

What Is Yoga?

Part Two by Swami Jyotirmayananda

The Pillars of human Personality

Human personality is founded on four pillars: reason, feeling (emotion), will and action. Your growth or advancement in life depends upon a balanced and integrated development of these four aspects of your personality. You must not exclude any of them if you hope to attain true success in your spiritual movement.

If a person were to acquire vast knowledge of voluminous books written by great philosophers from all over the world, but lacked integral unfoldment of their sentiments, will and action, they would be far away from the attainment of yogic perfection. Their erudition might be admired by thousands, but they would be unable to glimpse the cosmic expansion of life that promotes true joy in a human being.

There is a humorous anecdote about a scientist who was so absorbed in his scientific research that he became oblivious of his day-to-day duties with his wife and children and was unable to understand their feelings and sentiments. Once his wife approached him with tears in her eyes in order to touch upon a softer string in his heart, but the scientist looked at her with a cold gaze and said, “Madam, let me analyze your tears. Your tears are constituted of water and a few salts. They cannot affect me.” Such is the predicament of any person who allows his intellect to advance, without simultaneously promoting increasing maturity in his feeling, will, and

action. Such a disbalanced person can become a famous scholar, but he cannot enjoy the bliss of universal life, which is the goal of yoga.

Transform Your Personality Through Integral Yoga

As time passes, although you continue to change your external habits, reactions, and values, you are not spiritually transformed. You remain the same person with similar cravings and weaknesses, with similar defects such as irritability, greed, and infatuation. An aspirant should not perpetuate their same old personality. They must bring about a transformation in their inner nature. Spiritual understanding is like the philosopher’s stone that converts the base metal of human desires into the shining gold of spiritual aspiration.

Integration of personality and transformation of your inner life—these are the most important aspects of your spiritual movement. You can accomplish them by following the path of Integral Yoga, the path wherein you blend all the important elements of the different yogas in your daily life. There are four major aspects of yoga corresponding to the four aspects of human personality: action, emotion, will and reason. In other words, there should be a blend of selfless action (Karma Yoga), devotion (Bhakti Yoga), meditation (Dhyana or Raja Yoga), and wisdom (Jnana Yoga) in your daily life.

Gradually, you will outgrow your temptations, weaknesses, and illusions. You will no longer be like a crow feeding on vanity, but like

a swan that soars in the boundless expansion of the Self and sports in the lake of spiritual bliss.

The Major Aspects of Yoga

Jnana Yoga — the Path of Wisdom

Jnana Yoga (Yoga of Wisdom) is the yoga that aims at rendering reason healthy and pure, and further leads to the transformation of reason into intuition. The purpose of Jnana Yoga is to enable a person to understand clearly the nature of the deeper reality within. What is life? What is the world? What is God or the Divine Self? This is the philosophical aspect of yoga and it demands that your intellect become so subtle and sharp that it is not hampered by sentimental attitudes and unconscious complexes.

Jnana Yoga promotes the understanding that the Reality within you is the same as the Reality behind the whole world. Therefore, you have deep within you a basis through which you can commune with the whole world—a basis through which you can bring about a change in the world. The intuitive awareness of that essential Self and the realization that “I am That” has been taught by mystics in every religion, regardless of the different terms they use to describe the same truth.

On the path of jnana, a yogi tries to understand God, not as a person, but beyond all men-

tal attributes. Jnana Yoga is the philosophical understanding of God as *Brahman*—the formless, nameless, and attribute-less Self. Even terms such as eternal and infinite are conceptual and therefore limited in presenting the understanding of *Brahman*. However, a yogi can realize *Brahman* through intuitional unfoldment.

Therefore, enquire into “Who am I?” and discover the nature of the Self under the guidance of a spiritual teacher. Gain an insight into the fact that you are not this body, mind and senses. You are not this passing personality. The true Self within you is universal, all-pervading, one, and nondual. You are vast like the sky. So why should you be enchanted by the passing clouds of worldly glory? You are profound like the ocean. Why should you be constantly agitated by the frisking of the little fish of desire?

Listen, reflect and meditate. Assert your essential nature. Elevate your mind. Do not entertain thoughts that are degrading, desires that are humiliating, and concepts of life that are founded on ignorance. You are the architect of your destiny. You are not an accidental product of material elements. Just as every wave has its identity in the ocean, and every patch of blue has its identity in the sky, your real identity is *Brahman* the Absolute. You are the ruler of your circumstances, the designer of your personality, and the architect of the world that you see around you. In fact, you are the only Reality.

