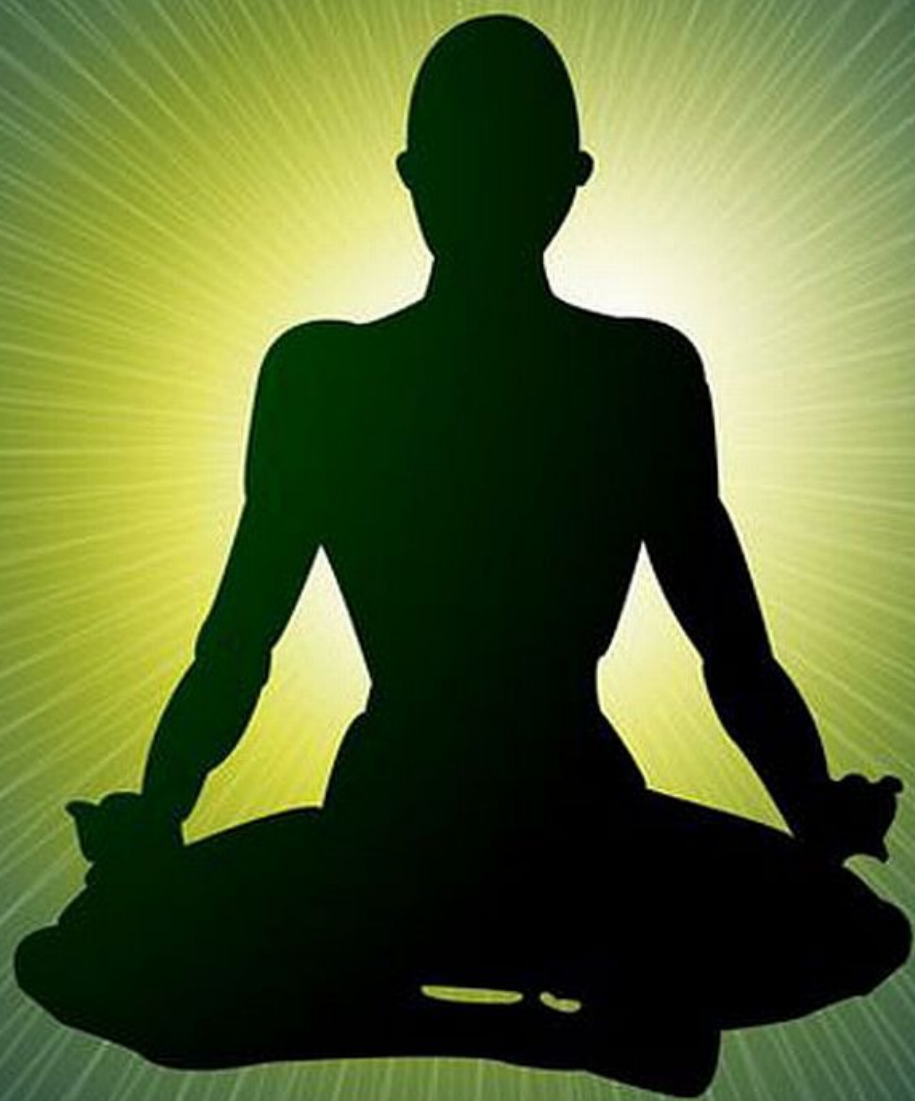


RAJA YOGA



SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Raja Yoga

Swami Vivekananda

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admin@jazzybee-verlag.de

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YOGA AND THE ULTIMATE AIM OF LIFE.

Swami Vivekananda

According to the Vedic Scriptures there are four objects for which men strive and struggle during their life on earth. These are discharge of duty, acquisition of wealth, gratification of desire, and moksha or the attainment of final liberation from the bondage of matter. This is a fairly good classification of the common aims of human life, but it is evident that all four cannot be held in the same esteem. The fourth one—final liberation—is very properly considered to be the highest and most important, for by it alone can the soul come to know and realize its own divine origin and divine destiny. The other aims of life have all to be held in subordination to this supreme one; but they are not to be ignored or suppressed altogether. There is nothing which is absolutely and in itself wrong either in the love of pleasure or in the love of wealth. To the man who has understanding and who does his duty neither pleasure nor wealth can prove a stumbling block. If he loves wealth, he does so because he knows that when properly used it is one of the most potent instruments for good placed in the hands of man. If he loves pleasure, he also does so because he knows that when it is derived from worthy objects and directed to worthy ends, it is capable of transforming the whole inner nature of man. Neither will endanger his spiritual well-being so long as he guards unclouded his higher sense of duty, for duty or Dharma is the pole-star which guides the soul of man safely and truly across the troubled waters of wealth and desire to the final haven of eternal peace and bliss.

