



# The Trinity of Intention, Attention, and Attitude Through the Three Paths

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# The Trinity of Intention, Attention, and Attitude Through the Three Paths

I want to begin with a question that might make some of us a bit uncomfortable. How many of you have checked your phone during a meditation session? Or perhaps during a spiritual discourse? Maybe even during prayer?

Please, no need to raise hands. I ask because I've done it myself. And in that moment of reaching for the phone while supposedly reaching for the Divine, I realized we're living through something unprecedented. We live in an age where attention has become the most sought-after commodity in the digital marketplace. Tech companies spend billions to capture just three more seconds of your attention. They call it the "attention economy."

But here's the paradox – we've never had more ways to pay attention, yet we've never been more distracted. We have meditation apps on phones that interrupt our meditation. We have spiritual podcasts that we listen to while multitasking. We seek presence of Divinity while living in absence of perceptive awareness.

Today, I want to share with you a timeless truth that transcends our modern predicament. It's a truth the ancient seers understood, one that neuroscience now confirms, and one that can transform how we live each moment. The truth is this:

**What one attends to, one becomes. What remains ignored, stays forever outside the circle of being.**

But I must tell you something more. Attention alone - without right intention and elevated attitude - becomes a ship without rudder or sail. You may have the most powerful engine, but without direction and proper conditions, you'll simply go in circles.

This is why the ancients spoke not just of attention, but of a trinity: Intention, Attention, and Attitude.

**Intention gives us direction - the "why."  
Attention gives us focus - the "what."  
Attitude gives us quality - the "how."**

Think of it like this. Imagine you're learning to cook. Your intention might be to nourish your family. Your attention focuses on the recipe, the ingredients, the technique. But your attitude - whether you cook with love or resentment, with presence or distraction - that determines whether you're making food or creating prasad, sacred offering.

Now, the ancient seers recognized something profound. They saw that human beings have different temperaments, different ways of approaching truth. And so they revealed three primary paths, three

doorways to the same destination. Not because truth is divided, but because we are diverse. These three paths are:

**Karma Yoga** - the path of action, for those who ask “What should I DO?”

**Jnana Yoga** - the path of knowledge, for those who ask “What should I KNOW?”

**Bhakti Yoga** - the path of devotion, for those who ask “Whom should I LOVE?”

Let me tell you a story that illustrates this beautifully.

There was once a master musician who accepted three students on the same day. Each came with burning desire to learn, but each was different in temperament.

**The first student was a natural Karma Yogi.** From day one, he practiced eight hours daily. His fingers flew across the strings with mechanical precision. He had clear intention - to master the craft. His attention was laser-focused on technique, timing, and discipline. But his attitude? His attitude was ambitious: “I must become the best. I must outshine all others.”

After a year, his music was technically perfect. Every note was precise. Every rhythm exact. But when he played, people would nod appreciatively and say, “Very correct.” No one ever wept. No one ever danced. His music was soulless.

**The second student was a Jnana Yogi.** She spent hours studying the theory of music – the mathematics of harmony, the physics of sound, the philosophy behind each raga. Her attention dissected and analyzed every aspect. She could tell you why certain combinations created specific emotions. Her attitude was purely intellectual: “I must comprehend completely.”

After a year, she could lecture brilliantly on music. She understood every nuance. But when she played, it was like listening to a musical dissertation. Precise, accurate, intellectually stimulating – but cold as winter stone.

**The third student was a Bhakti Yogi.** He would sit with tears in his eyes just tuning his instrument, overwhelmed by love for the master and the divine essence in music. His attention flowed through his heart. Every note was an offering. But his attitude was purely emotional: “I feel so much, I’m drowning in feeling.”

After a year, his music could move people to tears. But it wandered without structure. It was like a river during monsoon – powerful but flooding its banks, destroying as much as it nourished.

The master watched all three with knowing eyes. One day, he called them together.

“Each of you has mastered one face of music,” he said, “but music, like life, has three faces that must become one. You,” he pointed to the first, “have perfected action without love or understanding. Your music is a body without soul. You,” he pointed to the second, “have gathered knowledge without embodiment or feeling. Your

music is a mind without heart. And you,” he pointed to the third, “have cultivated devotion without discipline or wisdom. Your music is emotion without container.”

Then the master did something unexpected. He asked them to teach each other.

**The Karma Yogi was to learn devotion from the Bhakti Yogi and understanding from the Jnana Yogi.**

**The Jnana Yogi was to learn disciplined practice from the Karma Yogi and heartfelt offering from the Bhakti Yogi.**

**The Bhakti Yogi was to ground his devotion in daily practice and philosophical understanding.**

A year later, when each student performed, something miraculous happened. Their music was no longer just technically perfect, intellectually profound, or emotionally moving. It was all three. It had become alive. People didn't just listen - they were transformed.

The master smiled and said, “Now you understand. Doing, knowing, and loving - they are not three different things. They are three strings of the same instrument. Play only one, and you have a note. Play all three in harmony, and you have music.”

Let me share another story that goes even deeper.

