

S W A M I V I V E K A N A N D A



# Raja Yoga

Fascicle 1: Introduction

*Swami Vivekananda* was a Hindu monk, philosopher and author that in the last decade of the XIX century wrote classic books that proved foundational to Western understanding of Yoga. One of those books was *Raja Yoga*. This edition is divided in fascicles, of which the present tome is the first one, and covers the book's introduction and first chapter, that explains the basic concepts of the spiritual science of *Raja Yoga*. *Edition: : 1*

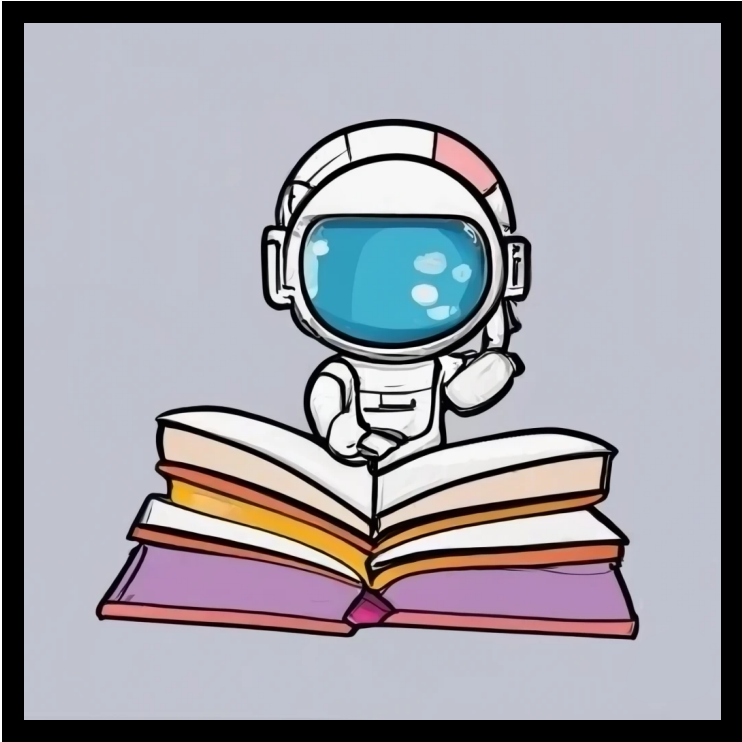
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**C O S M I C A**

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*Each soul is potentially divine.  
The goal is to manifest this divine 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.*

## *Author's Preface*

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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 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

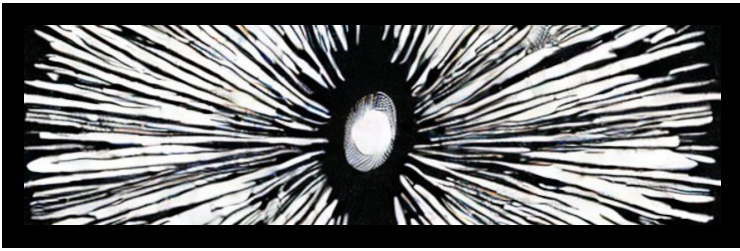
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than those who think that their prayers are answered by a being, or beings, above the clouds, or than those who believe that their petitions will make such beings change the course of the universe. The latter have the excuse of ignorance, or at least of a false system of education in their childhood, which has taught them to depend upon such beings for help, and this dependence has now become a part of their degenerate nature. The former have no such excuse.

For thousands of years such phenomena have been investigated, studied, and generalised, the whole ground of the religious faculty 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 very 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 to mankind that each being is only a conduit for the infinite ocean of knowledge and power that lies behind. 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 Indian 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 Vedantist schools point to Yoga in some form or other.



The subject of the first lectures in the present book is that form of Yoga known as Raja Yoga.



The aphorisms of Patanjali are the highest authority and text book on Raja Yoga. The other philosophers, though occasionally differing from Patanjali in some philosophical aspect, have, as a rule, acceded to his method of practice a decided consent. The first part of this book is comprised of 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 the free and easy style of conversation. In the first part some simple and specific directions are given for the student who wants to practice, but all such are especially and earnestly reminded that, with few exceptions, Yoga can only be safely

learned 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. Second, the Yogis hold the mind to be equally all-pervading with the soul, or Purusa, and the Sankhyas do not.

