

# Yoga and Food habits in *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā*

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**Abstract-** The *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā*, revered as an encyclopedic text encapsulating the essence of Vedic wisdom, profoundly integrates *yoga* as a holistic path to spiritual liberation, intertwining it with disciplined food habits for self-realization. This article explores the multifaceted concept of *yoga* in the *Gītā*, delineating its four primary forms: *Karma Yoga* (selfless action), *Jñāna Yoga* (path of knowledge), *Bhakti Yoga* (devotional surrender), and *Karma-Sannyāsa Yoga* (renunciation through action). Drawing from Lord Kṛṣṇa's teachings to Arjuna, the discourse emphasizes *yoga*'s ancient tradition, lost over time but revived through equanimity, non-attachment, and mastery over senses, mind, and desires. The *Gītā* posits that life and *yoga* are inseparable, with every action influenced by the three *guṇas* *sattva* (purity), *rajas* (passion), and *tamas* (ignorance) derived from *prakṛti*.

Central to the analysis is the process of *Yoga Sādhana*, involving controlled posture, meditation in solitude, and mental purification to unite the *ātmā* with *Paramātmā*. Qualifications for a *yogī* include fearlessness, mindful control, divine attachment, and renunciation of worldly impulses. The article underscores food habits as pivotal to yogic success, advocating moderation in diet, sleep, recreation, and wakefulness to balance the *guṇas*. Overeating or undereating hinders concentration, while *sattvic* foods promote purity and clarity, contrasting with *rajasic* and *tamasic* ones that foster attachment and delusion. Vegetarianism is highlighted through etymological insights into terms like "*māṃsa*" (meat) and "*matsya*"

(fish), symbolizing karmic consequences, aligning with global shifts toward ethical eating.

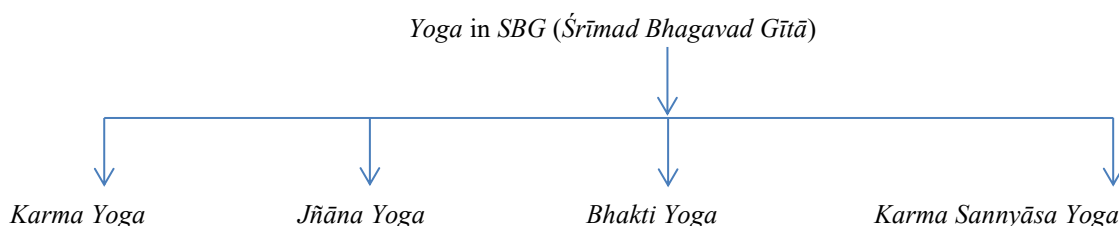
*Yoga* emerges as a conscious acceleration of human evolution, per Swami Vivekananda, fostering discrimination, determination, and freedom. By integrating *Gītā*'s precepts on wholesome, sustaining nutrition with yogic discipline, practitioners attain *nirvāṇa* and supreme bliss. This synthesis offers practical guidance for contemporary spiritual aspirants, bridging ancient wisdom with modern lifestyles.

**Keywords-** *Yoga, Bhagavad Gītā, Food Habits, Guṇas, Sattva, Rajas, Tamas, Karma Yoga, Meditation, Vegetarianism*

## I. INTRODUCTION

*Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā* is an encyclopaedic text for Science. Truly speaking, none has power to describe in words the glory of the *Gītā*, for it is a book containing the highest esoteric doctrines. It is the essence of Vedas; its language is so sweet and simple that man can easily understand it after a little practice. There are more than 40 verses regarding *yoga* in *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā*. The word of *yoga* is widely used in *Bhagavadgītā*. The *karma-yoga*, *jñāna-yoga*, *bhakti-yoga* and *karma-sannyāsa yoga* is very briefly discussed in details which are mostly accepted by the wise.

We can able to explain the theory of *yoga* in *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā* as follows:



## II. LORD KRISHṆA DESCRIBES TO ARJUNA ABOUT THE SECRET OF YOGA AS FOLLOWS

1. Yogic tradition was lost to the world which was known to rājarṣis.<sup>1</sup>
2. Kṛishṇa taught Arjuna about the *jñāna-yoga*, *karma-yoga*, *bhakti-yoga* and finally *karma-sannyāsa yoga*.
3. Kṛishṇa advised to Arjuna to maintain equanimity of mind which would enable him to become free from *dvandva* (duality) and *saṁśaya* (doubt).
4. Finally Kṛishṇa tells to Arjuna the absolute self-surrender, which is the perfection of *bhakti-yoga*.