Duty is variously defined in Indian sacred literature. A

man's place in life determines what his duty is. The Vedanta recognizes the value of renunciation or asceticism and gives to the order of ascetics an honored place, but it does not claim that the soul's final deliverance and bliss can be achieved by that path alone. It holds that salvation is as possible for the ideal householder as for the ideal Sannyasin (one who has renounced) ; and that while only a few are fit to lead the ascetic life of renunciation, the majority of mankind are intended to live as householders. It also recognizes more than one method of realizing the ultimate aim of life. The path of work {Karma Yoga), of Wisdom (Jnana-Yoga), of devotion (Bhakti-Yoga), and of self-surrender (Prapatti) are the chief among those which the Vedanta declares make men blessed and lead them to the final goal of freedom.

Karma-Yoga is the realization of God through works. It consists in the performance of righteous works without wishing to obtain the fruits thereof and with the conviction that such performance of work is itself an act of worship. Every person is born to some definite station and condition in life and is endowed with certain natural capacities and qualities. According as these vary the nature of the work that he has to do in life also varies. But whatever may be the work that a man has to do, he is expected to do it well and without the least attachment to the fruits thereof. It is not held that the work will not produce its fruits and that the worker ought not to live upon them. It is the selfish love of the fruits of work that is condemned; and who is there that does not know that morality rises only on the ruins of selfishness?

"Every action is right which, in presence of a lower principle, follows a higher; every action is wrong, which, in presence of a higher principle, follows a lower." Such is Dr. Martineau's beautiful, simple statement of the canon of

right and wrong; and the practice of Karma-Yoga is intended to train men always to follow the higher principle even in the compelling presence of a lower. The world of work is the world of temptations. It is also the gymnasium in which the human soul is drilled and disciplined that it may gain strength to work out its destiny. The allurements of sin and the pangs of sorrow are powerful factors in determining the shape and use of human life. Unless a man passes through the fiery furnace of active work in the world, the encrusted impurities of his mind and heart cannot be burned away. That sinful or ignorant actions obstruct the knowledge of the real nature of the Soul and God and thereby lead man on through successive births and deaths, is clearly stated in almost every page of the Upanishads. "Every wrong act destroys wisdom"; "When one's nature is purified by works, then wisdom begins"; "Whoever understands the nature of wisdom and work, overcomes death by work and obtains immortality through wisdom." These passages plainly declare that true wisdom comes only after the evil propensities of the heart are all destroyed by the steady practice of unselfish work.

Jnana-Yoga or the realization of God through wisdom is possible to those only who are pure in heart. "We desire, and desire most passionately when we are most ourselves, to give our service to that which is universal and to that which is abiding," says Mr. Balfour in his "Foundations of Belief." That which enables one to distinguish between what is universal and abiding and what is limited and transient is the wisdom which leads the soul to God. In the "Mahabharata" San jay a declares to the king: "He that hath no wisdom and whose mind is shrouded in the darkness of ignorance knoweth not the Lord. . . . Having obtained purity of heart through faith, I have come to know God with the help of the Scriptures." Here wisdom, it is evident, is understood to consist in knowledge of the

Supreme resulting from faith and purity of heart. In the same way in which work fortifies the struggling heart against temptations and disciplines human life into proper shape, wisdom enables the aspiring man to perceive the divine purpose of life on earth and points out to him the way to God. To know the nature of God, the nature of soul, and the relation between God and soul is really to know how and for what purpose to live. Not to know how to work well in life means not to be well-equipped for the holy pilgrimage of the soul to the abode of God; and not to possess wisdom means not to know where God's abode is and how one may approach it. As man is now situated his knowledge of the glory and greatness of God must be faint and imperfect; but even such faint and imperfect knowledge is quite enough to make him realize his own littleness and the folly and futility of selfishness. When through wisdom man learns that in God's glorious universe all is law and yet all is love and that the purpose of creation is the abiding salvation of the soul, he at once awakens to the grandeur and the beauty of God's love to man. This realization naturally fills his heart with love to God and thus wisdom leads to love.

