

THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Guru Purnima Lecture by Swami Paramarthananda

Transcribed by Sri VLN Prasad

Includes Swami Paramarthananda's Algorithm for Contemplation
Compiled by N. Avinashilingam



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The Spiritual Journey

sadāsiva samārambhām sankarāchārya madhyamām
asmad āchārya paryantām vande guru paramparām

I have been teaching the Vēdāntic scriptures for the last three decades in the form of regular classes, at various centers in Chennai. All these classes are based on whatever knowledge I have received from my Guru and also, what I have gathered from various commentaries written by Āchāryās belonging to this holy tradition, which we are worshiping today.

As I was sharing this knowledge through these classes, I found that I have to develop my own methodology of presentation or communication to suit the modern times and also, to suit the students who are attending these classes. As I was evolving this methodology, gradually, I found myself using several words, expressions, phrases, principles and acronyms like PORT, CLASP etc.

I found these words are very useful for communication. Therefore, I started using them very frequently. I found that even though, these words are very useful tools for those students who know these words, but these very expressions will become an obstacle for those who do not understand them.

Unfortunately, they cannot find them in any dictionary also. Therefore, I have been thinking that I should collect those expressions and phrases (at-least, the prominent ones) and present them in the form of a talk to those students. I thought that [Guru Pūrnima](#) will be a nice day and I can dedicated this method to the [Guru Parampara](#) itself and seek their blessings.

If they are collected in one talk, it will be easier to go through and recollect. If any new student comes and asks about those words, I can direct them to this one class. With that intention, today I am going to

deal with some of those expressions that I have been using. I have arranged these words in such way that they will form a spiritual scheme of Sādhana also. They will form a progressive scheme.

I propose to go through these words given in this pamphlet and give you brief notes. Of course, I cannot elaborately deal with them because this is the essence of thirty years of teaching. Therefore, my aim is only to give you notes. Assuming that most of you are already my students, I think that they will ring a note of memory in your mind.

With this background, I will quickly go through these words. The spiritual journey begins with **Karma Yōga** which has been elaborately described in the 3rd chapter of the Gīta. I generally present Karma Yōga in the form of a simple expression. **Proper Action + Proper Attitude = Karma Yōga.**

I have presented it in the form of the word RIDE which I have used in some of the later classes. The word RIDE is coined from the four principles that we have written here. ‘R’ refers to reducing **Adhārmic** activities. ‘I’ refers to increasing **Dhārmic** activities. ‘D’ refers to dedicating all actions to the Lord. ‘E’ refers to experiencing everything as **Prasāda**.

When I say, reduce **Adhārmic** activities, I mean gradual reduction of all the Adhārmic activities, with an intention to make them either minimum or zero, if possible. **What is Adhārmic activity?** It is nothing but all those actions and responses in life which become obstacles to our spiritual growth. In Sanskrit, action means **Karma**, responses means **Pratikarma**.

So, **Karma** and **Pratikarma** which become **Pratibandha** (obstacles) to spiritual growth are **Mōksha Mārga Pratibandha Bhūta Karma Pratikarmāni**. I gradually reduce all these actions and responses. A list of those has been given in the 16th chapter of Gīta in the form of **Āsuri Sampath**. In simple language, we can say avoidance of all those

activities and responses which I don't want from others, towards me. What I don't want others to do to me; I should not do to others.

That means, I should watch my actions and responses and then, I should identify those which are inappropriate. After identifying them, I may find some of them unavoidable or necessary. You ignore them, but initially, identify avoidable, inappropriate actions and responses. If we are sincere and honest, we can always identify many inappropriate actions and responses which we can avoid.

Once we avoid the avoidable, later the unavoidable also will become avoidable by the grace of the Lord. Sooner or later, all inappropriate behaviors will come down. This is a very significant discipline (R). Then, 'I' represents increase of Dhārmic activities. As a part of Dhārmic activity, I have been emphasizing [Pancha Mahā Yagnyās](#).

