CHAPTER - IV

BASIC PHILOSOPHY OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA
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To understand the true nature of philosophy held by Vivekananda we should study carefully his words on:

1. The Vedanta philosophy;
2. The Vedanta in all its phases;
3. The Vedanta philosophy and Christianity.

We should study two terms in his philosophy -- Hinduism and Vedanta -- though of course both of them are almost identical for Vivekananda. To appreciate the criticism of the traditional interpretation of Hinduism or Vedanta from the Vedic times to his times paves the path to his neo-Vedanta or Hinduism. About his new Vedanta Vivekananda said, "This is my attempt, my mission in life, to show that the Vedantic schools are not contradictory, that they all necessitate each other, all fulfil each other, and one, as it were, is the stepping-stone to the other, until the goal, the Advaita, the Tat Tvam Asi, is reached."*

Meaning of Dualism

Vivekananda gives an extremely original interpretation to the term dualism. It is different from the European concept of dualism. In the west dualism means a doctrine which believes two opposite substances: material and spiritual. They are irreducible; they are the source of all being. For Vivekananda dualism means recognising the existence of the two worlds, the other world (the world of essence, Brahma - Atman) and this world (the world of phenomena, the universe, nature).

According to Vivekananda, mind and matter are not different. They arise from one source or force. One is called matter when it is in gross form and mind when it is in subtle form. They are nothing but forces. At root they are one.

Vivekananda identifies force with nature. Nature means all that exists, all that moves. A distinction between matter and mind is made although actually they are one. Both matter and mind are really nothing but forces. Vivekananda holds that the external force and internal force meet somehow and somewhere. They are continuous. They are basically the same force. The force appears in one form as matter and in another form as mind. So mind and matter are not different. Mind is changed into
matter and matter is changed into mind. The difference between the two is only of degree. They are qualitatively the same. They differ only in quantity. Therefore the entire universe may be called either mind or matter. It makes no difference whether you call it material or spiritual. Thus Prakrti means literally differentiation. It is the vibration that makes a difference between mind and matter. Vivekananda cites an example: "If I do not eat for ten days, I cannot think. Only a few stray thoughts are in my mind. I am very weak and perhaps do not know my own name. Then I eat some bread, and in a little while I begin to think; my power of mind has returned. The bread has become mind. Similarly, the mind lessens its rate of vibration and manifests itself in the body, becomes matter."

By removing the age old problem of dualism in the east and the west Vivekananda brought in a new meaning to the term dualism. The mind and the matter to him are not opposed to each other. They interact upon each other because they are the two aspects of the same force, i.e., nature. Traditionally the Vedantin believed this world to be "unreal." He rejected the fact of the existence of this world. The world is considered to be illusory. Vivekananda was probably the first philosopher in the history of the Vedantism to defend the reality of this world.

Swamiji says that all religions are of the opinion that this world is nothing. They further say that beyond this world there is something which is very real. Swamiji does not admit this. He says that if this world is to be taken as a means to attain the next world, this world cannot be unreal. He says that this world is a "great gymnasium." He considers mind as a higher matter and claims that he is a materialist in some sense. What the materialist calls matter, he calls God. He says that matter, religion, and everything else have come out of Brahman.

Brahman And Nature

Brahman is absolute, motionless, eternal, infinite formless, and without any qualities. But at the same time, Brahman acts as the cause of nature. Thus it becomes relative, temporal, moving, finite and having a form.

Vivekananda is aware of the difficulty of showing the relation between Brahman and nature. He writes, "The one question that is most difficult to grasp in understanding the Advaita philosophy and one question that will be asked again
and again and that will always remain: How has the Infinite, the Absolute, become the finite?"*

Vivekananda has tried to explain how Brahman comes in contact with the universe through the doctrines of time, space and causation. This is the central idea of the Vedanta. He says, "Time, space and causation are like the glass through which the Absolute is seen and, when it is seen on the lower side, it appears as the universe."

Vivekananda sharply criticises Schopenhauer, the great German philosopher for not understanding the Vedanta philosophy properly. He says that the will of Schopenhauer cannot be a spiritual basis of all that is. Vivekananda objects. He says that the Absolute cannot be presented as will, for will is something changeable and phenomenal. To the question, why the Absolute ceases to be the absolute and degenerates into nature, Vivekananda says there can be no answer. The Absolute is Absolute. To express some idea about the Absolute is to restrict it. Then it ceases to be absolute.

Vedanta believes in the Vedas, revelation, cycles and God.

The Akasha (sky) is the primary matter. Everything in the universe is the manifestation of Akasha. All forces vital, gravitational, are the result of the primary force called Prana (life). Prana constructs nature in its many forms. Akasha at the beginning of the cycle is not mobile. It does not manifest itself. But Prana starts to act with a growing force. It creates forms like stars, plants, animals and men. Besides Akasha and Prana there is the cosmic reason. It is called Mahat. Akash and Prana do not create Mahat. Similarly Mahat does not create Akasha and Prana. Akasha and Prana are incorporated into it. Mahat is translated into them.

