

JNANA YOGA

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Jnana Yoga, the intellectual yoga, can be presented succinctly with four interrelated basic themes:

Categorical Framework¹

Superimposition

Dependent Origination

Two Truths

Jnana Yoga is a path. It is a path of knowledge for those who are of an inquiring turn of the mind. With reflection and contemplation, the Jnana Yogin comes to understand and embody undivided attention and clarity of thought. Through the development and exercise of the discriminative intellect one comes to comprehend the emptiness of the ego and the knowledge and experience of ultimate reality. One comes to see things as constituting a consistent, significant and illuminating pattern.

Categorical Framework

A categorical framework is a way of arranging the sensory input through one's perceptual endowment. This is how one views the world and speaks of what the world is like. The basic idea here to understand that the human being is a categorical framework.

The Principle of Superimposition

The principle of superimposition tells us that human beings superimpose on ultimate reality percepts and concepts. The Jnana Yogin comes to understand through reflection *on* experience that one cannot experience the world outside of one's own constitution. Experience and knowledge are bound up with one's very being.

So we see that a categorical framework is a superimpositional framework through which one attempts to grasp ultimate reality. One's superimpositional framework is how one views the world and speaks of what the world is like. The relation between ultimate reality and the world is what is called a one-many relation.

A categorical framework includes certain perceptual-conceptual possibilities and excludes others. An all-inclusive categorical framework is

not possible. Now one can make the distinction between absolute truth and universal truth.

Universal truths are relative. Absolute truths are independent of any constitution. Absolute truths cannot be expressed and communicated. What this means is that a categorical framework cannot give rise to an absolute truth.

Categorical frameworks depend on what is excluded and what is included and every categorical framework leads to situations in which it breaks down. This is how the Jnana Yogin comes to understand that relation has two functions, it separates and unites two things.

The Principle of Dependent Origination

The Principle of Dependent Origination tells us that every phenomenon arises in dependence upon other phenomena and passes away in dependence upon other phenomena.

Every phenomenon arises and passes away in dependence on other phenomena. No phenomenon is self-existent. This means that all phenomena are empty of self-existence. Empty here does not mean non-existence or lack of nature, it means lack of own-existence and own nature. It is in this sense that all phenomena are empty.

Every phenomenon is a dependent and relative existent and has a dependent and relative nature. This is how one comes to see that the Principle of Superimposition is what gives rise to the Principle of Dependent Origination.

The Principle of Two Truths

A categorical framework enables one to formulate a coherent view of experience. Reality is neither true nor false. Only views of reality can be called true or false.

There are two kinds of knowledge and truth. Lower truth is relative, conditioned, mundane, conventional truth. Higher truth is absolute, unconditioned, supramundane truth.

All categorical truths are perceptual-conceptual truths. Lower truths are within a given categorical framework. Higher truth is non-categorical, non-phenomenal, non-perceptual and non-conceptual. It cannot be grasped through any categorical framework. It transcends the senses and intellect. Every lower truth is a view of reality or integral component of a view of reality. Higher truth is not a view of reality.

Lower truths are grasped through the senses and intellect, categorical frameworks. Higher truth is to be apprehended non-perceptually and non-conceptually, non-categorically, directly and intuitively.

Reality is not a view. It is beyond all views. The Jnana Yogin comes to understand the rational, irrational and the non-rational. The non-rational is outside of any categorical framework. Views of reality are rational or irrational. Reality itself is non-rational. It simply is.

Notes

- 1) Cf. Ramakrishna Puligandla, *Fundamentals of Indian Philosophy* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1975).