CHAPTER VI

YOGA
YOGA

The word ‘Yoga’ is derived from the Sanskrit root ‘yuj’, meaning ‘to unite’ ‘to join’, and having the same meaning as English word ‘yoke’. Yoga, as used in the Indian religious terminology, means the spiritual communication of the devotee with God.

Yoga is characteristically Indian and its first appearance may be in the cross-legged figure on some of the Indus Valley seals. This is often called a Proto-Śiva, for in later religion Śiva is the Great Yogi. Yoga begins to emerge in the fusion of Aryan with other beliefs and practices, in the later of the classical Upaniṣads (Śvetāśvata Upaniṣad VI, 13). Thereafter the term is used of many kinds of religious exercise and any ascetic may be called a yogi or yogin.¹

Yoga is the primary focus of a Hindu’s religious activities. It is related with prayer, healthful exercise and meditation. The aim of Yoga is to achieve moksha or samādhi, liberation and enlightenment. Yoga is also one of the six schools of Vedic philosophy. The Bhagavad Gītā is the main ideal of Yoga scripture. It is the ground stone of Yogic thought. Lord Kṛṣṇa explains the Yogas through eighteen chapters.

Yoga means union of an individual self with the Absolute. It also means path, method or discipline by the practice of which the realization of salvation is achieved. According to Radhakrishnan, the Upaniṣads assume the Yoga practice in the

¹ John R. Hinnels and Eric J. Sharpe (edited), Hinduism, 1972, p 67
sense of conscious inward search or striving after a true knowledge of the reality.²

While Romain Rolland explains the Great Path (The four Yogas) in his famous book, ‘The Life of Vivekananda’, he says, “The term Yoga has been compromised in the west by the many charlatans and gull-catchers who have degraded its use. These spiritual methods, based on psycho-physiological genius experimenting for centuries past assure to those who have assimilated them a spiritual mastery, which is inevitably and openly manifested in a mighty power of action – a same and complete soul is the lever of Archimedes: find its fulcrum and it will raise the world.”³

As a matter of fact Swami Vivekananda received the same Sanskrit root as like English ‘Yoke’ in the sense of joining. According to him Yoga means ‘joining ourselves with God’—joining me with my real Self. To quote Swami Vivekananda, “this religion is attained by what we, in India, call Yoga – union. To the worker, it is union between men and the whole of humanity; to the mystic, between his lower and Higher Self; to the lover, union between himself and the God of Love; and to the philosopher, it is the union of all existence. This is what is meant by Yoga.”⁴

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh differs slightly from Swami Vivekananda. Romain Rolland points out that Aurobindo does not confine himself only to the properly Vedic or Vedāntic Yogas, which are always founded on knowledge (of the spirit or the heart

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² S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, Vol II, 1989, p 339
³ Romain Rolland, The Life of Vivekananda: And the Universal Gospel, 2001, p 154
⁴ Swami Vivekananda, Jñāna Yoga, 1970, pp 386-387
or the will). He adds Tantric Yogas after having cleansed and purified their polluted source.\(^5\)

The cessation of life in the universe or absorption of the soul in Reality is ultimate goal of Swami Vivekananda’s Yoga. In Vivekananda’s philosophy Yoga is done for the benefit of individual who realizes freedom and escapes from the worldly existence.

The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo is not undertaken for individual only but for all humanity. It transmutes an individual into a divine being. Eric J. Sharpe says, “The means of growth is Integral Yoga – the comprehensive discipline of body, mind and spirit. Eventually, as the number of those who have attained knowledge of the nature of Reality grows, there will develop ‘Gnostic’ communities, characterized by sympathy and understanding. This will be the nucleus of the new humanity, the revelation of the life divine in man.”\(^6\)

According to Patanjali, Yoga is restraining the mind stuff (Citta) from taking various forms (Vṛttis). The Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali recommended eight stages of Yoga. These are: Abstention or self control, Observance, Posture, Breath control, Sense restraint, Mental steadiness, Contemplation or meditation, Concentration or deep meditation. Hiriyanna comments that Yoga as treated of by Patanjali, is very much rationalized; and though

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5 Romain Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda: And the Universal Gospel*, 2001, p 155
he refers to the acquisition of certain supernatural powers, he dismisses them as really hindrances to self-realization.7