Now, in what way did Akasha, Prana and Mahat emerge from Brahman? Vivekananda, like other Vedantins, refuses to answer this question.

Vivekananda comes to the conclusion that nature is substance plus name and form. Name and form come and go but the substance remains. The name and form are not real because they
vanish. All of nature is not real. So it is not substantial. This is so because only that which is unchanging and indestructible is real and substantial. Nature is not Maya. Maya means the various forms of all that is, of the infinite, quantity of qualities. Maya is not real. For if it were real, we could not destroy or change it.

Vivekananda And Kant

Vivekananda has tried to explain his views on nature in the language of Kant. Maya is a phenomenon. The substance is noumenon. He says, "Everything existing has two aspects. One is noumenal, unchanging and indestructible; the other is phenomenal, changing and destructible."* There is a metaphysical gap between essence and phenomenon in case of both Vivekananda and Kant. Their philosophical positions are fundamentally different. Vivekananda is an objective idealist while Kant is a subjective idealist. The world of Kant is one of subjective idealism. The world of Kant is the phenomenal world based on the

experiences of the subject. For Vivekananda Maya is a projection of the objectively existing Akasha. We need not carry the comparison of the views of nature of Kant and Vivekananda any further because it is not necessary for our purpose.

**Whole And Parts**

What is true of nature as a whole is also true of its parts. Human organisations are part of nature. So society is an expression of the subjective and the objective laws of cyclical development. Vivekananda says that, in the history of nations, there is the rise and the fall. "... after the rise comes a fall, again out of the fall comes a rise, with greater power. This motion is always going on. In the religious world the same movement exists. In every nation's spiritual life, there is a fall as well as a rise."*

Like nature and society, the individual also goes through cycles. In the entire Vedanta philosophy the problem of individuality is the most important one. Vivekananda says, "The individuality is my pass word, I seek to form individuals."* To Vivekananda man is an organic mixture of the materials of the universe. He is a universe on a small scale. Man contains in himself the physical matter of the mineral kingdom, the vital force of the vegetable kingdom, the animals' ability to feel and desire, the simple intellect of the higher animal, and the soul which alone makes a true man. The soul constitutes man's essence; it is immortal. Birth and death are changes in matter. They are not changes in ourselves. Vivekananda in his "The Nature of the Soul and Its Goal," wrote, "The earliest idea is that a man, when he dies, is not annihilated. Something lives and goes on living even after the man is dead."** Death does not produce any change in man's personality. He exists in a finer form. This form is as real as its gross form while living. Dead men live, they exist, in a subtle form.

* Quoted by V. Brodov, Indian Philosophy in Modern Times (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), p. 225.

Liberation

The soul passes through cycles of reincarnations. It departs to the other side and returns to earthly life. Again it departs and returns. This process is called Samsara. The movement culminates finally in the release. This means that the individual soul has attained through many incarnations a degree of purity. Then it fully merges with Brahman and thus becomes identical with it.

The idea of duality of man is not new. The ancient Indians recognised the existence of duality in man. In case of the Indians, the soul did not depend on the material body as the ancient Egyptians believed. The soul throws off the tatters while leaving the body. The Upanishads speak of the nature of the body and soul and the connections between them. Vivekananda believed that the whole of the material nature, including man's body, plays a most significant, though not a principal, role in life. How the infinite (the soul) can live in a finite space (in the body)? Vivekananda gives an answer by citing an example. When a man holds a book in his hand and reads it, he turns one leaf after another. Nature is the book which the soul reads. Each life is one page in the book. Having read
the book, the soul becomes perfect. Vivekananda says that Vedanta differs from Christianity. Christianity believes in the existence of heaven. After death, the soul departs for the heaven. But Vedanta does not admit this. The soul does not reach the heaven, according to Vedanta. Vedanta believes in stopping the cycle of births and deaths or reincarnation. The Hindus believe that the soul is neither the mind nor the body. The body is always changing. The mind is undergoing greater changes. So behind the body, behind the mind, there must be something. That is soul which unifies man. Thus the Hindus believe that a man is a soul and has a body, while the westerners believe that he is a body and possesses a soul.

Laws of Nature

Vivekananda distinguishes the legal, the ethical and the "nation" laws from the laws of nature. The former are created by man's reason. They have subjective constructions. Vivekananda says, "The national laws at best are the embodied will of a majority of a nation."* According to him, these ethical, legal,

social laws are not laws in the proper sense of the term. They do not possess the obligatory and universal features. They can be violated.