*The author.*

## ***Chapter I: Introductory***

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All our knowledge is based upon experience. What we call inferential knowledge, in which we go from the less general 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 experience 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 those experiences, when he asks us to believe in his conclusions, he appeals to some universal experience of humanity. In every exact science there is a universal basis which is common to all humanity, so that we can at once see the truth of the fallacy of the

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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 on faith and belief, and, in most cases, consists only of different sets of theories, and that is the reason why we find all these various religions quarrelling with each other. These theories, again, are based on 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.



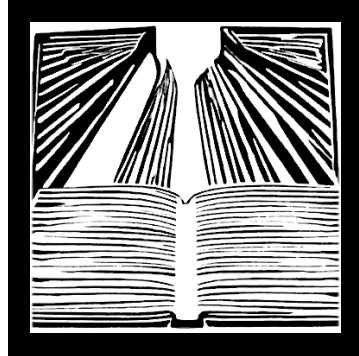
In the same way I may have my own ideas, which I am asking others to believe, and if they ask a reason, I cannot supply them with any. This is why religion and

metaphysical philosophy have a bad name

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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." At the same time I must tell you that there is a basis of universal belief in religion, governing all these different theories, and all the varying ideas of different sects of men in different countries. Going to the basis of them we find that they also are based upon universal experiences.

In the first place I will ask you to 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 reasons he says, “No, it is my belief.” 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 book the writers, who are called Rishis, or sages, declare that they have 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 eternity, they saw their future, and they saw what they preached. Only there is this difference, that in most of these religions, especially in modern times, a peculiar claim is put before us, and that claim is 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 case of experience in this world in any particular branch of knowledge it absolutely follows that this 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 experiences of ancient times, but that no man can be religious until he

has had the same perceptions himself. Yoga is the science which teaches us to get these perceptions. It is useless 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, and the reason is that 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.*

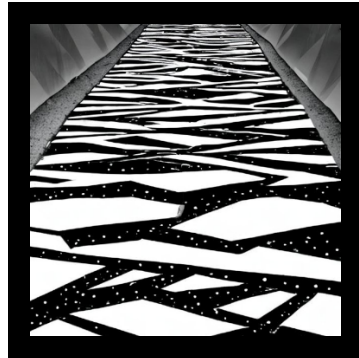
The modern idea, on the one hand, with the “learned”, is that religion and metaphysics, and all search after a Supreme Being, is futile; on the other hand, with the semi-



educated, the idea seems to be that these things really have no basis, that their only value consists in the fact that they are 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, to grasp it, to realise it, to feel it within his heart of hearts; then alone, declare the Vedas, will 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, and 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 “Astronmoy, Astronmoy!” it will never come to you. The same with chemistry. A certain method must be followed.



You must go to the laboratory, take the different substance, 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 the 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 first practiced the method.*

These are the truths of the sages of all countries, of all ages, men pure and unselfish, who

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had no motive but to do good to the world. They all declare that they have found some truth higher than that the senses can bring to us, and they challenge verification.

They say to you, take up the method and practise honestly, and then, if you do not find this higher truth, you will have the right to say that there is no truth in the claim, but be-



fore you have done that, you are not rational in denying the truth of these assertions. So we must work faithfully, using the prescribed methods, and light will come.

In acquiring knowledge we make use of generalisation, and generalisation is based upon observation. We first observe facts, and then we generalise, and then we draw our conclusions or principles. The knowledge of the mind, of the internal nature of man, of thought, can never be had until we have the power of first observing the facts that are go-

ing on within.



It is very easy to observe facts in the external world, and many thousand instruments have been invented to observe every point of nature, but in the internal world we

find 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 men such a means of observing the internal states, and the instrument is the mind itself. The power of attention of mind, when properly guided, and directed towards the internal world, will analyse the mind, and illumine facts for us. The powers

of mind are like rays of light being dissipated; when they are concentrated they illumine everything. This is the only source of knowledge that we have. Everyone is using it, both in the external and the internal world, but, for the psychologist, this minute observation which the scientific man can throw upon the external world, will have to be thrown on the internal world, and this requires a great deal of practice.