The Yoga system of Patanjali is a purely subjective method of Yoga. Patanjali’s Yoga seeks to attain Vivekananda which is only knowledge of the discrimination between the self and the not-self. Swami Vivekananda treated Patanjali as the father of Yoga who could show the way to God. The Yoga-Sūtra of Patanjali was to him a kind of technical manual for spiritual training. He thought of presenting religion as a science through the science of Yoga. It was essentially a science of Upaniṣadic or Vedāntic religion.8 In his edition of the Bhagavad Gītā, Radhakrishnan says that ‘here the teacher develops the technique of mental discipline on the lines of Patanjali’s Yoga Sūtra’.9

It goes to the credit of Swami Vivekananda to present Patanjali’s Yoga Sūtra as a valuable text of Yoga on the ground that such a comprehensive philosophy of religion which represented Upaniṣad and the Bhagavad Gītā recommended the vital need for a work on spiritual training.

The Gītā being a Yoga sāstra, its message is Yoga. The word Yoga gives the clue to the understanding of the message of the Gītā. Its primary meaning is union or communication with God. Yoga means absorption of the individual consciousness into the universal consciousness. In a secondary sense, Yoga means the path or the paths leading to union or communication with

7 M. Hiriyanna, Outlines of Indian Philosophy, 1993, p 295
8 R. K. Dasgupta, Swami Vivekananda on Indian Philosophy and Literature, 1996, p 137
9 ibid., p 143
God. The Gītā may be known as a Gospel of Yoga or Spiritual life and in it Karma, Bhakti and Jñāna have their rightful place. As a matter of fact these three paths cannot be separated from each other.

There are different paths of spiritual endeavour to the attainment of God realization. These paths are Jñāna Yoga, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Raja Yoga. All these four paths are independently capable of leading a person to self-realization.

Vivekananda never says that there is only one kind of Yoga incorporating all these in it, on the other hand, he says that all these – the way of cognition, the way of feeling, the way of karma – are themselves different ways for the realization of immortality. They are not inconsistent with each other, they are complementary to each other. All the four Yogas have some advantages and disadvantages, but if all the four Yogas are combined one may get advantages of all the four Yogas minus their disadvantages.

**Jñāna Yoga**

Jñāna Yoga is the most difficult path, requiring tremendous strength of will and intellect. Taking the philosophy of Vedānta the Jñāna Yogi uses his mind to inquire into its own nature. The goal of Jñāna Yoga is the realization of the true nature of Ātman (self), which is identical with Brahman or absolute pure consciousness or the ultimate Reality. All the things of this world

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10 Message of the Bhagavad Gita, A Vedanta Kesari Presentation, pp 32-33
11 Basant Kumar Lal, Contemporary Indian Philosophy, 1999, p 31
that appear to us are for the sake of the self alone, which is the only reality in the universe. According to Jñāna Yoga self knowledge is true liberation.

Jñāna Yoga is the path of knowledge for the realization of the ultimate reality. The darkness of ignorance can be dispelled by the light of knowledge. According to Ramakrishna, “Go beyond knowledge and ignorance; only then can you realize God. To know many things is ignorance, Pride of scholarship is also ignorance. The unwavering conviction that God alone dwells in all beings is Jñāna, knowledge. To know Him intimately is Vijnāna, a richer knowledge.”

The seekers of knowledge do not see many but see only the one. There is one Ātman, one Brahman, one indivisible Saccidānanda – nothing else. A verse in the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad says,

Eko devaḥ sarvabhūteṣu guṇdhah
Sarvavyāpi sarvabhūtāntaratmā –

‘The non-dual and resplendent Lord is hidden in all beings. All pervading, He is the inmost Self of all creatures’.

Swami Vivekananda delivered a Jñāna Yoga lecture in New York on 11th December, 1895. He said, Jñāna Yoga is Yoga by means of knowledge. The object of the Jñāna Yoga is Freedom — Freedom from our imperfections, freedom from the misery of life.

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12 Swami Nikhilananda (translated), Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, p 899
We are miserable because we are bound. What is the bondage? The bondage is of nature, who is it that binds us? We, ourselves. He further says, knowledge will remove all misery. Knowledge will make us free. This is the idea of Jñāna Yoga. "Knowledge will make us free.... "Know Thyself". You must know what you are, what your real nature is."

Our scriptures say that the nitya, the eternal is within man. Tattvamasi – you are That. You must discover the eternal within yourself – through Śravan, Manana and Nididhyāsana. That is listening to the Truth, then analyzing and meditating on it.

