

Śloka 16

नात्यश्नतस्तु योगोऽस्ति न चैकान्तमनश्नतः ।
न चातिस्वप्नशीलस्य जाग्रतो नैव चार्जुन ॥ १६ ॥

*nātyaśnatstu yogo'sti na caukāntamanaśnataḥ
na cātisvapnaśīlasya jāgrato naiva cārjuna*

न	<i>na</i>	not
अत्यश्नतः	<i>atyāśnataḥ</i>	of one who eats too much
तु	<i>tu</i>	verily
योगः	<i>yogaḥ</i>	yoga
अस्ति	<i>asti</i>	is
न	<i>na</i>	not
च	<i>ca</i>	and
एकान्तम्	<i>ekāntam</i>	at all
अनश्नतः	<i>anaśnataḥ</i>	of one who does not eat
न	<i>na</i>	not
च	<i>ca</i>	and
अतिस्वप्न शीलस्य	<i>ati svapna śīlasya</i>	of one who sleeps too much
जाग्रतः	<i>jāgrataḥ</i>	one who is awake
न	<i>na</i>	not
एव	<i>eva</i>	even
च	<i>ca</i>	and
अर्जुन	<i>arjuna</i>	O Arjuna

VERSES 16-17

*Rules and Regulations to be Observed to
Avoid Pitfalls in Meditation*

16

Arjuna, this yoga is neither for one who overeats, nor for one who does not eat at all; nor for one who sleeps too much, nor for one who is (always) awake.

After mentioning the methods and aim of meditation, the Lord further adds that an aspirant cannot achieve success in meditation if proper rules and regulations of eating and sleeping are not observed. The term “eating” pertains not only to eating food, but also to all enjoyments that are experienced by the senses. In order to achieve success in meditation, a yogi should be moderate in any indulgence of outer objects.

this yoga is neither for one who overeats, nor for one who does not eat at all - The physical body is called the food sheath; it exists as a result of eating food that nourishes the mind, body, and senses. If one does not eat food, the body cannot remain healthy for long, and will wither and die. On the other hand, if one overeats, the body will become sick because it will not be able to digest the food properly. Food that sits undigested in the stomach creates gas, mucous, and heartburn that will disturb a person in meditation. One can also become overweight by eating too much, which can lead to dullness, laziness, and loss of enthusiasm for meditation.

In contrast to this, if a person does not eat properly or fasts too much, that person will get weaker physically, and it will also affect the mind. The aspirant will not be able to sit properly and meditate. The mind will be disturbed and agitated. Therefore, for a yogi who practices meditation, it is very important to eat the correct amount of food.

nor for one who sleeps too much - One who has developed the habit of sleeping too much becomes dull and lazy, and the mind does not want to do anything. Moreover, it is a waste of time to sleep long hours when it is not needed. Therefore, one who sleeps too much does not achieve success in meditation.

nor for one who is always awake - If a yogi stays awake too much, that yogi will feel tired, weak, and exhausted, and will not be able to digest food properly or concentrate well. Such a yogi also cannot achieve success in meditation.

In summary, overeating, too much fasting, oversleeping, and not sleeping enough are harmful for one’s physical health and one’s meditation.

Śloka 17

युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु ।
युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवतिदुःखहा ॥ १७ ॥

yuktāhāra-vihārasya yuktaceṣṭa-sya karmasu
yuktasvapnā-vabodhasya yogī bhava-tiduḥkhahā

युक्त	<i>yukta</i>	one who is moderate
आहार	<i>āhāra</i>	in eating
वीहारस्य	<i>vihārasya</i>	in recreation
युक्त	<i>yukta</i>	one who is moderate
चेष्टस्य	<i>ceṣṭasya</i>	in exertion
कर्मसु	<i>karmasu</i>	in action
युक्त	<i>yukta</i>	one who is moderate
स्वप्न	<i>svapna</i>	in sleep
अवबोधस्य	<i>avabodhasya</i>	and wakefulness
योगः	<i>yogaḥ</i>	yoga
भवति	<i>bhavati</i>	becomes
दुःखहा	<i>duḥkhahā</i>	the destroyer of pain

Yoga becomes the destroyer of pain for one who is moderate in diet and recreation, moderate in exertion during actions, and moderate in sleep and wakefulness.