I find them extremely versatile set of religious cum spiritual disciplines. These Pancha Mahā Yagnyās are [Dēva Yagnyaha](#), [Bhūta Yagnyaha](#), [Manushya Yagnyaha](#), [Brahma Yagnyaha](#) and [Pitru Yagnyaha](#). These five Yagnyās have got both ritualistic version and non-ritualistic version. **What are the ritualistic versions?**

Ritualistic [Dēva Yagnyaha](#) is regular worship of God, either in the form of [Agnihōtram](#) or [Aupāsanam](#) or [Sandhyāvandanam](#) or [Panchāyatana Pūja](#) or any form of regular Pūja. [Bhūta Yagnya](#) also has got a ritualistic version in the form of a ritual called Vaishva Dēvam or in the form of Tulasi Pūja or Gō Pūja.

These are all ritualistic versions of [Bhūta Yagnyaha](#). Then, honoring guests or offering food to them is a ritualistic version of [Manushya Yagnyaha](#). Then, [Brahma Yagnyaha](#) is the performance of a ritual called Brahma Yagnya in which Rishis and scriptures are honored. Then, [Pitru Yagnyaha](#) is regular offering of Namaskāra to the parents, taking care of them when they are old and performance of Shrāddham, Tarpanam etc, after their departure.

They are ritualistic version of Pitru Yagnya. Thus, we have got ritualistic **Pancha Mahā Yagnyās**. We should note and know that they all have got a non-ritualistic form also. **Dēva Yagnya** is our reverential attitude and worship of the Pancha Mahā Bhūtās - space, air, fire, water and earth.

Reverential attitude towards them will be called Dēva Yagnyaha in which I worship the Lord in the form of **Vishwarūpa Ēshwara**. Then, **Bhūta Yagnyaha** is reverential attitude towards all the plants and animals and my reverential contribution for the protection of nature, protection of environment, protection of ecological balance.

All my reverential contributions will come under Bhūta Yagnya. Then, non-ritualistic **Manushya Yagnya** is in the form of all kinds of social service that I do through varieties of clubs or non-clubs available. They all will come under non-ritualistic Manushya Yagnya. Then, **Brahma Yagnya** is my reverential contribution to the preservation and propagation of scriptural learning.

Whatever I do by supporting those Āchāryās, by supporting those institutions will come under Brahma Yagnyaha. Finally, **Pitru Yagnya** is whatever I do for the protection of the family and protection of our ancestors or honoring our ancestors and the senior citizens, in general. I have been saying that a society is mature only when it takes care of its senior citizens properly, with reverence.

That will come under what Pitru Yagnyaha. Thus, when I follow the **Pancha Mahā Yagnya** in ritualistic and non-ritualistic way, it will come under increase of Dhārmic activities. Then, the letter 'D' is - Dedicate all the actions to the Lord. What I mean by this is that I inform the Lord that spiritual growth is my priority, my primary goal.

All the materialistic consequences are byproducts and they are subservient to my spiritual growth. Informing this to the Lord while performing all my activities, whether they are secular or sacred, is

Ēshwara Ārādhana Rūpam Karma. Finally, 'E' is the important thing. Experience everything as Ēshwara Prasāda. There is no injustice in the world.

Whatever I am going through is a just experience. I should never challenge God by raising the question - **Why me?** There is no 'why me' syndrome. I accept calmly and coolly and I look for hidden messages in and through all the experiences especially, the hidden messages in painful experiences.

This attitude of Prasāda Bhāvana is represented by the letter 'E'. All these ideas put together, I call RIDE. So, whenever I say RIDE, all these concepts should immediately flash on the computer screen of your mind. This is the definition of RIDE. Then, the next topic is benefits of Karma Yōga which I call as 4S - **Self Esteem, Serenity, Setup Harmony and Spiritual Growth.**

Since Karma Yōga involves more and more contribution and less and less of consumption, I become a contributor rather than a consumer. The more I contribute, I find a meaning to my life and it will remove my low self image, inferiority complex etc. I naturally develop self esteem or self respect.

By self esteem, I do not mean arrogance or superiority complex. I mean freedom from inferiority complex. There is a beautiful Subhāshitam which says **gauravam prāpyatē dānāt na tu vittasya sanchayāt** - A person gets more and more respect and honor (Gauravam) by **vittasya dānāt na tu vittasya sanchayāt** - not by amassing or hoarding wealth.