According to Śaṅkara’s Vivekacūḍāmaṇi (verse p 47) “It is verily through the touch of ignorance that thou who art the supreme self findest thyself under the bondage of non-self, whence alone process the rounds of births and deaths. The fire of knowledge kindled by the discrimination between these two, burns up the effects of ignorance together with their roots.”

Sri Ramakrishna says, “Jñāna Yoga is communion with God by means of knowledge. The Jnani’s object is to realize Brahman, the Absolute. He says, ‘Not this’, ‘Not this’ and thus leaves out of account one unreal thing after another until he gets to a point where all vichara (discrimination) between the real and the unreal ceases and Brahman is realized in Samādhi.”

The Bhagavad Gītā declares that one among thousands is able to know him if he is detached from the worldly covetous

14 C.W., IX, p 208
15 ibid., p 214
16 R. S. Srivastava, Contemporary Indian Philosophy, pp 39-40.
17 Kathamrita, I, p 141
matters like woman and gold. The various status of mind of the Brahma Jnani are described in the Vedas. The path of knowledge is extremely difficult. One cannot obtain Jñāna if one has the least trace of worldliness and the slightest attachment to ‘woman and gold.’ This is not the path for the Kaliyuga.\(^\text{18}\)

According to Vivekananda, “The Jñānayogi is a tremendous rationalist; he denies everything. He tells himself day and night: ‘There are no beliefs, no sacred words, no heaven, no hell, no creed, no church; there is only Ātman.’\(^\text{19}\) JñānaYoga is the path for self realization through discriminative knowledge. It is a form of spiritual discipline based mainly on philosophical discrimination between the real and the unreal and the renunciation of the unreal.\(^\text{20}\)

Swami Satprakashananda refers to the following verse of Svetasvatara Upaniṣad : “When the ardent seeker of self knowledge recognizes the truth of Brahma through the perception of the true nature of the self shining within the body, then by realizing the effulgent self, eternal, changeless, beyond the modifications of Prakṛti, he becomes free from all fetters.”\(^\text{21}\)

Romain Rolland remarks, “Like Descartes, the Jnani makes a clean sweep... The Jñāna Yoga is therefore, primarily a searching critic of the conditions of knowledge – time, space, causality etc., and it reconnoitres the frontiers of the mind in detail.

\(^{18}\) Swami Nikhilananda (translated), *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p 150

\(^{19}\) *C.W.*, VII, p 11

\(^{20}\) Swami Nikhilananda, *Vivekananda: A Biography*, Ramakrishna Vivekananda Centre, Newyork, 1953, p 212

\(^{21}\) Swami Satprakashananda, *The Universe God and God-Realization*, 2004 ©, p 261
before it crosses them."\(^{22}\) Ramakrishna says, "True knowledge is impossible without Samādhi. In Samādhi man becomes one with God. Then he can have no egotism."\(^{23}\)

Jnani says that Brahman is real and the universe is unreal, illusory. Śaṁkarācārya always expresses this truth. He says 'Brahma satya jagat mithyā' — Brahma alone is real, the world is illusory. According to Śaṅkara, Jñāna is superior to bhakti. Ramanuja says Jñāna is not equal to bhakti. It may appear that they are quarrelling with each other. But it is not true. They have some emphasis laid on different aspects of the same question. So they do not differ from each other in the ultimate reaches. And Bhagavan Śrī Kṛṣṇa's dictum is also of a similar character.

Vivekananda is a Karmayogi, but Śaṅkara was a Jñānayogi. According to Śaṅkara, action helps one to get purification of mind and leads to the knowledge of Brahman through renunciation. He says that Jñāna and karma are opposed to each other. Knowledge and action are like light and darkness. By removing ignorance, knowledge leads one to liberation, while action and its different forms cannot. Thus knowledge and action are contradictory.\(^{24}\)

Knowledge of the self alone can remove this ignorance and bondage of embodiment – not action, not prayer, not austerity and

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\(^{22}\) Romain Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda And the Universal Gospel*, 2001, pp 199-200

\(^{23}\) Swami Nikhilananda (translated), *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p 767

not worship, which only purify the mind. Knowledge of the self is revealed in the mirror of the pure heart.²⁵

**Karma Yoga**

The word ‘karma’ is derived from the Sanskrit Kri, ‘to do’, ‘to act’. The word is also used in Karma Yoga in the sense of work and the results caused by our actions. Karma Yoga is the path of selfless action. It purifies the heart by teaching us to act selflessly, without desire or reword. By detaching our self from the fruits of actions, we can reach the goal.