Vivekananda asserts that man formulated the laws of Karma (acts or actions). He determines the functioning of the human mind. The idea of Karma contains the conditions of the emergence and passing on the inherited properties. It may be of an individual biological organism (man or animal) and also of a social group (Varna, caste etc.). Karma also means the result of an action. Karma is inherited. It enters the body and becomes the Karma of the son, the grand-son etc. He gives an example of a pot-maker. The pot-maker was a poor workman and made ugly and fragile jugs. He would in this case suffer inconveniences in his life, due to his poor work. Retribution is inevitable. His son will inherit the Karma and pay for the poor workmanship.

The Karma theory takes into account social relations and social labour. The pot-maker alone is not responsible for his Karma. Others who have supplied him with materials are also responsible. Therefore our Karmas are thus collective. So different communities of men (Varnas, castes) have different Karmas. This does not mean that a man should be fatalist. He is
not completely powerless. For the law of Karma is not passive. Each action causes certain effects, and the effects lead to reincarnation. Vivekananda rejected a mechanistic determinism which emphasises the objective character of chance. He disagrees with the idea that freedom is obedience to the laws of nature. He says that freedom is not something which is caused by some factors. He says, "Everything that I do or think or feel, every part of my conduct or behaviour, my every movement — all is caused and therefore not free."* Vivekananda holds that freedom is possible only in the world of Absolute, of Brahman. Nature wants to be free. It seeks freedom. Freedom in this view is the motive force and ultimate goal of the development of nature. This universal struggle for freedom achieves its highest expression in man, in his conscious desire to be free. The Vedantin takes man to mean the soul, the substantial soul. The soul never changes. It is not destroyed. It manifests itself in nature, in many forms and many names. Vivekananda argues, "Yet men foolishly seek immortality in this changeable aspect, in the body and the mind, they want to have an eternal body. I do not want that kind of immortality."**


Relation Between Nature And Man

Nature is Maya. Its content is continual change. It is illusory, but man (the soul) is not part of nature. Because soul (man) is free, immortal, immutable and infinite. So the question of whether man has freedom of will or not does not arise. Man exists beyond any will. Vedanta believes, "Wherever there is will, it is never free. There is no freedom of will whatever. There is freedom of that which becomes will when name and form get hold of it, making it their slave." * When soul has become will or acquires will, it is no more really free. Swamiji says, "Thus have you and I danced throughout the years. All the things that we see, do, feel, know, all our thoughts and actions, are nothing but dancing to the dictates of nature. There has been, and there is, no freedom in any of this." ** Everything from the bottom to the top is determined and directed by law. But this does not pertain to our real life. It does not change in its essence. Because the true self is beyond all law. But man sets himself the goal of freeing himself from the bondage of nature. Vivekananda

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says, "When he is free, nature becomes his slave."* From these positions he formulates the content and meaning of man's life. At the time when he is nature's slave, the human soul becomes aware of its bondage and it makes efforts to assert its identity. This identity assertion is life. Success in this struggle is called evolution. The gradual success, when all the slavery is blown away, is called salvation, Nirvana, freedom. Therefore the ultimate goal of each individual, as well as of all men taken together, is to reunite with Brahman, with God — this is the release. The goal is the same but the methods of attaining it are different. The methods vary according to man's temperament. Vivekananda recognises mainly the methods of Karma-Yoga, Bhakti-Yoga, Jnana-Yoga, and Raja-Yoga.

**Advaita of Shankaracharya**

Advaita is one of the outstanding systems of Indian philosophy. Shankaracharya is the founder of Advaita Vedanta. Vedanta means the end of the Vedas or the cream of the Vedas.

Advaita means non-dualism. It is generally understood as monism but Shankaracharya makes a difference between non-dualism and monism. Monism means that the ultimate reality is one. Spinoza in the western philosophy holds that the ultimate reality is one. It is called substance, nature and God. Shankaracharya is more logical than Spinoza in saying that the ultimate reality is non-dual. For to say that reality is one is to make it determinate. Shankaracharya holds that the ultimate reality is Nirguna. It is indescribable (Anirvachaniya). Nothing can be said about it. So his method is negative. He says that Brahman is not this, that and so on. Brahman can never be described positively.

Shankaracharya’s interpretation of the first stanza of Brahma Sutra, "Brahman alone is real; the real is Mithya (illusory), Jiva and Brahman are one and the same (identical)," contains his views on Brahman, world and Jiva. There is no reality except Brahman. Brahman alone is the whole and sole of everything and nothing exists except Brahman. What then about the nature and status of universe? Universe is an illusion (Maya). It is also described as an appearance. Shankaracharya lays down the doctrine of Vivarthavada. It means that Brahman appears like a snake. He calls it Addyasavadi. It means that the world is the projection of Brahman. It is neither real nor unreal. It is not real like
Brahman but it is not unreal like the horns of hare. He cites two other examples of the son of a barren woman and the sky flower or golden mountain. It is empirically real but not transcendental. The world is real insofar as you are in the world. He gives an example of the dream. The dream is real for the dreamer. It is real as long as he dreams. But it is unreal for a wakeful person. Similarly this waking life is unreal for those who have attained a higher level of experience. But one cannot completely describe the nature of the world. It cannot be described as such and such.