From our childhood upwards we have been taught only to pay attention to things external, never to pay attention to things internal, and 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 that is the only way to anything which will be a scientific approach to the subject. What is the use of such knowledge?

In the first place, knowledge itself is the highest reward of knowledge, and, in the second place, there is also utility in it. *It will take away our misery.*

When, by analysing his own mind, man comes face to face, as it were, with something which is never destroyed, something which is, by its own nature, eter-



nally pure and perfect, he will no more be miserable, no more unhappy. All misery comes from fear, from unsatisfied desire. Man will find that he never dies, and then he will have no more fear of death. When he knows that he is perfect, he will have no more vain desires, and both these causes being absent, there will be no more misery—there

will be perfect bliss, even while in this body.

There is only one method by which to attain this knowledge, that which is called concentration. The chemist in his laboratory concentrates all the energies of his mind into one focus, and throws them out upon the materials he is analysing, and so finds out their secret. The astronomer concentrates all the energies of his mind and projects them through his telescope upon the skies; and the stars, the sun, and the moon, give up their secrets to him. The more I can concentrate my thoughts on the matter on which I am talking to you, the more light I can throw upon it. You are listening to me, and the more you concentrate your thoughts the more clearly you will grasp what I have to say.

How has all this knowledge in the world been gained but by the concentration of the powers of the mind? Nature is ready to give up her secrets if we only know how to knock, to give her the necessary blow, and the strength and force of the blow will come through concentration. There is no limit to the power of the human mind. The more concentrated it is, the

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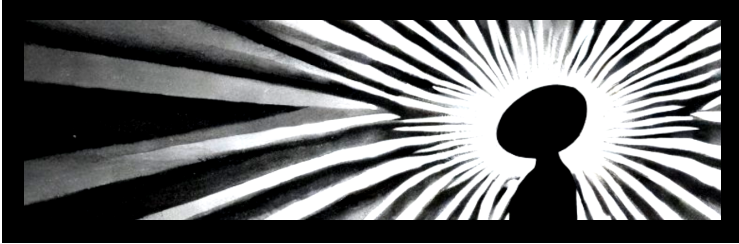
more power is brought to bear on one point, and that is the secret.



It is easier to concentrate the mind on external things, the mind naturally goes outwards; but, in the case of religion, or psychology, or metaphysics, the subject and object are **one**.

The object is internal, the mind itself is the object, and it is necessary to study the mind itself, **mind studying mind**. We know there is the power of the mind called reflective. I am talking to you; at the same time I am standing outside, as it were, a second person, and knowing and hearing what I am talking. You work and think at the same time, another portion of your mind stands by and sees what you are thinking. The powers of the mind should be concentrated and turned back upon itself, and as the darkest places reveal their secrets before the penetrating rays of the sun, so will this concentrated mind penetrate its own in-

nermost secrets. Thus will we come to the basis of belief, the real genuine religion.



We will perceive for ourselves whether we have souls, whether life is of five minutes, or of eternity, whether there is a God in the universe or none. It will all be revealed to us.



This is what Raja Yoga proposes to teach. The goal of all its teaching is how to concentrate the mind, then how to discover the facts in our own minds, then how to generalise

those facts, and form our own conclusions from them. It therefore never asks the question what our religion is, whether we are Deists, or Atheists, whether Christians, Jews,

or Buddhists. We are human beings; that is sufficient.

Every human being has the right and power to seek for religion; every human being has the right to ask the reason why, and to have his question answered by himself, if he only takes the trouble.

So far, then, we see that in the study of this Raja Yoga no faith or belief is necessary. Believe nothing, until you find it out for yourself; that is what it teaches us. Truth requires no prop to make it stand. Do you mean to say that the facts of our awakened state require any dreams or imaginings to prove them? Certainly not.



