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### The Scientific View of Yogaśāstra in the Bhagavad Gītā

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#### Abstract:

*Yogaśāstra* is the systematic methodology to be adopted or the rules of conduct to be practised by *Jīva* (a living being) to attain '*Mokṣa*' (liberation or enlightenment). The word '*Yoga*' comes from the root '*Yuj*', which means to join. *Yoga* is that, which joins *Jīva* to their real Self or to the path of Self-Realization. *Yogaśāstra* of the *Bhagavad Gītā* is a very systematic methodology for a *Jīva* to evolve from any stage and realise their ultimate seeking - *Mokṣa*, the liberation.

**Keywords:** *Yogaśāstra*, Self-Realization, *Mokṣa*

#### INTRODUCTION

*Bhagavad Gītā*, as we all know, is the summary or essence of all the *Upanishads* or *Vedānta*. *Vedānta* is the culmination of the knowledge contained in the *Vedas*. In addition, *Bhagavad Gītā* has a unique contribution to mankind, the *Yogaśāstra*, the method to attain the goal which is revealed by *Upanishads* or *Vedānta*. However, *Yogaśāstra* of the *Bhagavad Gītā* is not to be confused with the *Aśtāṅg Yoga* of Patanjali.

#### WHAT IS 'SCIENTIFIC VIEW'?

For the sake of clarity, it is essential to clarify what is implied by the term 'Scientific View' in a given context. There is a difference between 'Science View' and 'Scientific View'. 'Science View' means explanation on the basis of current knowledge base developed by science. 'Scientific View' means a systematic objective, rational view of the subject. This is the sense in which the term 'Scientific' is used here.

Hence, here, in this context, the term ‘Scientific View’ means an objective view of the *Yogaśāstra*, clearly establishing its purpose, the dependencies, its process and how it systematically achieves the said purpose. The understanding should be clear, logical, without any ambiguity. It should be complete without any gaps or missing links. With this perspective, in this article, we will try to understand the *Yogaśāstra*, revealed in the *Bhagavad Gītā*.

## THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ – BRAHMAVIDYĀ AND YOGAŚĀSTRA

### The quest of *Jīva* (a living being)

My quest is to be happy, free from all limitations and dependence and to be full and complete forever. I am actually seeking immortality, awareness, bliss and freedom from all limitations and sufferings. This is the fundamental quest of every living being, which manifests in variety of ways, leading to variety of endless pursuits. In reality, this is what I am actually trying to achieve through all my pursuits.

However, in spite of endless efforts, one does not seem to achieve this state. One does get these to some extent but again they are transitory and are lost. Thus, one has to continuously make endless efforts to just get fleeting glimpses of this state and never reaches the state one is actually seeking.

### The fundamental problem

The *Bhagavad Gītā* reveals that the fundamental problem of a *Jīva* is his ignorance about his own True nature, ignorance of what he is in reality. This ignorance is called *Ajñāna*. He considers himself as a mortal suffering *Jīva* and tries to improve his state based on this perception.

### The Ultimate Solution revealed by the *Bhagavad Gītā*

The *Gītā* reveals the knowledge of all the three areas, I - the Self, Creation, and *Īśvara* (God) and their interrelationships. It reveals the apparent nature as well as the Truth or the 'Absolute Reality' of these three. The Absolute Reality of all the three, is one and same, *Sat-Cit-Ānanda Svarūpa*. *Bhagavad Gītā* reveals that, the True nature of a *Jīva* - is *Sat-Cit-Ānanda*. *Sat-Cit-Ānanda* is that which is immortal, awareness, blissful, all the time. This is what *Jīva* is actually seeking, his own *Ātmasvarūpa* (one's true nature). This is achieved by realizing one's *Ātmasvarūpa*. Realizing this *Ātmasvarūpa* is *Mokṣa*, which is the ultimate goal of a *Jīva*.

This knowledge is called ‘*Brahmavidyā*’ and is the primary subject matter of the *Gītā*.

With this knowledge, the goal of our life becomes clear!

### **Methodology to realise the solution: *Yogaśāstra***

Once I know the goal, I need to know how to achieve it and how to lead my daily life so as to realize the goal.

The *Gītā* gives a systematic methodology for this. This methodology is *Yogaśāstra*. With *Yogaśāstra*, every human being, at any level of spiritual progress can evolve himself and reach this Supreme Goal revealed by *Brahmavidyā* - *Mokṣa* - the real seeking of a *Jīva*.

*Yogaśāstra* helps me realize my *Ātmasvarūpa* and be a *Muktaḥ* (liberated person). Practicing of *Yogaśāstra* is called *Sādhana*. Since this *Sādhana* is for realizing *Mokṣa*, it is *Mokṣa Sādhana*.

The word '*Yoga*' comes from the root '*Yuj*', which means to join. *Yoga* is that, which joins me to my real Self or joins me to the path of Self-Realization, *Mokṣa*.

I have to make my own efforts to progress by practising *Yogaśāstra* till I realize *Ātmasvarūpa* as my own nature. My progress is in my own hands. The grace of *Īśvara* and a *Sadguru* (true guide, a person who has attained enlightenment) can help me, but only when I put in my efforts.

