

A Simple Fact That We Must Not Overlook

Although there are only four principal yogas, represented in The Divine Life crest by the words: Serve, Love, Meditate, Realize, in actual fact there is almost no end to the number. And indeed there are constantly new yogas being born as God leads individuals to discover new paths.

Why have so many of their individual yogas survived? For the simple reason that we are all unique, and if we happen to be in a tradition that doesn't suit our nature, we don't feel at home. If we feel a call, we search for some tradition, some teaching, some yoga that we can relate to, that does suit our nature. Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī speaks of the different yogas and that each one of us is following the path of our preference. And often, if we are really sincere in following the path of our preference, we can become quite advanced.

If we follow the path of the intellect we can have a very thorough knowledge and often understanding of the scriptures. If our primary practice is meditation we can go extremely deep, have almost unbelievable experiences. If our path is the path of devotion, we can feel very close to God, have unitary experiences. And so too with selfless service. We can become the epitome of service, just giving, giving, giving.

However, even if we do become outstanding in the field of our choice, Gurudev discovered that for most people that was not enough. He referred to dry Vedāntins, those who understood the scriptures but hadn't developed their emotional side. In the early days he used to go to the Punjab, where he had a tremendous response to his *kīrtan*, but he finally stopped going because he discovered that they weren't interested in understanding the experiences that they were having.

Thus he developed integral yoga. "The human being is head, heart and hand," Gurudev said. "All should be developed." However, even if we try to develop all sides of ourselves and make good progress, still something seems to be missing. What is that flaw that has actually been there right from the beginning? We haven't recognized that what we are trying to get rid of is the wheel of *samsāra*, which has only two spokes, like and dislike. And so even if we are doing integral yoga, a variety of yogas, we still may be doing that which we like and avoiding those aspects we don't like.

If we're fortunate enough to have a realized *guru* standing over us, he will direct our paths in ways that we would otherwise never follow. If we don't have a realized *guru* standing over us, then we have to find the *guru* within and be prepared to follow His promptings to do things that normally don't suit us. The reason is because the spiritual life is, finally, getting rid of that part of ourselves that likes one thing and dislikes the other. If this is not recognized, then no matter how spiritually talented we are, sooner or later our spiritual life will become stuck.