



## Concept of Yoga According to Swami Vivekananda

### **1) Meaning of Yoga:**

Every human being wants to be happy, peaceful and fulfillment in their life. Because very nature of human being is happiness. But man seeks this happiness in the external world, while the source of happiness is within.

Swami Vivekananda says, “Each soul is potentially Divine. The Goal is to manifest this divinity by controlling nature, external and internal”. It means as the seed has capacity to become big tree, in the same way every human being has that capacity, or possibility to be divine, to be eternal, and the goal of this human life is to manifest this inherent divinity within by controlling our nature - external and internal. Continuing the same thing Swami Vivekananda says, ‘ Do this 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”. Means the way of controlling the nature is by different paths like Karma, Bhakti, Meditation or Knowledge. And this is the aim of Yoga.

The meaning of Yoga as per Swami Vivekananda is derived from Sanskrit root as the English “yoke”, meaning “to join”, to join us to reality, God. Means the ultimate goal of all mankind, the aim and end of all religion, is but one - re-union the our real nature, Atma, Divinity, God. And both the Goal and the method employed for reaching this Goal are called Yoga.

Traditionally, in the mindset of many people yoga means “Postural Yoga”, which refers to asanas, one utilizes while practicing meditation; although, in modern postural yoga meditation may or may not be involved, the postures themselves being utilized for physical health. Still deeper, according to the Maharshi Patanjali, Yoga means, “योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः” (Yogah chitta vritti nirodh), means the cessation of all the modification of mind (calming the mind) is called yoga, which is nearer to the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda that says, Yoga is about God-realisation. Physical health, although important, is secondary.

### **2) Doctrine of Yoga:**

Swami Vivekananda says, “Yoga teaches that there is the soul, and inside this soul is all power. It is already there, and if we can master this body, all the power will be unfolded.

All knowledge is in the soul. Why are people struggling? To lessen the misery. All unhappiness is caused by our not having mastery over the body. If you can thus get mastery of your body, all the misery of the world will vanish. All the misery in the world is in the senses. Misery and happiness can only belong to the sensuous individual man. Yoga is controlling the senses, will and mind and go beyond the relative knowledge, to go beyond the sense-world.”

And this is the theme of Yoga that how to see Him within and without.

### 3) Path of Yoga:

Aim of yoga is one - to be united with God, but the method of attaining may vary with the different temperaments of men.

There are various such yogas, or methods, of Union, but the chief ones are - Karma-Yoga, Bhakti-Yoga, Raja-Yoga, and Jnana-Yoga.

- a) **Karma-Yoga** : The manner in which a man realises his own divinity through works and duty. It is the yoga of selfless action tells that through the correct actions, the ‘troublemaker’ ego can turn into the ‘troubleshooter’ ego. It says that even if you do not believe in God, just focus on your work with utmost honesty, dedication and power of your mind. Be no-attached and keep working for work’s sake. Instead of worrying about the results, leave the fruits of your work to the Lord.
- b) **Bhakti-Yoga** : The realization of the divinity through devotion to and love of, personal God. This is the process of inner purification. Love is the vital element for all human beings, it teaches. Love is pure and cosmic, but ego pollutes it and gives out negative elements like lust, greed, jealousy and anger. God is the only one who truly loves us. Pour holy thoughts into the mind with prayer, chant holy words, study holy books and keep the holy company close to your heart.
- c) **Raja-Yoga** : The realization of the divinity through the control of mind. It seeks to attain the divinity by igniting the flame of knowledge of the self within. Most seekers do not have the patience and perseverance to follow this path for the sacrifices that it calls for. Raja-Yoga dispels that the mind is perverted to follow the

path of reason. Teaching the process of meditation and concentration, it tells you to confront the restlessness of the mind and uproot it.

- d) **Jnana-Yoga** : The realization of a man's own divinity through knowledge. This is the path of knowledge. Weeding out the darkness of ignorance through the light of knowledge, it brings the 'fire' and 'light' alive by burning all the impurities of the mind. The mind does not give up its attachment to worldly pleasures unless it has tasted something greater and higher. Self-knowledge, according to Jnana-Yoga is true liberation.

#### 4) Harmony of Yogas :

One important feature of Swami Vivekananda's approach to Yoga is harmony of all four yogas. Each of these four yogas supports the others, enabling one to move more effectively towards the goal of God-realisation.

Swami Vivekananda says:

"Would to God that all men were so constituted that in their minds all these elements of philosophy, mysticism, emotion and work were equally present in full! That is the ideal, my ideal of perfect man,...To become harmoniously balanced in all these four direction is my ideal of religion. And this religion is attained by what we, in India, call Yoga-Union.

A questioner asks to Swami Vivekananda, 'What do you mean by the harmony of four Yogas?' Swami Vivekananda replies; 'Discrimination between the real and unreal, dispassion and devotion, work and practices in concentration'.

Regarding the fact that each of these yogas supports the others, to one disciple, Swami Vivekananda says of Karma-Yoga that 'Without spiritual practices you will never be able to do Karma-Yoga. You must harmonize the four different yogas; otherwise how can you always keep your mind and heart wholly on the Lord?' Devotion, study and work support one another, and meditation supports them all. One may predominate, but all are helpful to the spiritual life.