A beautiful example is given - **sthati ucchaihi payōdānām payōdhīnām adhah sthitihi** - The clouds are always high above because they shower and give water. The giver clouds have got a higher stature. They are up above. The ocean which receives water from all over, is at a lower stature - **payōdhīnām adhah sthitihi**. Even when Bhagawān wanted to receive something from Mahābali, he had to take Vāmana Rūpam.

He took a small form when he was a receiver. So, reception makes me lower. Contribution or charity makes me taller. Therefore, Karma Yōga, being contribution, will increase my **Self Esteem**. Then, the second benefit is **Serenity** because I accept every experience as **Ēshwara Prasāda**. I don't react to those experiences.

Any Prasāda is received reverentially, without judgment. It may be tasty Pāyasam or it may be a little bit of mud. Whatever be the type of Prasāda, **Samatvam** is there. Therefore, Karma Yōga promotes Serenity. Then, the third benefit is **Setup Harmony** because a Karma Yōgi contributes to the entire creation in the form of **Pancha Mahā Yagnyās**.

The infrastructure around him, at the micro level (family), at macro level (society) and even the environment are all maintained in harmony. This is also a result of Karma Yōga. There is harmony of the surrounding at the micro and macro level. I call this Setup harmony, the third 'S'. The fourth 'S' is **Spiritual Growth**.

By Spiritual Growth, I mean getting a mind which is ready for **Gnyāna Yōga**, which is the next level of spiritual journey. **Gnyāna Yōgyata Prāptihi** is Spiritual Growth. In technical language, we call it **Sādhana Chatushtaya Sampatti**. To indicate this growth, I have been using two expressions which I use very often.

One is FIR decrease and the other is CCC increase. Decreased FIR and increased CCC is spiritual growth. **What is FIR?** F stands for Frequency of emotional disturbances. 'I' means Intensity of emotional disturbances. Intensity is high when it is at the level of mind, speech and body.

The intensity is the medium, when it is at the level of mind and speech. The intensity is low when it is at the level of mind only. Thus, the emotional disturbances can be of highest, medium and low intensities, which I represent by the letter 'I'. The letter 'R' refers to the recovery period, the time that I take for coming to normalcy.

Spiritual Growth is reduction in all these three - Frequency, Intensity and Recovery Period, with regard to the emotional disturbances. They should gradually come down. **What is CCC?** The first 'C' represents Calmness. The second 'C' represents Cheerfulness. Expressed calmness is cheerfulness. The third 'C' represents Confidence, Self Confidence.

When FIR comes down, CCC will gradually increase. **Therefore, what is spiritual growth? Decrease FIR + Increased CCC = Spiritual Growth.** As the spiritual growth takes place, a person will gravitate towards **Gnyāna Yōga**. He will be interested in Gnyāna Yōga. **What is Gnyāna Yōga?**

Technically, it is defined as **Shravanam, Mananam** and **Nidhidhyāsanam**. But I have been using an expression very often. **Gnyāna Yōga** is consistent and systematic study of Vēdāntic scriptures, for a length of time, under the guidance of a competent and live Āchārya. This requires two types of preparation.

I have called the first preparation as PORT reduction. **What is PORT?** 'P' represents **Possession**, 'O' represents **Obligations** or Responsibilities. 'R' represents **Relationships**. 'T' represents **Transactions**. If you study, these four factors are interconnected. Increase of anyone, will increase the other three and decrease of anyone will decrease the other three.

They come as a package and they provide you an infrastructure. This PORT infrastructure has both advantage and disadvantage. Advantage is that PORT provides an ideal infrastructure for doing more and more Karmās and contributing to material prosperity. But the disadvantage is that the very same PORT is an infrastructure which will be an obstacle to **Gnyāna Yōga**, deep study and contemplation.

Why do I say PORT is an obstacle? Firstly, PORT will take all your time. PORT is a guzzler of time. One will not have time for study or contemplation. The second reason is that PORT will create more and

more mental preoccupation. If you study any of your mental preoccupations, it will be connected with one of these four (P or O or R or T).

