

## 'Atha': A Revolution

There are three main paths to realization of the self – 'Bhakti yoga', 'Gyan yoga' and 'Karma yoga'. Which path is suitable for a seeker is dependent on his temperament, on his nature. If emotions (bhav, feelings) dominate in a seeker then Bhakti Yoga will be the most suitable path for him. If intellect, wisdom is what dominates a seeker's behaviour then he is most likely to be suitable for the path of Gyan yoga and if a seeker is action oriented then he is fit for karma yoga. Whether it is emotion, intellect or action that is the dominating force in a seeker, it is highly unlikely that he will endeavour on the path of spirituality until he experiences '**Atha!** '**Atha**' stands for bringing about a revolution, for changing the course of life. In other words, to steer the course of life which currently revolves around worldly pleasures and materialistic things towards the Almighty or towards the ultimate Truth. Therefore in Vedanta it is said, '**Atha Brahma Jigyasa**'. Similarly even in Bhakti and Yoga it is said, '**Atha Bhakti Jigyasa**' and '**Atha Yoganushasanam**'. The breaking of our belief systems, our conceptions (or misconceptions) is **Atha**. Unfortunately we consider our beliefs to be the truth and therefore when they break we feel hurt. In reality though when one realizes or experiences what Truth actually is then the beliefs, conceptions automatically fade away and this brings peace and bliss. For example, for a seed to sprout and grow its outer core must break. As long as there is a sheath or a shell around the seed it doesn't sprout and until it sprouts it cannot grow into a tree. To travel the distance from a seed to a tree the outer covering has to break. Similarly as long as a seeker is chained by his belief-systems he cannot unearth the Truth. The barrier or the shell that exists preventing one from realizing God or experiencing Self, is this belief-system. The ego and the attachment that one has towards these belief systems is ignorance. But once '**Atha**' occurs, a person who until now was entangled by objects will start to develop nonchalance towards the same objects. The inquisitiveness to know the Truth is born and thus the search begins. This thirst for knowledge or experience of the Self causes the focus of life change its direction towards the Self. The light of Truth starts to spread and brighten up the life and in the process devours the darkness of ignorance.

Until **atha** happens, or in other words until the desire to realize the Truth intensifies, until then whether the person is married or a sanyasi he cannot find the Truth. To experience Truth it doesn't matter whether one is married or a recluse, what matters is whether there is a strong desire to experience it. This strong desire is what is called **Jigyasa**. The liberating Knowledge neither belongs to a saint nor a householder, it is the seeker's. One who is thirsty will find water and quench his thirst! Thus, a seeker who yearns for liberation will strive for it and will experience the ultimate truth. Hence, he is a blessed person in whom the seed of **jigyasa** has sprouted.

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