What is the status of this world? Does it depend on Brahman? Or is it independent? It is not independent because Advaita holds that Brahman alone is the sole reality. The world does not depend on Brahman since it is not real. Therefore the status of the universe cannot be explained.

Jiva (Atma) and Brahman are identical. They are one and the same. Atman and Brahman are the two words for the same reality. Atman is Brahman and Brahman is Atman. This universe and Jiva (Atman) have no independent existence. They are ultimately unreal. They are not as real as Brahman.

Besides Brahman Shankaracharya introduces another concept, Maya. He tries to explain everything besides Brahman with the
help of Maya. Maya is something which conceals or hides the real nature of a thing and makes it appear as something else. A good example is the rope-snake. It is due to Maya that the real nature of the rope is concealed and it is made to appear as a snake. Is Maya real or unreal? It is neither real nor unreal. It is indescribable. To Shankaracharya Maya means universal ignorance and Avidya means individual ignorance.

Shankaracharya distinguishes between Nirguna (without attributes) Brahman and Saguna (with attributes) Brahman. Nirguna Brahman is Sat, Chit, Anand, Nitya Paripurna, i.e., pure existence, pure consciousness, pure bliss, eternal and perfect. These are not the attributes of Brahma but Brahman itself. Nirguna Brahman is devoid of all qualities. Nothing can be predicated of it. It is beyond the knower, the known and the knowledge.

Shankaracharya's Saguna Brahman is called Isvara -- it is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. He is the creator of the universe and the souls. He is the God of worship and devotion for the ignorant persons. The path of work and devotion and rituals are meant for the ignorant people. Isvara is the God of religion but he is the highest appearance. He is not as real as Brahman. He is Maya-ridden. Isvara and Jiva (Atma) are
ignorance-ridden. Both of them are not ultimately real. What is real is Brahman alone.

The ultimate goal of life according to Shankaracharya is liberation (Mukti). It means realisation of oneself as Brahman. It is not an achievement but a rediscovery of one's own self as Brahman. The path to gain this ultimate realisation is through spiritual knowledge. Knowledge and knowledge alone is the means of realisation.

Vivekananda's Views On Hinduism

It is not clear when exactly the term Hinduism has come into practice in the Indian philosophy and culture. In one of his works Vivekananda says that it is proper to use the term Vedic than religion rather than Hinduism. But people maintain that the Vedic religion and Hinduism are synonymous terms. The Vedic religion is also called Sanatana Dharma. The Indian literature on Hinduism does not seem to define the term Hinduism. The term has been used as an all-inclusive term without definite denotation or connotation. It is not clear whether "Hinduism" is used to mean a religion or a philosophy or a culture or a particular way of life. The confusion is due to a lack of clarity.
Swami Vivekananda rightly thinks that the term Hindu was originally known as Sindhu. It is a geographical name for the people who lived on the banks of the river Sindhu (Indus). The Sindhus were called Hindus by the Aryans or the Persians. Therefore the term Sindhu or Hindu does not definitely mean any religion or the Vedic religion.

The Vedic religion has its antiquity in the Vedas. It has its long historical development. The Vedic religion has two important parts. One is called Karma Kanda which mainly deals with sacrifice, rituals, ceremonies, idol worship, worship of Gods and Goddesses etc. The other part is called Jnana Kanda and it mainly deals with the different aspects of knowledge. In due course of the history of Indian thought, these two trends of the Vedas have come together and mingled as one flow of thought, i.e., Indian thought containing the Vedic religion and Vedanta. In the six Darshanas of Indian philosophy they are called the Purva Mimamsa and Uttar Mimamsa. The Purva Mimamsa deals with Vedic rituals and ceremonies and Vedanta deals with theories of knowledge.