This study of Raja Yoga takes a long time and constant practice. A part of this practice is physical, but the main part of it is mental. As we go along we shall find how intimately

the mind is connected with the body. If we

believe that the mind is simply a finer part of the body, and that mind acts upon the body, in the same way the body must act upon the mind. If the body is sick, the mind becomes sick also. If the body is healthy, the mind remains healthy and strong. When one is angry, the mind becomes disturbed; at the same time, when the mind is disturbed, the body also becomes disturbed.

With the majority of mankind the mind is entirely under the control of the body; the mind is very little developed. The vast majority of humanity, if you will kindly excuse me, is very little removed from the animals. Not only that, but, in many instances, the power of control is very little higher than that of the lower animals.

We have very little command of our minds. Therefore to bring that command about, to get that control over body and mind, we must take certain physical helps, and when the body is sufficiently controlled, we can attempt the manipulation of the mind. By manipulation of the mind, we shall be able to bring it under our control, make it work as we like, and compel it

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to concentrate its powers as we desire.



According to the Raja Yogi, all this external world is but the gross form of the internal, or subtle. The finer is always the cause, and the grosser the effect. So the external world

is the effect, and the internal the cause. In the same way external forces are simply the grosser parts, of which the internal forces are the finer. One who has discovered and learned how to manipulate the internal forces will get the whole of nature under his control.

The Yogi proposes to himself no less a task than to master the whole universe, to control the whole of nature. He wants to arrive at the point where what we call “nature’s laws” will have no influence over him, where he will be able to get beyond them all. He will be master of the whole of nature, internal and external. The progress and civilisation of the human race is simply controlling this nature.

Various races differ in their processes. Just as in the same society some individuals want to control external nature, and others want to control internal nature, so, among races, some want to control the external nature, and some the internal.



Some say that by controlling internal nature we control everything; some that by controlling external nature we control everything. Carried to the extreme both are right,

because there is neither internal nor external. It is a fictitious limitation that never exists. Both are destined to meet at the same point, the externalists and the internalists, when both reach the extreme of their knowledge. Just as the physician, when he pushes his

knowledge to its limits, finds it melting away into metaphysics, so the metaphysician will find that what he calls mind and matter are but apparent distinctions, which will have to vanish for ever.

The end and aim of all science is to find a unit, that One out of which all this manifold is being manufactured, that One existing as many. Raja Yoga proposes to start from the internal world, to study internal nature, and, through that, control the whole—both internal and external.



It is a very old attempt. India has been its special stronghold but it was also attempted by other nations. In Western countries it is thought to be *mysticism*. People

who wanted to practice it were either burned or killed as witches and sorcerers, and in India, for various reasons, it fell into the hands of persons who destroyed 90 per cent.

of the knowledge, and of that portion which remained tried to make a great secret. In modern times many so-called teachers have arisen worse than those of India, because the latter knew something, while these modern exponents do not.

Anything that is secret or mysterious in these systems of Yoga should be at once rejected. The best guide in life is strength.



In religion, as in everything else, discard everything that weakens you, have nothing to do with it. All mystery-mongering weakens the human brain.

Through it this science of Yoga has been well nigh destroyed, but it is really one of the grandest of sciences. From the time that it was discovered, more than 4000 years ago, it was perfectly delineated and formulated and preached in India, and it is a striking fact, that the more modern the commentator, the greater the mistakes he



makes. The more ancient the writer on it the more rational he is. Thus it fell into the hands of a few persons who made it a secret, instead of letting the full blaze of daylight and reason fall upon it, and they did so that they might have the powers to themselves.

In the first place there is no mystery in what I preach. What little I know I will tell you. So far as I can reason it out I will do so, but what I do not know I will simply tell you that it is what the books say. It is wrong to blindly believe.



You must exercise your own reason and judgement; you must practice, and see whether things happen or not. Just as you would take up any other science of a material nature, exactly in the same manner you should take up this science for study. There is neither mystery nor danger in it. So far as it is true it ought to be preached in the public streets, in the broad daylight. Any attempt to mystify

these things is productive of great danger.