A renowned musician accepted a new student who had traveled from a distant village. This young man had sold everything he owned to

study with the master. He arrived with great expectations. But for the first month, the master gave him no instruction. None. He simply had the student sit in the corner of the room while he practiced.

Day after day, the student sat. And within him, three voices began to war:

**The Karma voice demanded:** “When will I get to practice? I must DO something! I didn’t come here to sit idle. My fingers are itching to play!”

**The Jnana voice questioned:** “What is the theory behind this silence? What concept should I be grasping? There must be some hidden knowledge I’m supposed to decode.”

**The Bhakti voice whispered:** “Perhaps... perhaps just sitting in the master’s presence is itself the teaching. Maybe I need nothing more than this.”

For weeks, these voices tortured him. Some days, the Karma voice would win, and he’d sit with barely contained frustration, his body tense with the need to act. Other days, the Jnana voice would dominate, and he’d sit analyzing every sound the master made, trying to extract some secret formula. And sometimes, the Bhakti voice would prevail, and he’d sit in peaceful adoration, but without any clarity or purpose.

Then one morning, something shifted. As he sat, all three voices suddenly harmonized. He found himself actively listening - this was Karma, the action of complete presence. He began to understand



the teaching in the silence - this was Jnana, the wisdom that comes not through words but through being. And he maintained reverence for the process - this was Bhakti, the trust that allowed the teaching to unfold.

The master, without turning around, said: "Now you are ready."

"Ready for what, Master?"

"Ready to learn that in true music, as in true spirituality, doing, knowing, and loving are not sequential steps. They are simultaneous. When you pick up your instrument, you must act with your hands, understand with your mind, and offer with your heart - all in the same moment. This is why you had to first learn to sit with all three qualities alive in you."

Now, you might wonder - these are beautiful stories, but what about our daily life? What about the worker who stretches the work hour, thinking more time equals more productivity? What about us, checking emails during family dinner, scrolling through social media during meetings?

This is where the teaching becomes urgently practical. You see, when we operate from fragmented attention, we're like that worker who thinks stretching time creates value. But this is action without wisdom or devotion - what the ancients called mere shrama, toil. The intention may be to complete the task, but without understanding the work's deeper purpose or the attitude of offering, the result is mechanical, lifeless.

Let me make this very concrete. When you check your phone during a meditation session, you're committing a three-fold violation:

**From the Karma perspective**, you're like a cook who keeps leaving the kitchen. The food either burns or remains raw. No sacred action can be completed when constantly interrupted.

**From the Jnana perspective**, you're confusing the eternal with the ephemeral. You're saying that whatever notification just arrived is more real, more important than the consciousness you came to discover. It shows a fundamental confusion about what truly matters.

**From the Bhakti perspective** - and this perhaps stings the most - it's like turning away from your beloved to check if someone more interesting has arrived. It reveals that our love for the Divine is conditional, easily distracted. We're not yet the mad lovers, the true bhaktas who see only the Beloved everywhere.

There's a powerful teaching in our Heartfulness tradition. Babuji says: "It is better to stay home and be in remembrance of the Master than to be physically present while thinking of home and business." Listen to how each path understands this:

**The Karma Yogi says:** "Physical presence with mental absence is failed action. Like an archer whose body draws the bow while the mind aims elsewhere. Better to perform the action of remembrance wholly than the action of presence partially."

**The Jnana Yogi says:** “True presence is not physical but conscious. Space and time are maya, illusion. Consciousness is the only reality. The one who knows this finds the master present everywhere.”

**The Bhakti Yogi says:** “The heart knows no distance. Sometimes separation from the beloved intensifies love, making absence a form of intense presence. The Gopis found Krishna more present in separation than in union.”

Do you see? Each path offers a piece of the truth. Together, they offer the whole.

Now, I promised you practical wisdom, not just philosophy. So let me share how this trinity can transform your daily life. There’s a beautiful principle: “One gets what one is attentive towards.” But this operates differently through each path:

**From Karma Yoga:** “As you sow, so shall you reap.” Your attention is the seed. Repeated attention is the sowing. What manifests in your life is the harvest. But the quality of attention - whether it’s sattvic (pure), rajasic (agitated), or tamasic (dull) - determines the quality of fruit.

**From Jnana Yoga:** “Tat tvam asi” - That thou art. What we attend to, we become, because at the deepest level, we already are everything. Attention merely reveals what was always true. When the sage attends to Brahman, he recognizes “Aham Brahmasmi” - I am Brahman.

**From Bhakti Yoga:** The Divine takes the form that the devotee's love desires. This is divine reciprocity. Mother Yashoda's maternal attention brought Krishna as her son. Radha's romantic attention brought Krishna as her beloved. Your quality of attention draws the corresponding divine response.

Let me give you a practical framework for daily life:

## Morning Practice – Beginning with Integration

When you wake, before reaching for your phone, try this:

**Karma aspect:** Rise with the intention of dedicated action. Let your first action set the day's tone. Make your bed mindfully. Each fold, each smoothing is practice for bringing consciousness to all actions.

**Jnana aspect:** Ask yourself the eternal questions: "Who am I beyond all the roles I'll play today? What is my deepest purpose?" Don't seek mental answers. Let the questions work on you.