Hinduism is the outcome of the Vedic philosophy and Vedic religion. We find in Hinduism a fusion of the ritual-dominated Vedic religion and the knowledge-dominated Vedanta.
We may briefly analyse Hinduism and its main assumptions and doctrines based on them. Hinduism emphasises on the one hand the significance of knowledge and on the other hand the necessity of rituals. What it asserts in the ritualistic field, it rejects in the conceptual field. Hinduism believes in the doctrine of Karma and rebirth. This doctrine plays a vital role and has its deep impact on the minds and lives of the Hindus. They strongly believe in the Karma theory and rebirth which necessarily follows from it. They admit three kinds of Karmas, i.e., Prarabdha Karma, Sanchita Karma and Agamika Karma. Every Hindu believes in the cycle of births and deaths. For all the differences in personal and social life the Hindus refer to the law of Karma. Whatever happens to them is taken as due to Karma that holds its hand on them. The belief in the transmigration of soul from body to body is based on the Karma theory. The notions of Punnya (religious merit) and Papa (sin), heaven and hell are the result of the Karma doctrine. The Karma doctrine is very powerful and has a firm grip on the minds of the Hindus even today. The Hindus believe in the theory of incarnation and evolution. The Vedas are the supreme scriptures in which every Hindu believes. The Vedas, the Shrutis, the Smrutis, and the Agamas are the authoritative scriptures for all Hindus. Temple-cult along with idol worship is found to be an inseparable part of Hinduism. Similarly priesthood is an integral part of Hinduism. The priests
play the role of a middleman between God and the devotees. So the temple-cult is part and parcel of Hinduism. Idol worship, priests, and temples always go together. They cannot be separated. Another aspect of Hinduism is its belief of the taboos like Janana (birth) Sutaka (pollution and distance maintenance) and Marana (death) Sutaka. It believes in Shraddha which is a worship of the ancestors.

Secondly, we find that Hinduism has incorporated in itself some of the fundamental ideas of the Vedanta philosophy. Its metaphysical ideas have been mixed with the different schools of Vedanta. The Hindu beliefs in the nature of soul, world and God have derived from the three Vedantic schools, namely, Dvaita, Advaita and Visishtadvaita. The Hindu creed sometimes affirms the views of Jiva (soul), Jagat (world), Isvara (God) of Madhva philosophy while, at other times, it stands by Shankaracharya regarding the nature of Atman and Brahman. This has created a sort of confusion as to what Hinduism stands for. It has become difficult to grasp the exact philosophical position of Hinduism.

Hinduism has its own unique social set-up. It admits society as being divided into four classes. The society consists of four rigid classes of people. The Brahmins belong to the first class, the Kshatriyas, the warrior class, occupy the second class,
the Vaishyas, the business class, belong to the third class, and Shudras, the labouring class, are the fourth class, and they are meant for serving the upper classes. The most neglected and condemned class was called the Chandalas who were never considered as human beings. They were the wretched of the earth. Manu is considered as a great social scientist who is responsible for this gradation of human beings. It is said that Lord Krishna himself is responsible for this classification of human beings. The next important belief of the Hindus is the Ashrama Dharma. It contains four stages of human life, with hundred years as the total span. The first stage is that of Brahmacharya Ashrama. This bachelor life is devoted to study. The second stage is called Grahastha Ashrama. It is house-holdership. This is a stage of married life. Then comes the third stage which is known as Vanaprastha Ashrama. This relates to doing one's duties to society. The last stage is one of completely abandoning life and going to the Himalayas or a forest in search of God or self-realisation. This stage is called Sannyasa Ashrama. Hinduism believes in the achievement of four significant values (or Purusharthas) of human life. They are known as religious values, the economic values, values of desires and passions, and finally values of liberation. These occupy a very important place in the life of every Hindu. To realise these values in his life-time is the supreme goal of every Hindu.
Swami ji's Views on the Vedantic Philosophy of Hindu Religion

To understand Swami Vivekananda it is essential to understand his ideas on Vedanta and Hinduism. His philosophy may be called the Hindu philosophy or the philosophy of Hinduism. As usual, in the Indian thought, philosophy and religion are often used synonymously. Philosophy in India is called Darshan. Darshan is direct perception (of reality). Philosophy is a way of life for Indians. It is not merely an intellectual discipline as it is often looked upon by the many western thinkers. We find in the basic philosophy of Vivekananda a domination of religion over philosophy, but we also find in it the Advaita philosophy influencing the Vedic religion. It is difficult to separate religion and philosophy in Vivekananda’s thought.

The roots of the Hindu religion may be traced back to the period of the Vedas. Vivekananda says that the Hindus have received their religion through revelation. The Vedas do not mean any books. He says, "They mean the accumulated treasure of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times." The discoverers of these laws are called Rishis. They

are honoured as perfect beings. There were some women among them. They discovered laws governing the spiritual world. The laws governing the moral, ethical, and spiritual relations between soul and soul and between individual spirits and the father of all spirits were there before the discovery and would remain even if we forget them. He cites the example of the law of gravitation which existed before its discovery and would exist even if all humanity forgot about it.

