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Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga*: A Way To Control Mind On The Path Of Spirituality

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His Raja Yoga is the path of control of the mind. It owes its origin to the seer Patanjali. Raja Yoga consists in physical and mental discipline leading to concentration and samadhi. It is also a practical and scientifically worked out method of attaining salvation. It is called the king of all yogas because it is the most direct method aiming at the quickest realization of God.

Raja-Yoga is divided into eight steps. The first is Yama-non killing, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, and non-receiving of any gifts. Next is Niyama-Cleanliness, contentment, austerity, study and self-surrender to God. Then comes Asana or posture, pranayama, or control of Prana; Pratyahara or restraint of the senses from their objects; dharana, or fixing the mind on a spot; Dhyana or meditation and Samadhi or Super consciousness. (Vivekananda, Raja Yoga 19)

Through these eight steps the soul, realizes joy and identity with the Supreme, and achieves eternal freedom, bliss and truth. To achieve such a state needs concentration:

The world is ready to give up its secrets if we only know how to knock, how to give it to the necessary blow. The strength and force of the blow come through concentration. There is no limit to the power of the human mind. The more concentrated it is, the more power is brought to bear on one point; that is the secret. (Vivekananda, Raja Yoga 9)

Vivekananda suggests a way to concentrate. His raja-yoga calms, deepens and centres the aspirant through the daily practice of withdrawing the mind from the external world and focusing it as one's ideal of God within the heart:

Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life – think of it, dream of it. Live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, and every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success, and this is the way great spiritual giants are produced. (Vivekananda, Raja Yoga 79)

In his Raja Yoga Vivekananda takes the bases of Patanjali's Yoga-Sutra, Sankhya Yoga and the Upanishads. These help to form the eight steps, Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. When the aspirant perfects these sadhanas he becomes all powerful: -

ततोऽणिमादिप्रादुर्भावः कायसम्पत्तद्वमनिभिधातञ्च

This means that the Yogi has attained the eight powers. He can make himself as minute as a particle, or as huge as a mountain, as heavy as the earth, or as light as the air, he can reach anything he likes, he can rule everything he wants, he can conquer everything he wants and so on. A lion will sit at his feet like a lamb and all his desires will be fulfilled at will. (Vivekananda, Raja Yoga 237-38)

By his emphasis on spiritual realization through detached action, knowledge, devotion and control of the mind, Vivekananda shows the importance of a harmonious development. It is to kindle man's sense of responsibility for his own destiny that he stresses the practice of Yoga. So he quotes:- ततः क्लेषकर्मनिवृत्तिः "When that cloud of virtue has come, then no more is there fear of falling, nothing can drag the Yogi down. No more there be evils for him. No more pains." (Vivekananda, Raja Yoga 265)

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In Vivekananda's view, the four yogas constitute practical means for attaining the end of religion. Jnana yoga takes the aspirant to the One, without a second, appearing as the many. By control of the wayward mind Raja yoga ensures peace. Bhakti Yoga leads to the bliss of union with the beloved, and Karma Yoga confers fulfillment. Vivekananda's four yogas – the paths of selfless action, devotion, meditation and discrimination--are four paths to the attainment of this happiness that emanates from one's real self:

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. (Vivekananda, C.W. I. 124)

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