Therefore, PORT makes the mind shallow and reduces the attention span. Therefore, one of the preparations for Gnyāna Yōga is reducing the PORT as much as possible. How much, is a subjective decision. I cannot say how much, but the aim of a Gnyāna Yōgi should be PORT reduction to get quality time and also to get a non-preoccupied, deep mind for study and contemplation.

Therefore, the first preparation is PORT reduction. The second preparation is CLASP rejection or CLASP renunciation or [Āntara Sanyāsa](#) (inner Sanyāsa). **What do they represent?** Letter 'CL' represents the sense of ownership and controllership which is called [Abhimānaha](#).

The sense of ownership and controllership with regard to the body-mind complex is called [Ahankāra](#). The sense of ownership and controllership with regard to family and possessions is called [Mamakāra](#). Therefore, 'CL' stands for [Aham-Mama Abhimāna](#). The moment 'CL' comes, the next one automatically comes.

'A' stands for anxiety. All our anxieties are connected with either [Aham](#) or [Mama](#). We don't have any anxiety regarding the local auto rickshaw driver. Anxieties are centered around [Aham Mama Vishaya](#). Therefore, 'CL' and 'A' go together. Once 'CL' and 'A' come, 'SP' is a natural consequence. 'SP' means Special Prayers.

Special Prayers means [Sakāma Prārthana](#). Prayers are of different forms - [Sakāma Prārthana](#) and [Nishkāma Prārthana](#). [Nishkāma Prārthana](#) is all forms of prayers meant for [Lōka Kshēma](#) and spiritual growth. Any prayer for the wellbeing of the world or the spiritual growth is called [Nishkāma Prārthana](#). Any prayer, for anything other than these two, all those prayers and vows will come under [Sakāma Prārthana](#).

This will increase when ‘CL’ and ‘A’ increase. Therefore, CLASP go together as a package. If **Gnyāna Yōga** should succeed, one has to take to CLASP rejection which Krishna presents in the Gīta as -

**gnyēyah sa nitya sanyāsi yōna dvēshti na kānkshati
nirdvandvō hi mahābāhō sukham bandhāt pramuchyatē**

Kāshāya Vastram represents CLASP rejection. We cannot avoid the arrival of anxiety. It is very natural to human beings. CLASP rejection is not encouraging and nourishing the arrived anxiety. We cannot stop the arrival of the anxiety, but the CLASP rejection is - not supporting or encouraging the arrived anxiety.

How to do that? Drop the **Aham Mama Abhimāna** by remembering that everything, including the body and family belongs to Ēshwara alone. I am not an owner of anything. I am not a controller of anything. I am only a contributor. I never own or control anything. Bhagawān can give anything at any time and Bhagawān can take away anything.

Even the breath that goes out, may or may not come back. I cannot decide that factor. This awareness is CLASP rejection. I consider this also as an extremely important preparation for **Gnyāna Yōga**. Then comes the actually Gnyāna Yōga. That is, going through the spiritual education program by exposing myself to consistent and systematic study.

When I go through a spiritual education program for a length of time, I get the message from the Vēdāntic scriptures. **What is the message of Vēdāntic scriptures?** I have been presenting in the form of five capsules of the Vēdānta. The students are very much familiar. So, I won't elaborate. I will just go through them. They are very important capsules.

I am of the nature of Eternal and All-pervading consciousness. What is the meaning of the word consciousness? It will come in the next section. Then, the second capsule of Vēdānta is - **I am the only source of permanent peace, security and happiness.** The third capsule of Vēdānta

is - **By my mere presence, I give life to the material body and through the body, I experience the material universe.**

The word 'body' includes the mind also, because mind also is a subtle body only. The fourth capsule of Vēdānta is - **I am not affected by anything that takes place in the material world and in the material body, including the material mind.** The fifth capsule of Vēdānta is - **By forgetting my nature, I convert life into a struggle and by remembering my nature, I convert life into a sport or entertainment.**

These are five capsules which I am supposed to receive and assimilate through **Shravanam, Mananam** and **Nidhidhyāsanam** namely, **Gnyāna Yōga**. Then, the next question is - **What do you mean by the word consciousness?** The five features are given. Five features of Consciousness are -

1. Consciousness is not a part, product or property of the body.
2. Consciousness is an independent entity or principle which pervades and enlivens the body.
3. Consciousness is not limited by the boundaries of the body.
4. Consciousness continues to exist or survive even after death of the body.
5. The surviving consciousness is not accessible because of the absence of the body medium.

