direct perception, the direct identification of the things which are outside.

There's also one more thing, which is the recollection of an image from the past. For example, last year I might have visited some hilly station and now I begin to recall what it was. Or, a few years back I saw Niagara Falls. Now I begin to recall how beautiful Niagara Falls are! So the photo or the image projected on the mind long back is recollected now.

This is what we call *paroksha*, P A R O K S H A, *jnana vruthi*. An image is immediately projected on your mind as soon as you remember what it is.

So one is the memory relating to the past and the other is the direct perception or knowledge.

Therefore, *jnana* is different from our usual idea of knowledge or education. It is an inner light. We are the embodiments of *jnana*, as Bhagavan always says, '*Jnana Swaroopalara*'.

I think I could make this subject clear to the extent possible.

We'll meet again.

Sai Ram.