You can feel the pulsation of universal life in your heart and rise beyond the narrow confines of your mind to experience the joyous expansion of union with the Divine Self. Such union is the true meaning of “yoga.”



Bhakti Yoga — The Path of Devotion

Most of the religions of the world have one dominant feature—encouraging love of God. The unfolding of Divine love must be studied and understood in a rational and scientific manner. In yoga philosophy, through Bhakti Yoga, you are guided in a process of discovering Divine love and experiencing infinite sweetness through Divine surrender.

When you integrate your personality in the light of yoga, you become humble and ego-less. Just as iron is drawn to a magnet when the intervening obstructions are removed, in the same way, the soul is drawn to God when the egoistic movements are withdrawn through surrender and spiritual resignation. But, complete surrender to God is not a matter of a sentimental choice; it is, rather, a result of personality integration and spiritual unfoldment.

You ascend the ladder of Bhakti Yoga gradually. You begin to taste the joy of good association, repetition of mantra and devout meditation. You begin to enjoy increasing sweetness in discovering the operation of Divine will through your existence. You discover the power of prayer and Divine faith to bring about an effective process of personality integration. When the stream of Divine love begins to flow in your heart, it washes away all impurities, and the subtlest traces of anger, jealousy, hatred, and greed are eliminated.

Bhakti Yoga also gives a new dimension to human love. As your insight into Divine love grows, you realize that all human expressions of love are like sparks, while Divine love is the real fire. When you love God in every relationship, human love becomes profound.

Without love of God, your love for people remains shallow. That love is based on *moha* (delusion) and *raga* (attachment). It binds you to another person yet never feels secure. However, when you understand that God is the innermost

source of love, and that Divine love is ever-present and available within your heart, then you will always enjoy a state of fundamental security. Divine love does not come and go; it is always there as an inexhaustible fount of strength and sweetness.

As you promote Divine sentiments in your heart, and purity abounds in your mind, your feeling for God becomes steady and sublime. This feeling (*bhava*) grows into Divine love, which leads to God-realization.

Raja Yoga or Dhyana Yoga — The Path of Meditation

Raja Yoga or the Yoga of Meditation is widely known in the west. The basis of this system is an ancient work known as the *Raja Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali Maharshi. This work, written in aphorisms, deals with the study of mind, and gives insight into methods of unfolding the powers of the mind to attain the transcendental realization of the essential Self.

Raja Yoga presents an elaborate technique of eight limbs for attaining complete mastery over the mind. These eight limbs are: *Yamas* (restraints such as non-violence); *Niyamas* (observances such as contentment); *Asana* (physical postures); *Pranayama* (control of vital energy by regulating the breath); *Pratyahara* (withdrawal of the senses); *Dharana* (practice of mental concentration); *Dhyana* (intense meditation); and *Samadhi* (the state of superconsciousness wherein the Self is revealed through intuition).

Raja Yoga gives you a deep insight into the science of psychology. As a practitioner of Raja Yoga, you become your own psychoanalyst. You learn the art of controlling the mind and the senses. You are able to change a negative thought-current into a positive one because of your skill in the art of thought-culture.

Any person can practice Raja Yoga, regardless of what religion they belong to. Even

those who do not feel the need of accepting a Divine existence can still tread this path to mental concentration. Instead of concerning itself with the abstract reality behind the world phenomena, Raja Yoga focuses on the process that enables an aspirant to master their mind, to withdraw the outgoing senses, to integrate their personality. And when their mind is rendered as serene and calm as a silent lake through the practice of concentration and meditation, it begins to reflect the transcendental reality of the Self. It discovers space to soar beyond the stress of daily life. Through the windows of serenity, it glimpses the glorious vistas of universal consciousness, and the breeze of freedom blows in the heart, quenching all suffering. The truth then shines forth automatically.

Karma Yoga—The Path of Action

Selfless service is one of the most powerful and effective aids in the purification of mind. Through Karma Yoga, you allow your energies to be utilized in a dynamic way. When your energies are not well utilized, you are inclined to *tamas*—inertia, negativity and dullness. When you are *tamasic* your mind becomes like a transistor radio tuned to discordant music that emanates from so many other negative minds.

When you involve your mind in performing action that inspires and purifies, you rise beyond the negative sentiments that cloud your mind. You begin to realize that the things that created anger, hatred, and jealousy in your heart mean nothing.