The Vedas teach that creation is without any beginning or end. There never was a time when there was no creation. He uses a simile to suggest that creation and creator are the two lines without a beginning and without an end, running parallel to each other. God is the ever active providence. If so, why does a just and merciful God create one man who is happy and another who is unhappy? Why should a man be miserable in the reign of a just and a merciful God? Is He partial? Is God cruel? What are the causes that make some people happy and others miserable? His answer is that everybody's past actions are responsible for the happiness and misery. The "past actions" means Karma. He traces the mind-and-body relationship in the light of the Karma theory. To him there are two parallel lines of existence. One is of the mind, the other is of the matter. He does not accept the material monism or the spiritual monism to explain the
relationship between matter and mind. He says that there are two tendencies: one is physical which is peculiar to matter and another is spiritual which is peculiar to soul. The soul selects a particular body fitting its tendency. Thus due to Karma of the past lives the soul enters into different bodies as per the previous tendencies.

He proceeds to explain the nature of soul. The Vedic declarations go on these lines: I am a spirit living in a body. I am not the body itself. The body will die, but I shall not die. Here I am in this body; the body will fall, but I shall go on living. The soul was not created. For creation means a combination which means a certain future destruction. Swamiji says that the Hindu thus believes in the spirit. The sword cannot pierce it; fire cannot burn it; water cannot melt it; air cannot dry it. The Hindu believes that every soul is a circle whose circumference is nowhere but whose centre is located in the body, that death means the change of the centre from body to body. In its very essence, it is free, unbounded, holy, pure and perfect, but somehow or other it finds itself tied down to matter and thinks of itself as matter. Why should the free, perfect and pure being be thus under the thraldom of matters? This is the next question. The Hindu is sincere. He does not want to take shelter under sophistry. He is brave enough to face the question
in a manly fashion and his answer is "I do not know. I do not know how the perfect being, the soul, came to think of itself as imperfect, so as to join the condition of matter."

The Vedas teach that the soul is divine, only held in the bondage of matter; perfection will be reached when this bond will burst, that is called Mukti -- freedom from bonds of imperfection, freedom from death and misery.

Swamiji has a very high regard for Hinduism. He says the Hindu religion does not consist in struggles and attempts to believe a certain doctrine or dogma, but in realising, not in believing but in being and becoming. The attempt is to become perfect, to become divine is to reach God and see God. A Hindu should be able to say, "I have seen the soul, I have seen God." This is the only condition of perfection. What happens to a man when he becomes perfect? He lives a life of bliss infinite. He enjoys infinite and perfect bliss. He enjoys bliss with God. This is the common religion of all the sects of India. A man must become one with Brahman. This is the very centre, the very vital conception of Hinduism. What happens after death? The soul should gain infinite universal individuality. This miserable little prison of individuality must go. Then only death will cease. Then man will be one with happiness. The
physical individuality is a delusion. Therefore Advaita (unity) is the necessary conclusion with other counterpart of soul. This is in brief the sum and substance of Swami Vivekananda's views on the Vedantic philosophy of the Hindu religion.

The Concept of Yoga in Vivekananda's Philosophy

The study of Yoga occupies a central place in the basic philosophy of Swami Vivekananda. His basic philosophy will be incomplete without his views on Yoga. So it is necessary to consider some of his fundamental ideas on the nature of Yoga and its significance.

Historical Development

The treatment of Yoga is found for the first time in the Upanishads called Swetasvarupinishads. Later Yoga is treated in detail in the Agamas and Tantras. It is considered there as a special part called Pada. It treats Yoga as a method of attaining liberation. The method followed by devotees is called Sammarga, the supreme road. Patanjali, for the first time, gave
prominence to Yoga. Thus Yoga became one of the six systems of Indian philosophy.

**Meaning of Yoga**

Patanjali defines Yoga as Chit, Vritti, Nirodha, i.e., the suppression of the functions or activities of mind. Mind thus becomes quiet or still and then the soul behind mind is seen in its majesty.

Yoga is a Sanskrit word. It literally means 'Yuge,' that is, union. In this sense Yoga is the union of soul and God. Yoga also means 'Yoke,' i.e., harnessing the senses. Yoga is a method and it denotes many actions. It is a method which frees one from fetters and oppressions. It is a method of uniting, combining and attaining unity. It unites man's individual soul with absolute soul. It implies a method that frees one from suffering. It is considered as the process of separating Purusa (consciousness) from Prakriti (matter). The separation of self from Prakriti means liberation.

The Yoga-Sutras (a manual of Yoga) is the first major work of the Indian School of Yoga. It presents the principles of Yogic teaching and practical advice. The ultimate aim of Yoga is to liberate the soul from the bondage of the material
world, including one's own body. Patanjali is the author of the Yoga-Sutras. Therefore it is called Patanjali Sutras. The Yoga-Sutras are divided into four parts. Patanjali Yoga is considered as Ashtanga-Yoga. It consists of eight parts. The first five parts are preparatory steps for the last three parts which are really concerned with Yogic practice.