Before proceeding further, I will state to you a little of the **Sankhya** Philosophy, on which the whole of Raja Yoga is based. According to this philosophy perception comes through instruments, e.g., the eyes; the eyes carry it to the organs, the organs to the mind, the mind to the determinative faculty, from this the **Purusa** (the soul) receives it, and gives the order back, as it were, and so on through all these stages.

In this way sensations are received. With the exception of the Purusa all of these are material, but the mind is of much finer material than the external instruments. That



material of which the mind is composed becomes grosser, and becomes what is called the Tanmatras. It becomes still grosser and forms the external material. That is the psychology of the Sankhya. So that, between the

intellect and the grosser matter outside, there is only a difference in degree. The Purusa is the only thing which is immaterial. Mind is an instrument in the hands of the soul, as it were, through which the soul catches external objects. This mind is constantly changing and vacillating, and it can either attach itself to several organs, or to one, or to none. For instance, if I hear the clock with great attention I will not, perhaps, see anything, although my eyes may be open, showing that the mind was not attached to the seeing organ, although it was to the hearing organ. And the mind, in the same way, can be attached to all the organs simultaneously.



This mind has the reflexive power of looking back into its own depths. This reflexive power is what the Yogi wants to attain; by concentrating the powers of the mind, and turn-

ing them inward, he seeks to know what is

happening inside. There is in this no question of mere belief; it is the analysis of certain philosophers. Modern physiologists tell you that the eyes are not the organs of vision, but that the organs are in the nerve centre in the brain, and so with all the senses; and they also tell you that these centres are formed of the same material as the brain itself. So the Sankhyas will also tell you, but one is a statement on the physical side, and the other on the psychological side; yet both are the same. Beyond this we have to demonstrate.

The Yogi proposes to himself to attain to that fine state of perception in which he can perceive all these things. There must be mental perception of all the different states.



We shall perceive how the sensation is travelling, and how the mind is receiving it, how it is going to the determinative faculty, and

how this gives it to the Puruca. As each science requires certain preparations, as each science has its own method, until we follow that method we can never understand that science; so in Raja Yoga.

Certain regulations as to food are necessary; we must use that food which brings the purest mind. If you go into a menagerie you will find this demonstrated at once. You



see the elephants, huge animals, but calm and gentle; and if you go toward the cages of the lions and tigers you will find them restless, showing how much difference has been produced by food. All the forces that are working in this body have been produced out of food; we see that every day.

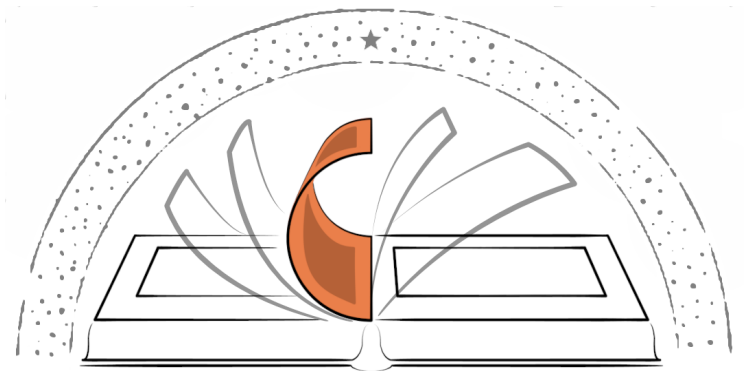
If you begin to fast, first your body will get weak, the physical force will suffer; then, after a few days, the mental force will suffer also. First, memory will fail. Then comes a

point, when you are not able to think, much less to pursue any course of reasoning. We have, therefore, to take care what sort of food we eat at the beginning, and when we have got strength enough, when our practice is well advanced, we need not be so careful in this respect. While the plant is growing it must be hedged round, lest it be injured; but when it becomes a tree the hedges are taken away; it is strong enough to withstand all assaults.



A Yogi must avoid the two extremes of luxury and austerity. He must not fast, or torture his flesh; he who does so, says the Gita, cannot be a Yogi; he who keeps awake; he who sleeps much; he who works too much; he who does no work; none of these can be Yogis.





And so it ends,  
the first fascicle of

RAJA YOGA,  
by  
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.



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