

Yoga and Understanding

In his book, *Ponder These Truths*, Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī has a talk entitled, “Connect Yourself to God.” In it he says, “Do it by any means, but by any means do it.”

One of the better known ways of connecting ourselves with God is repetition of God’s name, and perhaps the greatest modern advocate of that method was Swāmī Rāmdās. He used to constantly advocate the repetition of the Name, and said that while any repetition would be of benefit, if we wanted it to be of true benefit, God’s name should be repeated with understanding.

Actually, that is true of all yogas. All of them are meant to be done with a fundamental understanding, including *jñāna yoga*. We would think that *jñāna yoga* itself was understanding, and it is meant to lead to it. But we can be great *jñāni*-s and still not have the basic understanding that Swāmī Rāmdās was advocating.

What is that basic understanding? It is an understanding at the core of our being, no matter what yoga we are following, that the whole purpose of our yoga is to rub away our ego. We say, I know that, but then, is that the steady understanding with which we do our yoga? Is everything about our yoga done in the light that its real purpose is the wearing away of our ego bit by bit, day after day? Do we test our yoga against that? Are we gradually wearing away our ego bit by bit, and therefore there is more and more connection with God?

This is the understanding that is required as a basis for all our yoga. It is the fundamental one. But actually the goal is to be resting in something that is unknowable and unthinkable and yet includes this world. Therefore, ultimately, we not only have to have dispassion for our own false identity, we have to have dispassion, in order to rest in the Unknowable, for everything that is known. It is because we don’t go to this depth, it is because our understanding is not at this depth, that frequently our yogas, while helpful, are not taking us to the level that we want.

Thus, there is a reason why “That thou art” is a *mahāvākya*, a great sentence. There is a reason that the declaration “I am Brahman” is a *mahāvākya*. There is a reason that the declaration “This Self is Brahman” is

a *mahāvākya*. This is where our understanding is meant to be. This is where it is meant to focus. This is the sharp knife that cuts through the veil that is blocking us from our true Self.

Thus, let us follow the yoga path that is natural to us, but let us know at the same time that it is meant to be followed with understanding.