The last three parts have a bearing on the Raja Yoga of Swami Vivekananda. Thus the word Yoga comes from the root 'Yuge,' which means to join or unite. Dvaita and Vishistadvaita schools of philosophy hold that the human spirit is separate from the divine spirit. The Advaita school holds that the individual spirit merges with the divine spirit. To Shakti-Vishishtadvaita Yoga means the process by which the identities of the two, the individual spirit and divine spirit, which exist in fact but which are lost temporarily, are restored by the Yogi, practitioner of Yoga. In case of the monistic schools of Yoga, the final union is inapplicable because union implies dualism of the divine spirit and human spirit.

To attain liberation, the method of Yoga has been viewed from different standpoints as follows:
Mantra Yoga, Laya Yoga, Hata Yoga and Raja Yoga

Mantra Yoga is the attainment of the ultimate mystic communion of the individual spirit with the divine spirit by reciting certain sacred formulas. We find the use of the Mantras in the schools of Shakta, Shaiva, and Tantra. Some Buddhist schools also have opted for Mantra Yoga.

Laya Yoga is also called Kundalini Yoga. The Shakta schools and philosophies are based on this. According to it, energy (Shakti) polarises itself into two forms, namely, static (Kundalini) and dynamic (the working force of the body as Prana). The Shakta Tantra is the rendering of the Vedantic truth from the practical point of view and represents the world process as a polarisation in consciousness itself.

Hata Yoga is closely related to the other forms of Yoga. The aim of this Yoga is the attainment of Samadhi (trance). Some think that this is a means to Raja Yoga. This emphasises the physical side of the Yoga discipline. In this discipline, the body controls the mind and the mind controls the body. Hata Yoga makes the body strong and healthy to make the practitioner of Yoga fit for long and undisturbed meditation.
Raja Yoga is the Yoga of Vivekananda. It is based on the Yoga-Sutras of Patanjali. It is the first systematised form of Yoga. Its goal is Kaivalya, that is, complete isolation of Purusa from Prakriti. The Patanjali Yoga is adopted by the various Vedantic schools with a little variation here and there. The knowledge of the Patanjali Yoga therefore is vital.

Classification of Yoga

Bhakti Yoga

Vivekananda holds the view that the ultimate goal of life is freedom from the fetters of the worldly affairs. He distinguishes, like the other Indian philosophers (except Charvaka) that there are two types of Mukti (liberation). One is called Jeevan Mukti which soul enjoys in its embodied condition. The other is the Videh Mukti, i.e., liberation after the death of the body. In that state, the self gets back to its original nature which is pure bliss. The state of Mukti for Vivekananda is a state of pure bliss.

The classification of the Yogas is based on the temperaments of human beings. Bhakti Yoga is called emotion-dominated Yoga wherein the feeling aspect in the form of love is fundamental.
Bhakti Yoga means the way of devotion. It is knowing God through feeling. Strong emotions have the power to awaken the hidden energy of man. Man is able to know God through intense love. Ordinary emotions may be converted into divine love. The supreme devotion to God is called Bhakti. There is a distinction between love for an ordinary object of the world and love of the divine. In case of the first, love is transitory, perishable and unreal. This love is not pure love, it is an attachment. Love for the supreme being (God) is real love. It is universal love. It is love for all because it is based on the knowledge of oneness of everything. Thus devotion becomes truly universal. Vivekananda determines different steps through which the Bhakta progresses towards God. The external worship is the first stage. The Bhakta begins his worship in a gross manifestation of the divine, the idols and images of the Gods and Goddesses, the prophets. The God-man relationship forms the first stage of worship in Bhakti Yoga. The next stage consists in prayer and repetition of God's name. It consists in chanting religious hymns and singing the songs of God's glory. In the third stage, this kind of prayer moves up into a silent meditation. In this stage, there exists for the devotee nothing but God. In the final stage, even this distinction between the devotee and God disappears. The devotee becomes almost one with the divine presence. The devotee finds in his vision the presence of God everywhere.
Thus external worship, prayer, uttering God's name, and meditation are all stages of Bhakti. The devotee realises the feeling of the essential oneness of everything. Bhakti Yoga is natural to man. It is a most convenient and popular way of God realisation. It does not require any special capacity on the part of the devotee. Bhakti Yoga is the easiest path of God realisation.

**Jnana Yoga**

In Jnana Yoga it is the cognitive aspect which is powerful. Jnana does not mean mere information. It means a discriminative understanding of the real and the unreal, the true and the false. Action-oriented knowledge is called Karma Yoga. Activity is the distinguishing mark of Karma Yoga. In case of Raja Yoga the mystic experience of the inseparable union of self and God is the unique feature. To Vivekananda these different ways of realisation are not exclusive. They are complementary and supplementary to each other.