When one performs an action with the cherished expectation of a certain reward, they do not realize how graciously life unfolds in accord with the infinite wisdom of the Divine Self. Encumbered by egoistic expectations, they are limiting their future and conditioning their spiritual potentialities. In the Divine plan one is given more than they could ever expect. But, guided by egoistic interest, one continues to turn away

from the abundance of spiritual expansion. Understanding this with increasing clarity, a Karma Yogi develops the attitude of renouncing or surrendering the fruit of ego-driven action.

Without looking for an egoistic reward or caring whether someone else is there to appreciate their actions, they perform their duties to the best of their ability with an internal sense of integrity. Although they make the effort to be successful in every project, even if their actions do not yield the expected outcome, they will continue to perform their duties with patience. By not being attached to the fruits of action, they are able to stay balanced in gain and loss and will not be heartbroken over the vicissitudes of life. Their selfless actions are characterized by spontaneity and effortlessness, by increasing joy and creativity, rather than tension, fatigue and boredom.

The human heart is constantly pressured by the urge to discover its oneness with the Divine Self through acts of goodness, kindness, generosity, self-effacing love and magnanimity. As a Karma Yogi, an aspirant cultivates this urge to attain mental purity and to move on to the heights of spiritual realization.

Karma Yoga is a process of spiritualizing all activity with the understanding that one's entire life can become an artistic process leading to Self-realization. Imbued with this understanding, a Karma Yogi converts every aspect of their work into an act of meditation and prayer.

They do not let the vision of harmony and oneness be dissipated because of the illusions of give and take that sustain the practical realities of life. They give with utter humility and receive with a spirit of uplifting love proceeding from the Divine Self. Their giving is an expression of their Divine love, and their receiving is an acceptance of a Divine blessing.

Acts of real goodness are like an aroma emanating from a blooming soul. You should not even be aware at the egoistic level of your acts of goodness done to others. Give abundantly,

with love and humility. Be a dynamic servant of humanity. Share all that you have with others. Share your very being with all. Do not be miserly. Do not keep your knowledge, your wisdom, and your talents locked up in the confines of your own little self. Fling open the doors of your mind. Just as imprisoned air blends with the joyous breeze, so too allow yourself to blend with the breeze of cosmic life and be free.

INTEGRAL YOGA
**The Interdependence of the
Four Major Yogas**

There is an important interrelation and interdependence among the four Yogas we have briefly outlined. If you perform your actions guided by the spirit of Karma Yoga you begin to discover profound streams of feeling in your heart. You begin to love the Divine Self. Therefore, Karma Yoga aids the development of the path of devotion. And, as you advance on the path of love and Divine feeling, your mind begins to withdraw itself from the objects of the world. It begins to detach itself from the external names and forms. This aids the movement in meditation. Thus, Bhakti Yoga, the path of devotion, begins to aid the practice of meditation or Raja Yoga. As meditation deepens, your intellect becomes sharp and subtle. The path of wisdom begins to reveal itself.

Thus, Bhakti Yoga promotes the development of Jnana Yoga, the Yoga of Wisdom.

In the same way, as you discover purer understanding, you begin to deepen the practice of meditation. *Jnana* (wisdom) aids meditation. Further, success in meditation aids the development of devotion to God. With the advancement of purer feeling you begin to perform your action in the spirit of Karma Yoga.

It is important to understand that yoga is basically one movement towards the goal of Self-realization. But it assumes different names due to different aspects of human personality. And these aspects are interdependent, you cannot progress on the path of one of the four aspects of your personality without progressing on the path of the other three.

A yogi, therefore, blends the important elements of all these four major yogas in his day-to-day life. By doing so, he advances steadily on the spiritual path. But, there are others who adopt one of these four and continue to ignore the other three, considering them to be inferior methods of Self-realization. In this case, the movement becomes slow and eccentric. Some are able to transcend their limitations, but many remain involved in their egoistic concepts. It is important, then, for an aspirant to understand the ideal of Integral Yoga and to practice it in their day-to-day life.
(to be continued)

You are the architect of your destiny. You are not an accidental product of material elements. Just as every wave has its identity in the ocean, and every patch of blue has its identity in the sky, your real identity is *Brahman* the Absolute. You are the ruler of your circumstances, the designer of your personality, and the creator of the world that you see around you. In fact, you are the Only Reality.

