

The Spiritual Scientist

An ezine for those who think!

Yoga of Love

Question: What is the relationship between *yoga* and *bhakti*?

Yoga, with its extraordinary health benefits, has achieved global acclaim today. The word 'yoga' comes from the root 'yug', which is similar to the English word 'yoke' and means to 'connect' or 'link'. The Patanjali Yoga-Sutra, which is the foundational guidebook for yoga, explains that yoga in its completeness comprises eight stages and so is called *ashtanga-yoga* (ashta – eight, anga - limbs). What is popular as yoga today is actually just one of the eight stages named *asana*. The ancient Vedic wisdom-tradition that gave us yoga reminds us yoga has much more to offer than what we are currently receiving. In its most evolved form, yoga does much more than healing the body or even calming the mind. The highest yoga fulfills the need of our innermost being, our heart. More than treasures and pleasures, positions and possessions, our deepest longing is for love. All of us want to love and to be loved. In our times, love is sometimes misunderstood to be the physical relation between two people. But real love goes beyond the body, beyond the mind, to the real person, the spiritual being. True love enables us to connect with others at an eternal dimension by centering our relationship on the origin of all love.



This art of centering and connecting our love is what *bhakti* is all about. *Bhakti* is the universal wisdom that underlies and unifies all the great wisdom-traditions of the world. *Bhakti* efficaciously fulfills the ultimate purpose of yoga by devotionally connecting our hearts with the Supreme Lord, who is origin of all love and the pivot of all loving relationship. That's why *bhakti* is often called the yoga of love. *Bhakti* empowers us to tune our consciousness so that we can receive the love that is at the heart of the creation and then radiate that love to all whom we contact, thus enriching many, many love-starved hearts with warmth and joy. That's why Lord Krishna in the *Bhagavad-gita* (6.47) states explicitly that *bhakti-yoga* is the most complete of all yogas: "Of all yogis, the one with great faith who always abides in me, thinks of me within himself, and renders transcendental loving service to me is the most intimately united with me in yoga and is the highest of all." The Patanjali Yoga-Sutra also states that the culmination of yoga is *samadhi*, complete, loving, trancelike absorption in the divine.



हरि कृष्ण हरि कृष्ण
कृष्ण कृष्ण हरि हरि
हरि राम हरि राम
राम राम हरि हरि

Thus, the chanting of the mantra of love, the Hare Krishna maha-mantra, which is the essence of *bhakti*, is the quintessential practice of the yoga of love.