Jnana Yoga is called the way of knowledge. It is based on the realisation that bondage is ignorance. Ignorance arises when one fails to distinguish between the real and the unreal. Ignorance is the lack of discrimination between the apparent
and the real. Self-knowledge means the knowledge of the Brahman. It is the knowledge of the unity of everything. Knowledge does not mean information only. It is not mere study with the help of a teacher. It is necessary to have spiritual knowledge by meditating upon the truths. For this concentration is quite necessary. It is not an easy process. Thus the self should direct its entire energy on the object of concentration. The self should not waste its energy through physical activities.

Renunciation is a necessary stage in the practice of Jnana Yoga. Renunciation helps one to get rid of all selfishness and to control the body, the mind and the senses. Renunciation is called Vairagya. Renunciation means to know Brahman. The positive hunger for knowledge is an essential condition of renunciation. The next step is the concentration of mind to understand the various divine aspects. By this the individual may attain the stage of complete concentration or Samadhi. In the state of Samadhi all distractions melt away. The distinction between self and Brahman will not remain. The self will have a realisation of the oneness, of perfect unity. This in brief is the nature of Jnana Marga.

Karma Yoga

The word Karma is derived from Kr which means to do. All
action is Karma. The other meaning of Karma is the effect of an action. Vivekananda says, "Karma Yoga is a system of ethics and religion intended to attain freedom through unselfishness and by good work. The Karma Yogi need not believe in any doctrine whatsoever. He may not ask what his soul is, nor think of any metaphysical speculation. He has got his own special aim of realising selfishness and he has to work it out himself."* Vivekananda does not recommend asceticism. He does not approve of flying away from the world. He says that man should remain in the world. He should stay in the world among pain and suffering and evil and good. He should always keep working as much as he can. The Karma Yogi has to work against selfishness. He should be free from man attachment. He should work in the world as a stranger. One must work like a master and not like a slave. He should not be the slave of his desire. One must be unattached. The Bhagvad-Gita's ideal is Nishkama Karma. It preaches the doctrine of work without expecting anything in return. He should be a giver without expecting anything in return. Vivekananda cites the example of Lord Buddha. After attaining Nirvana, Buddha kept on working throughout his life. His work can be taken as an ideal of non-attachment. He remained

in the midst of people and kept on working for the good of people. He accepted nothing in return. 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, and out of him will come the power to work in such a manner as will transform the world. This man represents the very highest ideal of Karma Yoga."

The Karma Yogi gives up his body, mind and everything as an eternal sacrifice unto the lord and thus he attains perfect peace. The Karma Yogi always believes in self-abnegation. In that state there is no I but only thou. Ultimately, to attain liberation performance of work without desire is the means. Such work leads to knowledge which in turn brings emancipation. Vivekananda makes a distinction between Karma Yoga and duty. Duty checks brutality but it involves attachment. In Karma Yoga work is not done as duty due to compulsion. The Karma Yogi is a free being. He is not attached and considers his work as God's work. The Bhagvad-Gita emphasises the duties of different persons depending on their birth and positions in life and society. The duties determine the mental and moral

attitude of individuals towards the activities of life. Everyone should do his duty. This will enable and exalt him.

How does a Karma Yogi attain immortality? Vivekananda answers the question in a very simple manner. Immortality is the realisation of the oneness of everything. It is complete freedom from all kinds of bondage. Selfless work and non-attachment enable a man to rise above his self. These enable him to have a feeling of oneness with everything. Thus through a selfless work the Karma Yogi's mind becomes pure and he is able to identify himself with all. This is the realisation of immortality by the Karma Yogi.

Raja Yoga

Raja Yoga is the Yoga of a mystic. It is the path of psychology to realise the immortality of the self by controlling the mind and the body. It is a method of realisation through the mystic union of the lower self with the higher self. It controls the activities of the mind. By this the attachment and bondage of the activities of mind disappear. Raja Yoga produces certain super normal power like Anima, Mahima, Lagima, Garima etc. The aspirant should not be tempted by these powers. He should ignore them and aim only at liberation.
Raja Yoga of Vivekananda is based on Patanjali Sutras which are the foundation of all Yogas. Raja Yoga is called the king of all Yogas. The ultimate aim of Raja Yoga is the realisation of unity with God. In deep sleep man enters the plane below consciousness. The body functions but there is no feeling of I. When a man goes into Samadhi, the state he enters into is super consciousness. He attains spiritual knowledge.

Raja Yoga is the method of disciplining body and mind. It assumes that the bondage is due to the activities of body and mind. So they must be brought under control. The energy saved should be directed towards the supreme goal. Raja Yoga thus is a plan of physical and mental discipline. The Yogi should undergo certain exercises of psycho-physical nature. Concentration plays an important role in Raja Yoga. The organism should be completely at ease and under complete control of the individual. Swamiji says that such Raja Yoga is not for the weak minded people. For it requires deep faith in oneself. It enables the Yogi to acquire certain powers and excellence and finally it prepares him to concentrate deeply on realising one's unity with the divine presence.