Bhakti-Yoga or the realization of God through love and devotion is a theme on which Indian saints and sages have sung the sweetest songs and composed the most soul-enrapturing hymns of praise and supplication. Bhakti is regarded by many as the ultimate path. "Two sciences have to be known, the higher and the lower," it is said in the Mundaka-Upanishad; and if, as we have just seen, wisdom leads to the love of God, the higher science may well be the science of this supreme love. In the Bhagavad-Gita, we read: "Only by love and unswerving devotion to Me can I be known in My true nature and entered into. He who works for Me, who regards Me as the Supreme Goal, who is free from selfish attachment and who hateth no living being,

that devotee comes unto Me." God must seem the Highest Goal to the devotee; otherwise how can he love Him and Him alone with unfaltering devotion? When the heart of the devotee is fully immersed in the ocean of God's love, he naturally sees his Beloved everywhere and in all things; and all that he does, he does for Him and Him alone. Such a man can have no selfish attachment of any kind, nor can he hate any being. It is not the fear of punishment in hell or in any other place that makes the devotee do his duty. His morality depends on what has been called a "higher religious sanction," which appeals to the motives of love and reverence rather than of hope and fear. "In this higher frame of mind we keep God's commandments because we love Him, not because we hope for His rewards or fear His punishments." We love and revere God and therefore we strive to be like Him, to be perfect even as He is perfect. Prapatti-Yoga is the method of realizing God by complete surrender to Him. "Thy will be done" is the only prayer which this Yoga knows. "Take thou refuge in Me alone. I will free thee from all imperfections ; grieve not": these are the final words or the "supreme secret" of the teachings of the Gita, words which fully embody the spirit of this path of absolute surrender. According to one of the Indian Sacred writings, this Yoga of "refuge-taking" is six-fold in nature. It consists in "the practice of that which is good, and the avoidance of all that is harmful, in strong faith that God alone is the deliverer, in earnest prayer to Him for protection, in a complete entrusting of the soul to Him for His use, and in the sense of our own littleness." When one throws one's self entirely at the feet of God, one cannot do wrong. The man who has thus taken refuge in God need not be afraid of sin; God works through him and he is free and blessed.

Work, worship, love and surrender all lead to the supreme goal of liberation, in attaining which the soul knows God as

a blissful Reality; and knowing Him, "forthwith enters into Him." This does not mean however complete annihilation or submergence as so often supposed by western scholars. On the contrary, when in the state of Moksha or freedom the soul becomes united with God, it acquires a fuller and nobler personality, in relation to which all human limitations are abolished and evil is non-existent. Is it possible that knowledge of our oneness with God, the Source of all consciousness and life, could destroy our conscious existence? God does not cease to be God when He is known as the All and the All-in-all. Man does not lose anything of value if he rises above his finite condition to know that he is one with the Infinite. In this world of Divine realization there is no place for evil or imperfection. The realm of ego and moral struggle has been transcended and the Ultimate Goal of Eternal Peace and Blessedness is attained. "He whose passions are quieted and mind perfectly tranquil, who has become one with God, being freed from all impurities, to such a Yogi comes Bliss Supreme."

Raja Yoga

Preface

Since the dawn of history, various extraordinary phenomena have been recorded as happening amongst human beings. Witnesses are not wanting in modern times to attest to the fact of such events, even in societies living under the full blaze of modern science. The vast mass of such evidence is unreliable, as coming from ignorant, superstitious, or fraudulent persons. In many instances the so - called miracles are imitations. But what do they imitate? It is not the sign of a candid and scientific mind to throw overboard anything without proper investigation. Surface scientists, unable to explain the various extraordinary mental phenomena, strive to ignore their very existence. They are, therefore, more culpable than those who think that their prayers are answered by a being, or beings, above the clouds, or than those who believe that their petitions will make such beings change the course of the universe. The latter have the excuse of ignorance, or at least of a defective system of education, which has taught them dependence upon such beings, a dependence which has become a part of their degenerate nature. The former have no such excuse.

For thousands of years such phenomena have been studied, investigated, and generalised, the whole ground of the religious faculties of man has been analysed, and the practical result is the science of Raja-Yoga. Raja-Yoga does not, after the unpardonable manner of some modern scientists, deny the existence of facts which are difficult to explain; on the other hand, it gently yet in no uncertain terms tells the superstitious that miracles, and answers to

prayers, and powers of faith, though true as facts, are not rendered comprehensible through the superstitious explanation of attributing them to the agency of a being, or beings, above the clouds. It declares that each man is only a conduit for the infinite ocean of knowledge and power that lies behind mankind. It teaches that desires and wants are in man, that the power of supply is also in man; and that wherever and whenever a desire, a want, a prayer has been fulfilled, it was out of this infinite magazine that the supply came, and not from any supernatural being. The idea of supernatural beings may rouse to a certain extent the power of action in man, but it also brings spiritual decay. It brings dependence; it brings fear; it brings superstition. It degenerates into a horrible belief in the natural weakness of man. There is no supernatural, says the Yogi, but there are in nature gross manifestations and subtle manifestations. The subtle are the causes, the gross the effects. The gross can be easily perceived by the senses; not so the subtle. The practice of Raja - yoga will lead to the acquisition of the more subtle perceptions.