The concept of *yoga* in *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā* is the most ancient one. The *Gītā* says that every moment of life is *yoga*. Lord Śrī Kṛishṇa also teaches *Rāja-yoga* to Arjuna. He said to Arjuna: “Be aware, Arjuna, lust and anger are the great enemies. These are to be controlled. These cover the knowledge even of those (who are wise). This fire of lust is unconquerable. Its location is in the sense-organs and in the mind.”

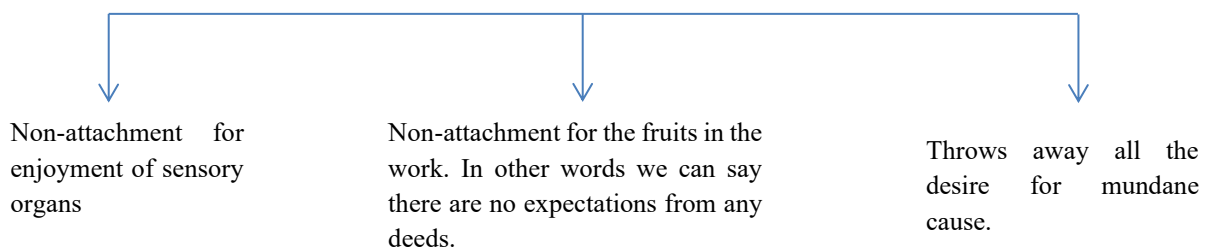
Patañjali defines *yoga* much the same way as the Upaniṣads. According to him *yoga* consists in the suppression of mental states (Y.S. I.2). An important point about this definition to which attention has already been drawn by Vyāsa, the earliest known commentator, is that the term ‘mental states’ has

been used in a fully unqualified sense. Lord Kṛishṇa says, nobody could stand without work.<sup>2</sup> This work done by *prakṛti* and individual beings are forced to work under three qualities of *Sattva*, *Rajas*, *Tamas*. Life and work are synonyms to each other. Nobody can exist even for a moment without *Karma*. The *Karma* is performed as per the nature of *guṇas*. Again *yoga* without life is inconceivable and life without *yoga* is futile. Person is only a medium which is designed by the Supreme being that’s why *Gītā* says, “The works done by individual is prompted by *prakṛti*.”

While persuading Arjuna for the fight in the *Mahābhārata* war Lord Kṛishṇa discloses the tradition of *yoga* to him. This tradition of *yoga sūtra* was imparted by Śrī Kṛishṇa to Ikṣvāku and Ikṣvāku to Manu. But in course of time it was lost which was known to Rājarṣis. The rest of the world was quite ignorant of this *yoga* system.

Therefore now who is the straight person to enter into the domain of *yoga*? Where a person is not attached to enjoyment of sense-organs, leaving all the desires, possibility and expectation from one’s deed becomes a *yogī*. The *Gītā* not only speaks of the goal of life’s journey but also of various stages of the journey. It teaches one how to counter problems and challenges of life and also how to be preventive with regard to various crises and emergencies of life. We can demonstrate the quality of a *yogī* like this:

### Necessity of a Yogī



This is the complete essence of *karma-yoga* as taught in the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

## III. THE PROCESS OF YOGA SĀDHANA IN ŚRĪMAD BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

Lord Śrī Kṛishṇa described the process of *yoga* to Arjuna like this. Body, senses and mind should remain controlled. Remains without any expectation and free from the will to possess materials etc.

Remains alone in lonely place. Always engaged in uniting *ātmā* with *Paramātmā*.<sup>3</sup>

One starts one’s *yoga* in a holy and pious place on a *kuśa* grass seat. One can put the skin of antelope and cloth on the skin be expanded. The place should neither be too high nor too low.<sup>4</sup> Then being seated

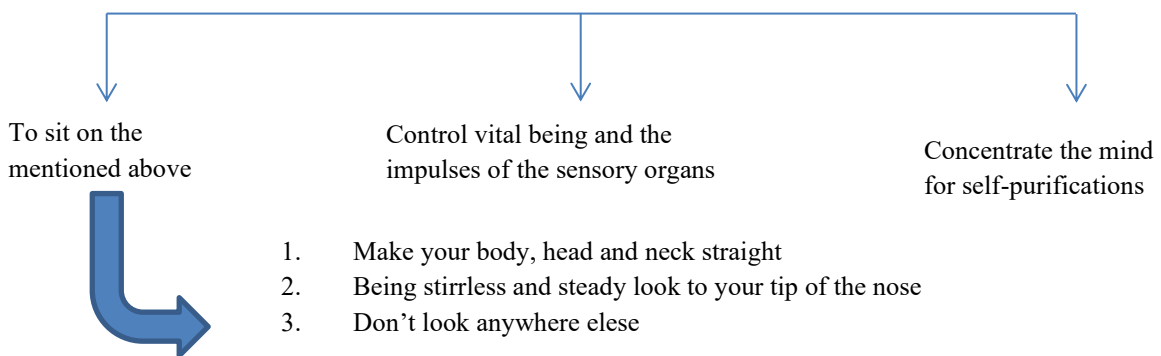
on the above seat making the action of *citta*/mind and senses under control concentrating the mind for the purification of *antaḥkaraṇa* one should make the practice of *yoga*.