There are two ways of working. One way is to work in the ordinary way, to fulfil our selfish desires. That kind of work will cause us to be reborn again and again. The other way of working will give us liberation; it will not bind us, but free us. It is called Karma Yoga.²⁶

Karma Yoga teaches the secret of work. It tells to work incessantly giving up all attachment to work. Ramakrishna says, “To work in a spirit of detachment is known as Karma Yoga.”²⁷ Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna to work in this spirit of detachment:

\[ \text{“tasmād asaktah satatam} \]  
\[ \text{kāryam karma samācara} \]

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²⁶ Swami Lokeswarananda, *The Way to God as Taught by Sri Ramakrishna*, 1992, p 311  
²⁷ Swami Nikhilananda (translated), *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p 452
Therefore, man has to perform always the work that has to be done, for he attains to the highest by doing work without attachment.

The central message of the Gītā is to work ceaselessly without any selfish motive. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, ‘karmanye eva’dhikāraṣ te mā phalesu kadācana’ – ‘To action alone hast thou a right and never at all to its fruits. To work you have the right, but not to the fruits thereof’.²⁹

Karma Yoga is very important to Vivekananda. In modern age every man is busy, they spent most of his available time in pursuit of activities. They cannot devote much time for prayer or worship or meditation. Without scarifying this time, just by changing the attitude of mind, the ordinary work performed by him becomes a path to divinity. If one prays a little everyday dedicating the work as well as the result of work, then this work instead of binding him will lead to liberation.

To Vivekananda, karma means work or activity; everything done, physical or mental is karma. All the actions seen in the world is the manifestation of the will of man, and this will be caused by character, and character is manufactured by karma.³⁰

²⁹ ibid., (II.47), p 119
According to Vivekananda, Karma Yoga teaches not to give up the world; but to live in the world, to imbibe its influences as much as anybody can. Work should not be done for enjoyment’s sake. Enjoyment should not be the goal. First everybody is to kill his own self, then he is to take the whole world as his self; as the old Christians use to say, ‘The old man must die’.31

Vivekananda advised everybody through Karma Yoga ‘to work freely’, ‘to work for freedom’ to work as a master and not as a slave while Śamkara states that Karma Yoga is a stepping stone to Jñāna Yoga. It is a remote aid to the attainment of moksa with which it has no direct connection.

If anybody does not desire the results of work, if he work for others unselfishly, his heart becomes purified. With the pure heart he sees God. This is ideal of Karma Yoga. ‘Cittasya śuddhaye karma’ – ‘Right action purifies the heart’.32

Swami Vivekananda says, “Karma Yoga teaches us how to work for work’s sake, unattached, without caring who is helped, and what for. The Karma Yogi works because it is his nature, because he feels that it is good for him to do so, and he has no object beyond that. His position in his world is that of a giver, and he never cares to receive anything. He knows that he is giving, and does not ask for anything in return and, therefore, he eludes the grasp of misery. The grasp of pain, whenever it comes, is the result of the reaction of attachment.”33

31 C.W., I, p 88
32 Vivekaçādamani, 11(quoted from The Way to God, p 357)
33 Swami Vivekananda, Jñāna Yoga, pp 392-393
By dint of selfless work one’s mind becomes purified and as a result knowledge and devotion come. “By the performance of selfless work, the covering of ignorance is removed. As the mind becomes increasingly pure, true knowledge begins to unfold; in purity knowledge and the knower becomes one. There is a story in the Mahabharata of a chaste woman who attained knowledge through service to her husband and through performing other household duties. In the Gītā there is the teaching, ‘By work alone Janaka and others attained perfection’.”

Sri Ramkrishna Paramahansha occasionally says, “After making the knowledge of oneness your own, you can do whatever you like.” The significance of Sri Ramakrishna’s saying is that after acquiring supreme knowledge one is unable to do any evil kind of work. It is not possible for the man who has realized God, acquired knowledge by virtue of discrimination, renunciation; love, devotion and purity to do wrong work.

In the conceptual context of the niskāma theory of karma or action stands for intentional action but not an action that is done inadvertently, accidentally or impulsively or in any other means. Kṛṣṇa instructed Arjun to action without any intention for its consequences. Kṛṣṇa’s gospel of niskāma karma states that an intentional action be done with no desire for its results. Rajendra Prasad referring the Gītā (II.71) says, “Kṛṣṇa also speaks of giving up all desires, and not only desires for the consequences of actions. He attains peace, according to him, who after giving up

34 Christopher Isherwood, *Vedanta for Modern Man*, 1952, p. 84
35 *ibid.*, p. 87
all desires, moves about freed from the sense of ‘me’ and ‘mine’ from egoism and attachment.”