**Bhakti aspect:** Offer the day to something greater. Whether you call it God, Truth, the Highest Good, or simply Life itself. Say, "May my actions serve. May my understanding deepen. May my love expand."

## During Work – The Living Laboratory

Your workplace becomes your spiritual practice hall:

**Karma integration:** Excel in your work while releasing attachment to results. Do your absolute best, then let go. Success or failure – receive both as *prasad*, divine gift.

**Jnana integration:** See each challenge as an opportunity for self-knowledge. That difficult colleague? They're showing you where your buttons are. That impossible deadline? It's revealing your relationship with pressure.

**Bhakti integration:** Transform your colleagues into forms of the divine. Serve the divinity in them, even when – especially when – it's well hidden. Turn every task into an offering.

## Evening Reflection – Three-fold Review

Before sleep, instead of scrolling through the day's noise, try this:

**Karma review:** Which actions today served the highest good? Which arose merely from ego? No judgment, just recognition.

**Jnana review:** What did I learn about my true nature today? Where did I identify with the temporary and forget the eternal?

**Bhakti review:** Where did I lose the attitude of devotion? Where did I find it again? When did my heart close? When did it open?

Now, I know what some of you are thinking. “This sounds beautiful, but what about technology? How do we handle these devices that fragment our attention?” Let me give you the three-fold approach:

**Karma approach:** Establish clear protocols. Make phone checking a conscious action at designated times, not a compulsive reaction. Create rituals – three conscious breaths before engaging, a moment of gratitude after.

**Jnana approach:** Discriminate between information and wisdom. Before clicking, ask: “Will this nourish my understanding or merely feed mental restlessness?” Remember – true knowledge liberates; mere information often binds.

**Bhakti approach:** Dedicate your technology use to service. Before engaging, ask: “How can this serve love?” Whether responding to emails or creating content, infuse each interaction with the spirit of seva, selfless service.

Dear friends, here’s the ultimate secret. Karma, Jnana, and Bhakti are not separate paths. They never were. They’re three faces of one truth, three streams of one river, three notes in one chord.

When separated, each becomes distorted:

**Karma** without Jnana and Bhakti becomes binding action, mere busyness

**Jnana** without Karma and Bhakti becomes dry intellectualism, philosophy without life

**Bhakti** without Karma and Jnana becomes emotional sentimentalism, feeling without foundation

But when integrated:

**Karma** becomes enlightened action - kriya shakti

**Jnana** becomes living wisdom - jnana shakti

**Bhakti** becomes transformative love - bhakti shakti

These three shaktis, these three powers, are actually one. Like fire's light, heat, and burning are inseparable aspects of fire itself.

In this very moment, as you sit here listening, notice what's happening within you:

**The Karma Yogi in you is asking:** "How can I practice what I'm hearing?"

**The Jnana Yogi in you is asking:** "Do I truly understand this teaching?"

**The Bhakti Yogi in you is asking:** "Can I feel the love behind these words?"

The integrated practitioner asks all three simultaneously, recognizing that true spiritual life requires:

**The hands of Karma Yoga to serve**

**The head of Jnana Yoga to discern**

**The heart of Bhakti Yoga to love**

When intention provides direction, attention provides focus, and attitude provides quality - all through the integrated lens of action, wisdom, and devotion - life itself becomes yoga. Every moment offers the opportunity to work with dedication, understand with clarity, and love without limit.

Dear friends, I want to leave you with this. The paths appear separate only to lead us from our various starting points. But they converge in the heart - that cave of the heart, dahara, that the Upanishads speak of - where action, knowledge, and love reveal themselves as three streams of the same ocean of consciousness.

Life calls to us through countless voices. The mind questions, seeking understanding. The heart yearns, pursuing its beloved. The body moves, seeking to create and serve. But for one established in the integration of all three paths, every summons becomes an invitation to practice, every question a doorway to wisdom, every yearning a bridge to the divine.

We need not renounce the world. We need only transform our relationship with it. We need not flee to caves in the mountains. We need only find the cave of the heart in the midst of the marketplace. We need not wait for perfect conditions. We need only discover that this imperfect moment is perfectly designed for our awakening.

So I ask you - no, I challenge you: How will you live when you leave from here today? Will you sleepwalk through your days, letting attention scatter like leaves in the wind? Or will you claim your birthright as conscious beings? Will you wield intention like a sword



of clarity? Will you focus attention like a laser of transformation?  
Will you polish attitude until it reflects the divine in everything?

The kingdom of consciousness awaits. And the price of entry is simply this: How fully will you dare to live what you now know to be true?

Rise then, O noble souls! Let your work become worship.  
Let your questions become quests. Let your love become a  
beacon for all who stumble in the dark. Show up completely.  
Act with purpose. Know with clarity. Love without measure.

The time for half-measures has passed. The world doesn't  
need more people who are partially present. It needs  
beings who are fully alive, fully engaged, fully integrated.

Remember who you are! Reclaim your birthright! Return  
to wholeness!

Welcome home, divine ones. Welcome home.

Thank you.

With love and respect,  
*Kamlesh*



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heartfulness  
advancing in love