All the orthodox systems of India philosophy have one goal in view, the liberation of the soul through perfection. The method is by Yoga. The word Yoga covers an immense ground, but both the Sankhya and the Vedanta Schools point to Yoga in some form or other.

The subject of the present book is that form of Yoga known as Raja-Yoga. The aphorisms of Patanjali are the highest authority on Raja-Yoga, and form its textbook. The other philosophers, though occasionally differing from Patanjali in some philosophical points, have, as a rule, acceded to his method of practice a decided consent. The first part of this book comprises several lectures to classes delivered by the present writer in New York. The second part is a rather free translation of the aphorisms (Sutras) of Patanjali, with

a running commentary. Effort has been made to avoid technicalities as far as possible, and to keep to the free and easy style of conversation. In the first part some simple and specific directions are given for the student who want to practise, but all such are especially and earnestly reminded that, with few exceptions, Yoga can only be safely learnt by direct contact with a teacher. If these conversations succeed in awakening a desire for further information on the subject, the teacher will not be wanting.

The system of Patanjali is based upon the system of the Sankhyas, the points of difference being very few. The two most important differences are, first, that Patanjali admits a Personal God in the form of a first teacher, while the only God the Sankhyas admit is a nearly perfected being, temporarily in charge of a cycle of creation. Second, the Yogis hold the mind to be equally all - pervading with the soul, or Purusha, and the Sankhyas do not.

—The Author.

Each soul is potentially divine.

The goal is to manifest this Divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal.

Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy -- by one, or more, or all of these -- and be free.

This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.

Introductory

All our knowledge is based upon experience. What we call inferential knowledge, in which we go from the less to the more general, or from the general to the particular, has experience as its basis. In what are called the exact sciences, people easily find the truth, because it appeals to the particular experiences of every human being. The scientist does not tell you to believe in anything, but he has certain results which come from his own experiences, and reasoning on them when he asks us to believe in his conclusions, he appeals to some universal experience of humanity. In every exact science there is a basis which is common to all humanity, so that we can at once see the truth or the fallacy of the conclusions drawn therefrom. Now, the question is: Has religion any such basis or not? I shall have to answer the question both in the affirmative and in the negative.

Religion, as it is generally taught all over the world, is said to be based upon faith and belief, and, in most cases, consists only of different sets of theories, and that is the reason why we find all religions quarrelling with one another. These theories, again, are based upon belief. One man says there is a great Being sitting above the clouds and governing the whole universe, and he asks me to believe that solely on the authority of his assertion. In the same way, I may have my own ideas, which I am asking others to believe, and if they ask a reason, I cannot give them any. This is why religion and metaphysical philosophy have a bad name nowadays. Every educated man seems to say, "Oh, these religions are only bundles of theories without any standard to judge them by, each man preaching his own pet ideas." Nevertheless, there is a basis of universal belief in religion, governing all the different theories and all the varying ideas of different sects in

different countries. Going to their basis we find that they also are based upon universal experiences.

In the first place, if you analyse all the various religions of the world, you will find that these are divided into two classes, those with a book and those without a book. Those with a book are the strongest, and have the largest number of followers. Those without books have mostly died out, and the few new ones have very small followings. Yet, in all of them we find one consensus of opinion, that the truths they teach are the results of the experiences of particular persons. The Christian asks you to believe in his religion, to believe in Christ and to believe in him as the incarnation of God, to believe in a God, in a soul, and in a better state of that soul. If I ask him for reason, he says he believes in them. But if you go to the fountain - head of Christianity, you will find that it is based upon experience. Christ said he saw God; the disciples said they felt God; and so forth. Similarly, in Buddhism, it is Buddha's experience. He experienced certain truths, saw them, came in contact with them, and preached them to the world. So with the Hindus. In their books the writers, who are called Rishis, or sages, declare they experienced certain truths, and these they preach. Thus it is clear that all the religions of the world have been built upon that one universal and adamant foundation of all our knowledge -- direct experience. The teachers all saw God; they all saw their own souls, they saw their future, they saw their eternity, and what they saw they preached. Only there is this difference that by most of these religions especially in modern times, a peculiar claim is made, namely, that these experiences are impossible at the present day; they were only possible with a few men, who were the first founders of the religions that subsequently bore their names. At the present time these experiences have become obsolete, and, therefore, we have now to take religion on belief. This I entirely deny. If there

has been one experience in this world in any particular branch of knowledge, it absolutely follows that that experience has been possible millions of times before, and will be repeated eternally. Uniformity is the rigorous law of nature; what once happened can happen always.