It is also noticed that Vivekananda is very much impressed by the Gītā-ideal of niṣkāma karma. When he says, “The true Niṣkāma Karma (performer of work without desire) is neither to be like a brute, nor to be inert, nor heartless. He is not Tamasika but of pure Sattva. His heart is so full of love and sympathy that he can embrace the whole world with his love. The world at large cannot generally comprehend his all-embracing love and sympathy.”

‘Niṣkāma Karma’ means an action done by the doer in a desireless manner, i.e. done by a doer who is desireless in doing it. It qualifies the motivation of the doer, the motivation with which he does it, and not the action which he does. Therefore, the thrust of the niskāma theory is that whatsoever be the nature of the action if its doer is desireless in doing it, it would not have any bondage-causing effect.

Niṣkāma karma is not easy. Because ego so often deceives everybody. As a result it becomes difficult to do selfless action. One begins to work with the best intentions, then one forgets his ideals. In this context Ramakrishna says, “But it is very difficult……You may think you are working in a detached spirit, but attachment creeps into the mind from nobody knows where. You may worship in the temple or arrange a grand religious

37 C.W., IV, p 107
festival or feed many poor and starving people. You may think you have done all this without hankering after the results. But unknown to the desire for name and fame has somehow crept into your mind complete detachment from the results of action is possible only for one who has seen God.”

But it is to be remembered here that the Gītā’s Karma Yoga is not identical with the elucidation of Karma Yoga by Vivekananda. Referring to the Bhagavad Gītā, R. S. Srivastava also says, “Men are mere pawns in the hands of God. The Gītā conceives in a certain amount of fatalism or determinism. In Vivekananda’s philosophy, the individuals are architects of their own destiny. If an individual realises salvation, it is entirely his own effort. Man’s activity is not determined by God’s will.”

Karma Yoga calls for incessant work. But the work has to be without attachment, for attachment brings about identification and with it pain and misery. Vivekananda teaches two ways of practising Karma Yoga and non-attachment. One way is for those who do not believe in God or in any outside help. They are left to their own devices; they have simply to work with their own will, with the power of their mind and discrimination, thinking, ‘I must be non-attached’. For those who believe in God there is another way, which seems to be much easier. All they have to do is to surrender the fruits of work to the Lord and automatically they get detached from the result of their work.

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39 Swami Nikhilananda (translated), The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, p 452
40 R. S. Srivastava, Contemporary Indian Philosophy, second edition 1983, p 55
41 Swami Nikhilananda, Vivekananda: Yogas and Other Works, 1996, p 499
Vivekananda has a great regard for the great humanist Buddha, who ignores the various theories of God and soul. Buddha's motto is 'Do good and be good. And this will take you to freedom and to whatever truth there is'. Thus Vivekananda says, "He works best who works without any motive, neither for money nor for fame nor for anything else; and when a man can do that, he will be a Buddha. This man represents the very highest ideal of Karma Yoga." It is to be noted here that Vivekananda does not reject Humanism without God or a permanent reality, provided it follows the path of Karma Yoga.

Thus Vivekananda says that Karma Yogi need not believe in any doctrine or in God. "He has got his special aim of realization selflessness; and he has to work it out himself. Every moment of his life must be realization, because he has to solve by mere work, without the help of doctrine or theory, the very same problem to which the Jnani applied his reason and inspiration and Bhakta with love."43

**Bhakti Yoga**

Bhakti Yoga is the most natural path for most of the people. Every one wants to give love and receive love. The message of Bhakti Yoga is that love is the most basic human emotion. Bhakti Yoga means the method of devotion and worship. Bhakti means 'Seva', service to God, internal communication with God. In different human representations of Love with God, it is the Love of God in the ways known as Santa, Dasya, Sakhya, Batsalya and

42 C.W., I, pp. 117-118.
43 *ibid*, p. 111
The pathways of devotion originated from the Upaniṣad. According to Mahaprabhu Sri Chaitanya Dev, the path of Bhakti is the path of Mukti (or Mokṣa).

Sri Kṛṣṇa says in the Gitā(X.10):

‘Teṣām satatayuktānāṁ bhajatāmi Prūtipūrvakam
Dadāmi buddhiYogam tam Yena māṁ upayāntite’

“To these who are constantly devoted and worship Me with love, I grant the concentration of understanding by which they come unto me.”

