**Question: Discuss Swami Vivekananda’s conception of Raja Yoga.**

**Answer:** The Sanskrit term*raja* means "best of its kind," “chief,” or "king". The word *Raja yoga* thus means the "best of yoga," or “the chief yoga.”.In Sanskrit texts, the term refers to both the goal of yoga and a method of attaining it. Raja yoga became a modern name for the practice of yoga, when in the 19th-century Swami Vivekananda equated it with the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. According to Vivekananda, the Yoga Sutras are the highest authority on Raja-Yoga, and form its textbook. The other philosophers, though occasionally differing from Patanjali in some philosophical points, have, as a rule, agreed to his method of practice.

**“**Raja Yoga” is the name of the book by Swami Vivekananda in which gave his interpretation of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras adapted for a Western audience. The book was an instant success and was highly influential in the Western understanding of Yoga.

In his book, Vivekananda combined his understanding and interpretation of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras along with a selection of hatha yoga teachings. Thus, he adapted traditional Hindu ideas to suit the needs and understandings of his western audiences, who were familiar with western spiritual traditions and movements. An important element in his adaptation of Hindu ideas was the introduction of his fourfold yoga model, in which Raja Yoga was listed with the three classical types of yoga, namely Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, and Jnana Yoga.

Vivekananda's Raja Yoga understands yoga as a journey of the mind back to its origins by means of meditative practice. According to Vivekananda, each individual mind is part of the universal mind which can be re-joined by attaining samadhi. Thus, raja yoga seeks to attain the divine by igniting the flame of knowledge of the self within. Teaching the process of meditation and concentration, it teaches one to confront the restlessness of the mind and uproot it.

Vivekananda held that the science of Raja Yoga was the practical result of thorough analysis of the faculties and capabilities of human beings over thousands of years. Raja Yoga informs us that each man is a channel for the infinite ocean of knowledge and power that lies behind mankind. It teaches that if 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 is out of this infinite reservoir that the supply has come, and not from any supernatural being. There is no supernatural, 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 leads to the acquisition of the more subtle perceptions.

Vivekananda summarizes his ideas on Raja Yoga in the Preface of his book:

“Each soul is potentially divine.

The goal is to manifest this Divinity 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.”