While seated on his seat concentrating the mind and controlling the thinking faculty (*citta*) and the senses, he should practise *yoga* for self-purification.

While meditating, one should make a firm resolve that he has to engage himself only in meditation. If, however, worldly thoughts creep up, he should think

that it is time only for meditation and not for worldly thoughts. If time passes in worldly thought, no useful purpose will be served, and he will be a loser, both ways. Thus, he should concentrate his mind on God, without having any thought of mundane affairs. Even then, if a worldly thought comes to the mind, he should neither support it nor oppose it. By doing so, the thought will disappear as it is transitory. The thought, affecting him, only if he accepts his affinity with it, but if he remains indifferent to it will automatically perish, because it is perishable and transient.<sup>5</sup>

#### Steps of *Yoga*



So what are the qualifications required to sit on the *Yoga Sādhana*?

1. A person who has silent impulses, mind, intellect and ego.
2. Fearless.
3. Careful.
4. Controlling mind.
5. Mind being attached to God.
6. Depending /thinking/ of none but God.

The embodied (soul) having controlled the senses, and having renounced the performance of all actions by discrimination, in the abode of nine gates, neither acting nor causing others to act, he rests happily in the self.<sup>6</sup>

Let him hold the trunk, head and neck straight and steady gazing at the tip of his nose, without looking around.<sup>7</sup> He should sit steady, without any activity of the body or sense, just like statue continuously for three hours. Moreover, there should not be any activity of the mind also. By doing so, he will overcome the strain of the posture and will become *Jitāsana* (conqueror of the posture).

Here, it doesn't mean only Vow of Continence, but also includes that a Celibate should lead a disciplined and controlled life, according to the order of his preceptor, free from sensual pleasure, honour, praise and comforts etc. (VI.14). He shouldn't in the least, enjoy worldly things in any state, under any circumstance, either during meditation or in practical life, but use them only as necessities of life.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa says thus, Constantly meditating on me, the *Yogī* of controlled mind attains everlasting peace (Supreme Bliss) abiding in Me (*Nirvāṇa*). (VI.-15)

#### IV.FOOD HABITS IN *ŚRĪMADBHAGAVADGĪTĀ*

*Yoga* is not possible, for him who eats too much. Over eating causes thirst for water. So he has to drink much water. Too much water makes the stomach heavy and the body too. If he overeats, he becomes dull and lazy and may suffer from indigestion, which causes disease in the body. So he cannot concentrate his mind, in adoration and Spiritual practice etc. So how can *Yoga* be possible for him? *Yoga* is also not possible for him who eats too little will feel hungry, think of food again and

again, and become weak. Oversleep makes a striver idle, lazy, and inert. In oversleep, the striver cannot sleep soundly, and so different thoughts come to mind. (VI. 16) Yoga is also not possible for one who sleeps too little.

Dieting Process:

1. Balanced diet
2. Harmonious moments
3. Regulated and moderate lifestyle
4. Harmony and endeavour

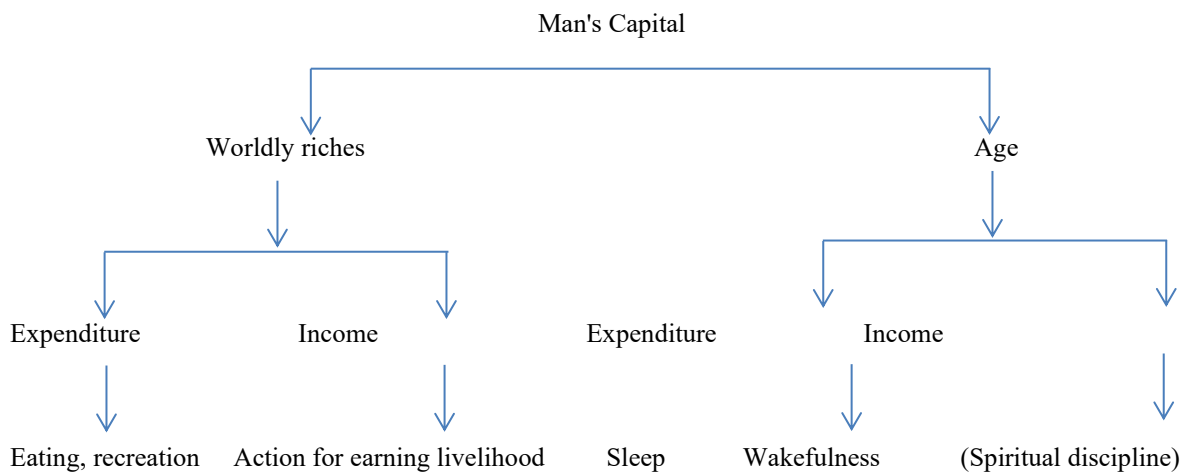
This teaching on moderation is useful for all strivers. By following it, they may attain salvation. There are four factors described:

1. Moderate in diet and recreation
2. Moderate in action
3. Moderate in sleep
4. Moderate in wakefulness

We have twenty-four hours at our disposal. If twenty-four hours are divided broadly into four parts, we get six hours for each of the above activities:

1. Six hours for eating, recreation, and physical exercise, etc.
2. Six hours for actions for earning Livelihood, farming, business and Service.
3. Six hours for Sleep and
4. Six hours for Wakefulness, meditation, adoration, Constant remembrance, and loud chanting. Prayers for God-realization.

These Can also be divided into two parts: (i)- Income and (ii) Expenditure. Actions and Wakefulness are the means of income. While eating, recreation and sleep involve expenditure. For income and expenditure, we have two kinds of Capital (i) Worldly riches (Capital) and (ii) age.



Let us discuss the food habits that the discipline beings are noticed to have. The knowledge of the nature of food as propounded in the *SBG* would guide them in selecting food for themselves and others and make them aware of the consequence of the Inappropriate type of food he receives. The Lord has defined too broadly the three types of quality-*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* in chapter it.<sup>8</sup> The three *gunas* born of *prakṛti* bind the Immutable embodied being to the body. From among these three *gunas* the *sattva* is pure, luminous and harmless; therefore it binds one with the attachment to happiness and knowledge. (*SBG*14.6) The *rajas* is of the nature of passion, it gives Arise to thirst and attachment to action. (*SBG*:14.7) The *tamas* is born of Ignorance, Stupefying all embodied being and it Verily Causes

miscomprehension, Indolence and Sleep. (*SBG* 14.8). The lord also speaks of the general implication of these qualities. The *sattva* makes for attachment to happiness, *rajas* to action and *tamas* to miscomprehension by Verily Shrouding discrimination. (*SBG*:14.9).

## V. CONCLUSION

So one should eat that food which is wholesome as well as promoter of purity, cleanliness and Steadfast sustaining value in his life, not merely nourishing ones. One should ever remember that whatever he does here is not for this life only but for the future life. Choice of food is not excluded from this Consideration. More people belonging to different

parts of the world now tend towards vegetarianism and discourage Selfishly Killing Animals for own Satisfaction. The Sanskrit word *māṃsa* 'he will eat me' which is being Caused (by me) to be killed now: is the Inner essence of the word. The English Word 'Meat' means "Me eat" possesses the same meaning association. The word *matsya* 'Fish' literally means 'he whom I attempt to eat' is mine.

Swami Vivekananda puts *Yoga* as a means of compressing one's Evolution Into single life, or a few months or a few days or hours of bodily existence. In the universe there is a perpetual growth process due to the interaction with nature. Man endowed with power of discrimination, determination and well-developed Control system (Freedom) can accelerate this process of Growth. *Yoga* is that Conscious process of growth.

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- [2] *na hi kaśicatkaṣaṇamapi jātu tiṣṭhatyakarmakṛt. kāryatē hyavaśaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛtijairguṇaiḥ* 3.5
- [3] *yōgī yuñjīta satatamātmānaṃ rahasi sthitaḥ. ēkāki yatacittātmā nirāśīraparigrahaḥ* 6.10
- [4] *śucau dēśē pratiṣṭhāpya sthiramāsanamātmanaḥ. nātyucchritaṃ nātinīcaṃ cailājīnakuśōttaram* 6.11
- [5] *tatraikāgraṃ manaḥ kṛtvā yatacittēndriyakriyaḥ. upaviśyāsanē yuñjyādyōgamātmaviśuddhayē* 6.12
- [6] *sarvakarmāṇi manasā saṅnyasyāstē sukhaṃ vaśī. navadvārē purē dēhī naiva kurvanna kārayan* 5.13
- [7] *samaṃ kāyaśirōgrīvaṃ dhārayannacalaṃ sthiraḥ. saṃprēkṣya nāsikāgraṃ svaṃ diśaścānavalōkayan* 6.13
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