In this verse the Lord emphasizes moderation in diet, recreation, activity, sleep, and wakefulness.

moderate in diet - This means the diet of a yogi should be regulated. The food should be pure, easy to digest, and not too salty, spicy, or sweet. One should eat the right amount of food so that it can be digested easily.

recreation - This means that playing, walking, running, and any other physical exercise should be regulated according to one's physical strength. Overdoing recreational activities will harm one's physical health.

moderate in exertion during actions - This means that the effort one puts out in daily activities such as earning a livelihood, taking care of family, and selfless service to others should be regulated according to time, circumstances, and environment. If in performing spiritual work one overexerts, it can cause exhaustion of the body and agitation in the mind. This can cause one to develop a negative attitude toward everything, which will disrupt one's meditation.

moderate in sleep and wakefulness - The general rule is to sleep at night and remain awake during the day. For an adult who is healthy, six hours of sleep a night is sufficient. One can even reduce this to four or five hours without harming the body. However, if one's body needs six to eight hours of sleep, it is all right. There is no one single rule for the specific diet or amount of sleep that applies to everyone.

The word *svapna*, which means dream state, also means a state of misapprehension of reality. The world is like a dream or unreality, and consequently, *avabodha* or wakefulness means one who is awakened in that dream world. Here it means that one who is beginning meditation practice should neither indulge too much in the world nor push too hard in meditation in an attempt to attain peace. There should be moderation in relating to the world and in meditation as well. One who practices yoga observing moderation, achieves success in meditation, which eliminates all suffering.

Śloka 18

यदा विनियतं चित्तमात्मन्येवावतिष्ठते ।
निःस्पृहः सर्वकामेभ्यो युक्त इत्युच्यते तदा ॥ १८ ॥

yadā vini-yataṁ cittam---ātmanyevā-vatiṣṭhate
niḥspr̥haḥ sar-vakāmebhyo yukta ityu-cyate tadā

यदा	<i>yadā</i>	when
विनियतम्	<i>viniyatam</i>	perfectly controlled
चित्तम्	<i>cittam</i>	mind
आत्मनि	<i>ātmani</i>	in the Self
एव	<i>eva</i>	only
अवतिष्ठते	<i>avatiṣṭhate</i>	rests
निःस्पृहः	<i>niḥspr̥haḥ</i>	free from longing
सर्वकामेभ्यः	<i>sarvakāmebhyaḥ</i>	from all (objects) of desires
युक्तः	<i>yuktaḥ</i>	united
इति	<i>iti</i>	thus
उच्यते	<i>ucyate</i>	is said
तदा	<i>tadā</i>	then

VERSES 18-19

When Does One Become a Steadfast (Yuktah) Yogi?

18

When the mind that is perfectly controlled rests in the Self only, free from yearning for all desires, then it is said that he is united.

A mind that is uncontrolled continuously runs after the objects of sensual enjoyments, making it restless. This restlessness can only be removed when the mind is withdrawn from its preoccupation with sense objects. Complete withdrawal of the mind from its longing for sense objects is possible only when the mind is firmly riveted to contemplation of the Self, the infinite and conscious principle. The **Bhagavad Gītā** uses the term *nihṣprhaḥ*, which means **free from yearning**. Yearning arises when the attachment for the object gets soaked in desires; desire alone does not make the mind restless. Therefore it is the yearning, based on attachment for all desired sense objects, that must be removed.

The mind engrossed in the Self, in peace and bliss, stops its longing for sensual enjoyments. By comparison to the peace and bliss of the Self, sensual enjoyments appear only to cause pain and, as a result, mental deviation toward sensual enjoyment stops. One who has controlled the mind, intellect, and senses, and who is firmly established in contemplation of the Self, becomes a steadfast (*yuktah*) yogi.