I have to understand these five principles or features of consciousness. Later, I should learn to use the word 'I', in the meaning of this consciousness. When I can do these two together, I can be called myself as a **Gnyāna Yōgi**. **Gnyāna Yōgi** is one who learns these five features and who trains his mind to use the word 'I', not in the meaning of the body or in the meaning of mind, but as this consciousness principle.

The one who practices this is called **Gnyāna Yōga Abhyāsaha** or **Anushthānam**. Then, we come to the final topic. Every spiritual seeker first has to go through the **Karma Yōga Sādhana** which is compulsory for all. And every spiritual seeker has to go through **Gnyāna Yōga**

Sādhana later. Both are compulsory for all. I have also said that **Bhakti Yōga** is the name of the combined **Karma Yōga** and **Gnyāna Yōga**.

So, what is our equation? **Karma Yōga + Gnyāna Yōga = Bhakti Yōga**. Care of the 12th chapter of the Bhagavad Gīta. When a spiritual seeker travels from **Karma Yōga** to **Gnyāna Yōga**, when a **Karma Yōgi** becomes a **Gnyāna Yōgi**, his mindset is totally changed. A **Karma Yōga** mindset is transformed into **Gnyāna Yōga** mindset.

I have been presenting this in the form of Format Conversion. This is another expression that I have been often using in several classes. It is a loaded expression. Format Conversion is transition of **Karma Yōga** mindset to **Gnyāna Yōga** mindset. **What is that?** I have given as the fifth topic here.

A **Karma Yōgi** has world view which can be presented in a triangular format of **Jīva-Jagat-Ēshwara**. That means I am an individual **Jīva** - is the first component. I look up on the world as **Jagat** which I confront in front of me, a world which gives varieties of problems. God is someone other than the **Jīva** and the **Jagat**, who is separate from and one who is the invisible creator, different from **Jīva** and the **Jagat**.

This is the world view that a **Karma Yōgi** has. Naturally, he looks upon **Mōksha** as a future event which he intensely yearns for. One day, I will get **Mōksha** and all the sufferings will go away. Therefore, **Mōksha** is a future event which will give freedom from suffering. Not only that, but **Mōksha** will give me freedom from the cycle of the birth and death.

Thus, freedom from suffering and freedom from the cycle of birth and death, which has to happen in future, is the **Mōksha** that a **Karma Yōgi** looks forward to. When a person enters **Gnyāna Yōga**, this triangular format is totally changed. A **Gnyāna Yōgi** has a world view which can be presented in a binary format of **Ātma** and **Anātma** which means, I am not an individual **Jīva**, but I am the consciousness principle. You should not raise your eyebrow.

When I say that you should remember the five features and the five capsules, all those ten items should flash in your mind. I am the Ātma of the above description which I have received through **Gnyāna Yōga** training. Once I practice to claim this fact, my attitude towards Mōksha has to totally change.

It is no more a future event because 'I', the consciousness am the illuminator of the sufferings of the body-mind complex. But 'I', the **Ātma** myself, do not have any sufferings in all the three periods of time. Therefore, there is no question of freedom from suffering. So, I consistently remove that mindset because I have practiced and developed that **Vāsana** as a **Karma Yōgi**.

As a **Gnyāna Yōgi**, I eliminate that. There is no question of freedom from suffering because 'I', the Ātma, do not have any sufferings to be free from. All the so called, pains and the pleasures belong to the material body and world, the **Anātma**. I am the non-material **Ātma**. Thus, claiming the **Mōksha** as my **Swarūpam** is a new format, a new mindset.