The teachers of the science of Yoga, therefore, declare that religion is not only based upon the experience of ancient times, but that no man can be religious until he has the same perceptions himself. Yoga is the science which teaches us how to get these perceptions. It is not much use to talk about religion until one has felt it. Why is there so much disturbance, so much fighting and quarrelling in the name of God? There has been more bloodshed in the name of God than for any other cause, because people never went to the fountain - head; they were content only to give a mental assent to the customs of their forefathers, and wanted others to do the same. What right has a man to say he has a soul if he does not feel it, or that there is a God if he does not see Him? If there is a God we must see Him, if there is a soul we must perceive it; otherwise it is better not to believe. It is better to be an outspoken atheist than a hypocrite. The modern idea, on the one hand, with the "learned" is that religion and metaphysics and all search after a Supreme Being are futile; on the other hand, with the semi - educated, the idea seems to be that these things really have no basis; their only value consists in the fact that they furnish strong motive powers for doing good to the world. If men believe in a God, they may become good, and moral, and so make good citizens. We cannot blame them for holding such ideas, seeing that all the teaching these men get is simply to believe in an eternal rigmarole of words, without any substance behind them. They are asked to live upon words; can they do it? If they could, I should not have the least regard for human nature. Man wants truth, wants to experience truth for himself; when he

has grasped it, realised it, felt it within his heart of hearts, then alone, declare the Vedas, would all doubts vanish, all darkness be scattered, and all crookedness be made straight. "Ye children of immortality, even those who live in the highest sphere, the way is found; there is a way out of all this darkness, and that is by perceiving Him who is beyond all darkness; there is no other way."

The science of Raja-Yoga proposes to put before humanity a practical and scientifically worked out method of reaching this truth. In the first place, every science must have its own method of investigation. If you want to become an astronomer and sit down and cry "Astronomy! Astronomy!" it will never come to you. The same with chemistry. A certain method must be followed. You must go to a laboratory, take different substances, mix them up, compound them, experiment with them, and out of that will come a knowledge of chemistry. If you want to be an astronomer, you must go to an observatory, take a telescope, study the stars and planets, and then you will become an astronomer. Each science must have its own methods. I could preach you thousands of sermons, but they would not make you religious, until you practised the method. These are the truths of the sages of all countries, of all ages, of men pure and unselfish, who had no motive but to do good to the world. They all declare that they have found some truth higher than what the senses can bring to us, and they invite verification. They ask us to take up the method and practise honestly, and then, if we do not find this higher truth, we will have the right to say there is no truth in the claim, but before we have done that, we are not rational in denying the truth of their assertions. So we must work faithfully, using the prescribed methods, and light will come.

In acquiring knowledge we make use of generalisations, and generalisation is based upon observation. We first observe facts, then generalise, and then draw conclusions or principles. The knowledge of the mind, of the internal nature of man, of thought, can never be had until we have first the power of observing the facts that are going on within. It is comparatively easy to observe facts in the external world, for many instruments have been invented for the purpose, but in the internal world we have no instrument to help us. Yet we know we must observe in order to have a real science. Without a proper analysis, any science will be hopeless -- mere theorising. And that is why all the psychologists have been quarrelling among themselves since the beginning of time, except those few who found out the means of observation.

The science of Raja-Yoga, in the first place, proposes to give us such a means of observing the internal states. The instrument is the mind itself. The power of attention, when properly guided, and directed towards the internal world, will analyse the mind, and illumine facts for us. The powers of the mind are like rays of light dissipated; when they are concentrated, they illumine. This is our only means of knowledge. Everyone is using it, both in the external and the internal world; but, for the psychologist, the same minute observation has to be directed to the internal world, which the scientific man directs to the external; and this requires a great deal of practice. From our childhood upwards we have been taught only to pay attention to things external, but never to things internal; hence most of us have nearly lost the faculty of observing the internal mechanism. To turn the mind, as it were, inside, stop it from going outside, and then to concentrate all its powers, and throw them upon the mind itself, in order that it may know its own nature, analyse itself, is very hard work. Yet