Śloka 19

यथा दीपो निवातस्थो नेङ्गते सोपमा स्मृता ।
योगिनो यतचित्तस्य युञ्जतो योगमात्मनः ॥ १९ ॥

yathā dīpo nivāstho neṅgate so-pamā smṛtā
yogino ya-tacittasya yuñjato yo-gamātmanaḥ

यथा	<i>yathā</i>	as
दीपः	<i>dīpaḥ</i>	lamp
निवातस्थः	<i>nivāsthaḥ</i>	placed in a windless place
न	<i>na</i>	not
इङ्गते	<i>iṅgate</i>	flicker
सा	<i>sā</i>	that
उपमा	<i>upamā</i>	simile
स्मृता	<i>smṛtā</i>	is thought
योगिनः	<i>yoginaḥ</i>	of the yogi
यतचित्तस्य	<i>yatacittasya</i>	of one with controlled mind
युञ्जतः	<i>yuñjataḥ</i>	of the practicing
योगम्	<i>yogam</i>	the yoga
आत्मनः	<i>ātmanaḥ</i>	of the Self

“As a lamp in a windless place does not flicker” is a simile for the disciplined mind of a yogi practicing meditation on the Self.

If a lamp is set in a place where there is no wind, its flame will not flicker. The mind is like the flame of a lamp that flickers due to thoughts that flow like a continuous wind through the mind. One thought rises up and then subsides, and another thought immediately follows in similar fashion. This continuity of thought creates the appearance of a solid entity that is called “mind.” But the mind, by its very nature, is unsteady. Desire for sense objects activates the thought process making the mind unsteady, restless, and agitated. When a yogi removes longing for sensual enjoyment and employs the mind in constant contemplation on the Self, the mind becomes calm, peaceful, and steady, like the Self.

The mind’s nature is to take the form of the object on which it dwells. All worldly objects are finite, changing, and illusory, so when the mind dwells on worldly objects it, like them, becomes unsteady. When the mind is engrossed in constant contemplation of the Self, it becomes like the Self: calm, peaceful, and steady. Just as a non-flickering flame is steady and flows upward, a disciplined mind flows steadily upward toward the contemplation of Brahma (God).

Śloka 20

यत्रोपरमते चित्तं निरुद्धं योगसेवया ।
यत्र चैवात्मनात्मानं पश्यन्नात्मनि तुष्यति ॥ २० ॥

yatropara-mate c_ittam niruddham yo-gasevayā
yatra caivāt-manātmānam paśyannātma-ni tuṣyati

यत्र	<i>yatra</i>	where
उपरमते	<i>uparamate</i>	attains quietude
चित्तम्	<i>cittam</i>	mind
निरुद्धम्	<i>niruddham</i>	restrained
योगसेवया	<i>yogasevayā</i>	by the practice of yoga
यत्र	<i>yatra</i>	where
च	<i>ca</i>	and
एव	<i>eva</i>	only
आत्मना	<i>ātmanā</i>	by the self
आत्मानम्	<i>ātmānam</i>	the Self
पश्यन्	<i>paśyan</i>	seeing
आत्मनि	<i>ātmani</i>	in the Self
तुष्यति	<i>tuṣyati</i>	is satisfied

VERSES 20-23

The Stages of Progress Achieved by a Yogi Through Meditation

20

When the mind, restrained by the practice of yoga, attains quietude, and when seeing the Self by the self, one is satisfied in the Self;

When the mind is completely restrained, as explained in verses 18-19, by the regular practice of meditation according to the rules described in verses 11-14, it attains absolute quietude. In that state the ego of individuality disassociates from its field of activity (the mind, body, and intellect) and rediscovers itself in its true nature, which is the Self. In the experience, or seeing, of the Self by the transcendent intellect (*sattva buddhi*), the yogi remains satisfied in infinite bliss because the aim of Self-realization is fulfilled and there is nothing else that needs to be fulfilled.