Not only that, but as a **Karma Yōgi**, I wanted freedom from the cycle of birth and death. When I offered Namaskāra to the Lord or the Guru, I prayed for freedom from cycle of birth and death. That is all fine as a Karma Yōgi. As a **Gnyāna Yōgi**, I should never use the word 'freedom from the cycle of birth and death' because 'I', the Ātma, being of the nature of eternal and all-pervading consciousness, don't have the cycle.

In me, the cycles of **Anātma** events are going. Therefore, I am **Nitya Muktaha**, ever free from birth and death. Practicing this kind of **Nitya Muktatvam** is called the nourishment of the binary format. A **Karma Yōgi** nourishes triangle format. For a **Gnyāna Yōgi**, **Mōksha** is freedom from triangular format and claiming that I am **Nitya Muktaha**.

On the auspicious **Guru Pūrnima** day, we will pray to the entire **Guru Parampara** that, according to our level, we should be able to go through

the entire spiritual journey. Come to binary format and claim that I am **Nitya Mukta**. With these words, I conclude this Guru Pūrṇima speech.

*Pūrṇmadah Pūrṇamidam Pūrṇāth Pūrṇamudachyatē.
Pūrṇasya Pūrṇamādāya Pūrṇamēvāvasishyatē..*

Om shānti shānti shānti



THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Swami Paramarthananda's algorithm for contemplation

Compiled by N. Avinashilingam

NATURE OF WORLD

B- Bandakatvam

A- Atrupthikaratvam

D- Duka Mistutatvam

Karma Yoga = Proper action + Proper attitude

KARMA YOGA = RIDE

R- Reduce adharmic activities

I- Increase dharmic activities

D- Dedicate all actions to the Lord

E- Experience everything as Prasada

DHARMIC ACTIVITIES = PANCHA MAHA YAGNA

Deva Yagna

Bhuta Yagna

Manushya Yagna

Brahma Yagna

Pitru Yagna

BENEFITS OF KARMA YOGA = 4S

Self esteem

Serenity

Setup harmony

Spiritual growth

BENEFITS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH I = FIR DECREASE

Frequency of emotional disturbances

Intensity of emotional disturbances

Recovery period

BENEFITS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH II = CCC INCREASE

Calmness

Cheerfulness

Confidence

OLD AGE PROBLEMS = FEDERAL PROBLEMS

Fear of disease

Depression due to inability to do things

Regret over the past

Loneliness

JNANA YOGA PREPARATION I = PORT REDUCTION

Possessions

Obligations or responsibilities

Relationships

Transactions

JNANA YOGA PREPARATION II = CLASP REJECTION OR RENUNCIATION

Claim of ownership and controllership

Anxiety

Special prayers seeking special favours for special people

JNANA YOGA = SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

Consistent and systematic study of vedantic scriptures for a length of time from a competent live Guru.

Receive and assimilate through Shravanam, Mananam and Nididhyasanam

JNANA YOGA

FIVE CAPSULES OF VEDANTA

1. I am of the nature of eternal and all pervasive consciousness
2. I am the only source of permanent peace, security and happiness
3. By my mere presence, I give life to the material body and through the body, I experience the material universe
4. I am not affected by anything that takes place in the material world and in the material body
5. By forgetting my nature, I convert life into struggle and by remembering my nature, I convert life into a sport or entertainment

FIVE FEATURES OF CONSCIOUSNESS OR ATMA OR I

1. Consciousness is not part, product or property of the body
2. Consciousness is an independent entity or principle which pervades and enlivens the body
3. Consciousness is not limited by the boundaries of the body
4. Consciousness continues to exist or survive even after the death of the body
5. The surviving consciousness is not accessible because of the absence of the body medium

FORMAT CONVERSION

A karma yogi has a world view which can be presented in a triangular format of Jiva, Jagat and Isvara

A jnana yogi has a world view which can be presented in a binary format of atma and anatma

A karma yogi becomes a jnana yogi by format conversion to binary format

CONTEMPLATION

All the pains and pleasures belong to the material body and world, the anatma. I am the atma or consciousness. I am nitya muktaha.

Brahma Satyam. Jagat Mithya. Aham Brahma Eva Naparaha.

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