Ramkrishna says that Niṣṭhā leads to bhakti; bhakti, when matured, becomes bhāva; bhāva, when concentrated, becomes mahābhāva; and last of all is prema. Prema is like a cord; by prema God is bound to the devotee; He can no longer run away. An ordinary man can at best achieve bhāva. None but an Ṣivarakoti attains mahābhāva and prema. Chaitanyadeva attained them.

The Chaitanya Charitāmrita says, “He who calls upon the Lord with love attains him.” Here love means motiveless love. Love without desire. Sri Ramakrishna said, “Prahłada loved God for the sake of love. A devotee like Prahłada says, “O God, I do not want wealth, fame, creature comfort, or any such thing. Please

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44 Swami Lokeswarananda, *The Way to God as Taught by Sri Ramakrishna*, 1992, p 239
45 Swami Nikhilananda (translated), *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p 680
46 *Chaitanya Caritamrita Madhyalīla*, Chapter VIII (quated from *The Way to God*, p 241)
grant me the boon that I may have genuine love for Thy Lotus Feet."

According to Swamiji devotion is unpaid service. The devotee is not servant. He does not complain for this. This is pure and unmotivated love. In the Nārada Bhakti Sūtras, it is said that pure love is the only thing to be desired, “If you get that love, you want nothing more. You should pray only for this.”

Śaṅkara being a Jñāni laid much stress on ‘Bhakti as the necessary and sufficient qualification for the study of Gītā. The follower of Bhakti Yoga establishes a loving relationship with God and eventually realizes God in everything and everywhere. As Swami Vivekananda says, “We all have to begin as dualists in the religion of love. God is to us a separate Being, and we feel ourselves to be separate beings also. Love then comes between, and man begins to approach God; and God also comes nearer and nearer to man. Man takes up all the various relationships of life — such as father, mother, son, friend, master, lover — and projects them on his ideal of love, on his God. To him God exists as all these. And the last point of his progress is reached when he feels that he has become absolutely merged in the object of his worship.”

According to Vivekananda, Bhakti Yoga is the path of systematized devotion for the attainment of union with the Absolute. This path is real, genuine search for the Lord, a search beginning, continuing and ending in love. Vivekananda quotes

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47 Swami Nikhilananda (translated), The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, p 866
48 Narada Bhakti Sutras-5
49 Swami Nikhilananda, Vivekananda: Yogas and Other Work, p 454
Närada, “Bhakti is intense love of God. When a man gets it he loves all, hates note; he becomes satisfied forever.” While Vivekananda hailed the Bhakti Marga as the easiest and most natural way to reach God consciousness he was aware that in its lower forms it often degenerates, into hideous fanaticism.\(^{50}\)

Vivekananda emphasized the role of Guru for the search of Bhakti Yoga. The intense devotion to God is known as Para Bhakti or supreme devotion. In this stage, Bhakti transforms into pure love and there is no distinction between man and man and really between man and all others. Vivekananda says, “He alone has attained that supreme state of love commonly called the brotherhood of man; the rest only talk. He sees no distinctions and sees not man in man but beholds his beloved everywhere.”\(^{51}\)

In the Bhagavad Gītā (XVIII.55) Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa says to Arjuna “Through devotion he comes to know Me, what My measure is and who I am in truth; then, having known Me in truth, he forthwith enters into Me.”\(^{52}\)

Vivekananda says, “Bhakti Yoga teaches how to love, without any ulterior motives, loving God and loving the good.... It teaches that love itself is the highest recompense of Love – that God himself is love. It teaches ... to pay all kinds of tribute to God as the creator, the omnipresent, omniscient, Almighty Ruler, the Father and the Mother.”\(^{53}\)

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\(^{50}\) V.K.R.V. Rao, Swami Vivekananda, third print 2001, p 132

\(^{51}\) *ibid.*, p 135

\(^{52}\) S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, 1993, p 371

\(^{53}\) Swami Vivekananda, *Jhāna Yoga*, p 394
In this context Swami Vivekananda says, “Serving living beings is worshipping God”, “Jīva is Śiva”. A human being is God Himself. The Sanskrit term used is nara-nārāyaṇa - man is God. Swami Vivekananda preached this truth in the whole world. This is not a new truth. There are well-known Sanskrit verses supporting this truth. Such as ‘Sarvam khalvidam brahma’, ‘Brahmamayam jagat’, ‘Jivo brahmaiva nāparah’. Such a humanistic interpretation will, no doubt, inspire all men irrespective of caste, creed, religion, theist and atheist etc., to serve humanity at large as service to humanity as service to God.

Raja Yoga

Raja Yoga is the method of concentration and meditation. It is the royal path, scientific in approach and consists of eight steps – Yama, Niyama, Āsana, Prānāyāma, Pratyāhāra, Dhārāna, Dhyān and Samādhi. By meditation one can increase the power of concentration of mind, one’s health also is improve. It was initially introduced by Patanjali. It is regarded as the king of all Yogas because it is the direct physical and mental discipline for the realization of God. The power of concentration is the only way to the treasure house of knowledge.

Vivekananda states that Raja Yoga is the controlling of the mind. It is the power of concentration which is the key to the treasure house of knowledge. In his own words, “The system of Raja Yoga deals almost exclusively with this. In the present state of our body we are so much distracted, and the mind is frittering away its energies upon a hundred sorts of things. As soon as I try to calm my thoughts and concentrate my mind upon any one
object of knowledge, thousands of undesired impulses rush into the brain and disturb it. How to check it and bring the mind under control is the whole subject of study in Raja Yoga.\footnote{54}

The demerit of Raja Yoga is that if the Yoga not practised properly it may lead to insanity. Often temptations in the kind of siddhis (miracles) may obstacle one’s spiritual development. It is very much tedious to meditate for long time for an ordinary person. Of course if the Yoga is combined with some kinds of works, the possibility of insanity can be overcome.

Realizing the difficulties, Swami Vivekananda tended more and more to restrict his instruction to Raja Yoga to the conquest of knowledge by the most perfect instrument of scientific method: absolute concentration.\footnote{55}

Swami Vivekananda advised us, “Give up this nibbling at things. Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life think of it; dream of it, live on that idea until it becomes the substance of your whole body.”\footnote{56}

Swami Vivekananda emphasized that any seeker may become established in one of the four paths or harmonize them in everyday practice. The goal of all Yogas is freedom from bondage of the mind and realization of our true identity, which is identical with the universal Self or ultimate reality. Vivekananda advises: “[The] various Yogas do not conflict with each other; each of them leads us to the same goal and makes us perfect; only each

\footnote{54} ibid., p 391  
\footnote{55} C.W., VII, p  
\footnote{56} Swami Vivekananda, \textit{Raja Yoga}, p 198
has to be strenuously practised. The whole secret is in practicing. First you have to hear, then think, and then practice. This is true of every Yogas. You have first to hear about it and understand what it is; and things which you do not understand will be made clear to you by constantly hearing and thinking."

Any one of these four Yogas is quite capable of bringing us face to face with the Reality. But Swamiji says that it is better if we can synthesis all of the four. Although they are independently capable of leading a person to self-realization, but Vivekananda advocates combining all the four Yogas in one’s life for reaching the goal quickly.

By practising all four Yogas simultaneously we are utilizing all our faculties, viz., Hands for Working (Karma Yoga), Mind for Meditation (Raja Yoga), Intellect to reason out (Jñāna Yoga) and Heart to love (Bhakti Yoga). With the heart we can love God, with the mind we can mediate on God, with the help of our brain we think about God, finally we can work for God with the help of hands. All the faculties that have been given to us will be very well utilized if we combine all the four Yogas.

Romain Rolland mentioned, “the common herd who sought in Yoga a fraudulent means to ‘success’, these who wished to cheat fate, dabblers in the occult and clients of Beauty Parlours, found ‘No road’ barring the way at the outer ring of fortifications. But most of them were careful not to read the notice; and they

57 Swami Nikhilananda, Vivekananda: Yogas and Other Works, 1996, pp 493-494
tried to coax the more or less authentic Guru, who guarded the
door, to allow them to enter.”58

Swamiji boldly said there is no mystery and secrecy in
these systems of Yoga. He advised us to discard everything that
weakens us. “Mystery mongering weakens the human brain.
Swami Vivekananda says, It has well nigh destroyed one of the
grandest of sciences. .......It is wrong to believe blindly you must
exercise your reason and judgement. You must practise and see
whether these things happen or not.”59

Vivekananda is the emblem of the harmony of all human
energy. He proclaims the inner divinity of man and the glory of
human spirit. The Muṇḍaka Upanisad, 2, 2.5 declares, “each man
is essentially divine being identical with Brahman or pure
consciousness Ayamātmā Brahma.”

One need not wonder, then that he is a great Bhakta Yogan
a great Karma Yogan, a great Raja Yogan and a great Jñāna Yogan.
His soul performs innumerable rhapsodies and variations upon
the great musical notes of the Indian spiritual experience. He is a
man of prodigious thought and a man of prodigious feeling.60

Romain Rolland describes Swami Vivekananda’s vision of
harmony of four Yogas in the following words, “In the two words
- equilibrium and synthesis, Vivekananda’s constructive genius
may be summed up. He embraced all the paths of the spirit: the
four Yogas in their entirety, renunciation and service, art and

58 Romain Rolland, The Life of Vivekananda And the Universal Gospel, p 187
59 C.W., I, p 134
60 Swami Vivekananda: The Man and His Message by His Eastern and Western Disciples,
p 71
science, religion and action from the most spiritual to the most practical. Each of the ways that he taught had its own limits, but he himself had been through them all and embraced them all. .... he held the reins of all four ways of truth and travelled towards unity along them all simultaneously."^61

Swami Vivekananda makes the synthesis of four Yogas into a simple process of transformation of human life. He combines Jñāna, Karma, Bhakti and Raja Yoga together. His aim is to find a religion that will be equally acceptable to all minds and must be equally philosophic, equally emotional, equally mystic, and equally conducive to action.^62

But the question is how to combine these four Yogas? The followers of Ramakrishna -Vivekananda ideology try to practise the four Yogas in this way – early in the morning they get up and pray. That is Bhakti Yoga. In the evening or at the night they meditate. That is sort of Raja Yoga. After that they try to read some holy books – that is a part of Jñāna Yoga. And the whole day they try to do work in the spirit of worship. That is Karma Yoga.

Swami Bhajanananda comments on Vivekananda’s Yoga in this way, “Yoga is not merely a special kind of exercise done at certain times; living itself can be Yoga. Swami Vivekananda saw life as the continual unfolding of divine consciousness. Every act from mending shoes to chanting the scriptures, to use a Bengali expression, can be done as Yoga. And Yoga is for all. For a

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^61 Romain Rolland, The Life of Vivekananda And the Universal Gospel, 2001, p 234
^62 C.W., II, p 578
sweeper, sweeping the floor itself can be Yoga, for a student, studying itself can be Yoga, for a fisherman catching fish itself can be Yoga. In the vision of Swami Vivekananda the barriers separating the sacred from the secular vanish and life is seen as one seamless, unbroken effort at the transformation of consciousness.”

Sister Nivedita explained Swami Vivekananda’s Yoga in the following words. “If the many and the one be indeed the same reality... no distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life itself is religion. ...To him (Swamiji), the workshop, the study, the farmyard and the field are as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man as the cell of the monk or the door of the temple. To him, there is no difference between service of man and worship of God, between manliness and faith between true righteousness and spirituality.”

Swami Vivekananda says that Advaitist call Brahman and realize by Jñāna and the Dvaitins and the Visistadvaitins call Bhagavan, and finally realize bhakti. The ways may be different, but the goal is the same. So there is no real ground of conflict among them. Rather they should also be accepted and respected as serving the needs of different men with different taste and temperaments.

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Barbara Foxe comments in respect of Harmony of the Four Yogas. She mentions that Vivekananda tells about his Master Sri Ramakrishna who never utters one word of condemnation for any sect rather he has found the harmony among these sects. “A man may be intellectual or devotional or mystic or active; the various religious represent one or the other of these types. Yet it is possible to combine all the four in one man, and this is what future humanity is going to do. That was his idea. He condemned no one, but saw the good in all.”65

The synthesis of Yogas is most important for the modern man to develop personality and for success, happiness and peace in every day life as well as for obtaining infinite bliss, infinite knowledge and infinite life by manifesting the divinity within. Practice of four Yogas will not only give everyone happiness and peace, but also give the capacity to face the problems of life.

From the above discussion, it is clear that all the Yogas are nicely interwoven in the philosophies of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Swami Vivekananda as they are found in the Bhagavad Gītā. But all these three Vedāntins differ in this regard when emphasis is taken into consideration. Śaṅkara emphasized on Jñāna, Rāmānuja on Bhakti and Vivekananda on Karma Yoga. It is also a point to be noted that Vivekananda synthesizes all the Yogas, Jñāna, Karma, Bhakti and Raja, retaining the importance and role of each Yoga in his philosophy, the Vedāntic Humanism.

65 Barbara Foxe, Harmony in Chaos Ramakrishna Vedanta, 1980, p 126