## **THE NEED FOR YOGAŚĀSTRA**

My reality is *Ātmā*. The *Ātmā* is already perfect, free from all limitations, immortal and is of the nature of infinite happiness and consciousness. There is nothing to improve upon in *Ātmā*. No *Yogaśāstra* is needed to make the *Ātmā*, *Sat-Cit-Ānanda Svarūpa*. *Ātmā* is already that.

Then, why do I need *Yogaśāstra*? I have ignorance of who I am in reality. I need to recognise that I am *Sat-Cit-Ānanda Svarūpa* *Ātmā*. *Yogaśāstra* helps me to recognise my *Ātmasvarūpa*.

## **THE ROLE OF YOGAŚĀSTRA**

To achieve this, *Yogaśāstra* has two roles.

- My faulty notions about my Reality are deeply embedded in my mind and intellect as *Samskāras* over so many births. *Yogaśāstra* helps me to overcome the compelling hold of my misunderstandings and release my mind and intellect from their pressures, making them ready and capable for knowledge. This is called purification of mind and intellect, *Antaḥkaraṇasuddhi*.

- Secondly, *Yogaśāstra* removes my fundamental ignorance about my reality, reveals my True nature and helps me to recognize my *Ātmasvarūpa*. This is the ultimate goal of *Yogaśāstra*.

## THE PROGRESSIVE NATURE OF YOGAŚĀSTRA

**The path of *Yogaśāstra* is based on two things.**

Firstly, its foundation is the knowledge of the Ultimate Truth - Absolute Reality.

Secondly, it acknowledges my present condition based on my typical perception of the Self, *Īśvara* and Creation, in which I am currently rooted. Hence, it gives me a step-by-step progressive methodology to evolve from my present stage and reach the ultimate goal.

My present confusion and misunderstanding about myself, the world and *Īśvara* is not simple. I have built layers upon layers of deeper and deeper misunderstandings and faulty notions.

Hence, in the cleaning process, I have to remove these layers step by step starting from the most compounded misunderstanding to the lesser ones. It is like peeling an onion layer by layer. It is a process of progressively destroying these multiple layers of misunderstandings and their influence on my mind and intellect and finally destroying self-ignorance, the root cause of these wrong notions. With the destruction of the basic self-ignorance by *Ātmajñāna* (knowledge of one's own *Pūrnatvam* or completeness, the True nature), I realize my *Ātmasvarūpa*.

As I progress step by step, at each stage, there is a certain condition that needs to be addressed. In order to address this, certain relevant knowledge is required and based on that, certain corrective action and practice is required. Thus, there is something 'to know' and then something 'to do'. Hence *Yogaśāstra* has various *Sāadhanās* or *Yogas*, which are relevant at each stage. This knowing and acting together is the appropriate *Sāadhanā* or *Yoga* at that stage. *Sāadhanā* at each stage serves the purpose by making one ready for the next stage. Each stage is important; at the same time, having reached a particular stage, one needs to work for the next stage. Finally, *Yogaśāstra* destroys the ignorance of *Ātmasvarūpa*.

I climb the stairs step by step to finally reach my destination. Each step I take makes me ready for the next step. Also, I do not get stuck on any step and I keep moving further so that I finally reach the destination.

Similarly, *Yogaśāstra* is a step-by-step ladder of progressive stages, finally leading to be a *Muktaḥ*.

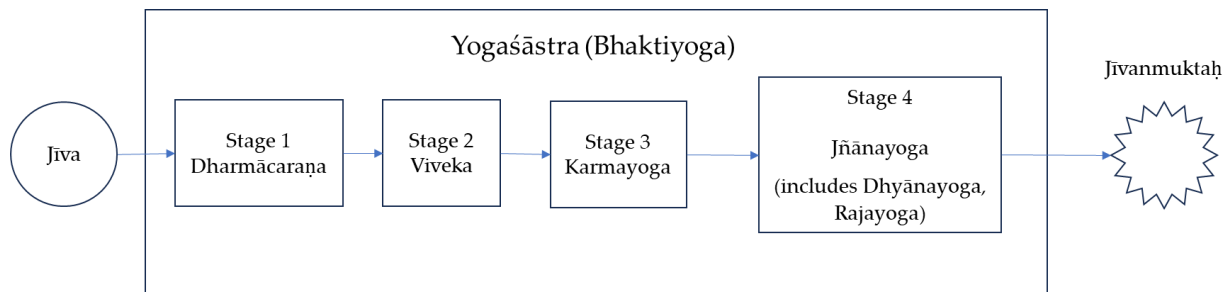
**These successive stages of *Yogaśāstra* as given in the *Bhagavat Gītā* are –**

1. *Dharmācāraṇa*
2. *Viveka*
3. *Karmayoga*
4. *Jñānayoga*
5. *Dhyānayoga* (This is considered as final stage of *Jñānayoga*)

There is a popular notion that *Karmayoga*, *Jñānayoga*, *Dhyānayoga* and *Bhaktiyoga* are independent paths leading to *Mokṣa*. However, if we analyse the prerequisites of each of first three and it's deliverable in terms of readiness it gives, as given in *Bhagavat Gītā*, then we find that deliverable of earlier stage in the above sequence is the prerequisite of next stage. Thus, these three are sequential stages. Similarly, these are preceeded by *Dharmācāraṇa* and *Viveka*.

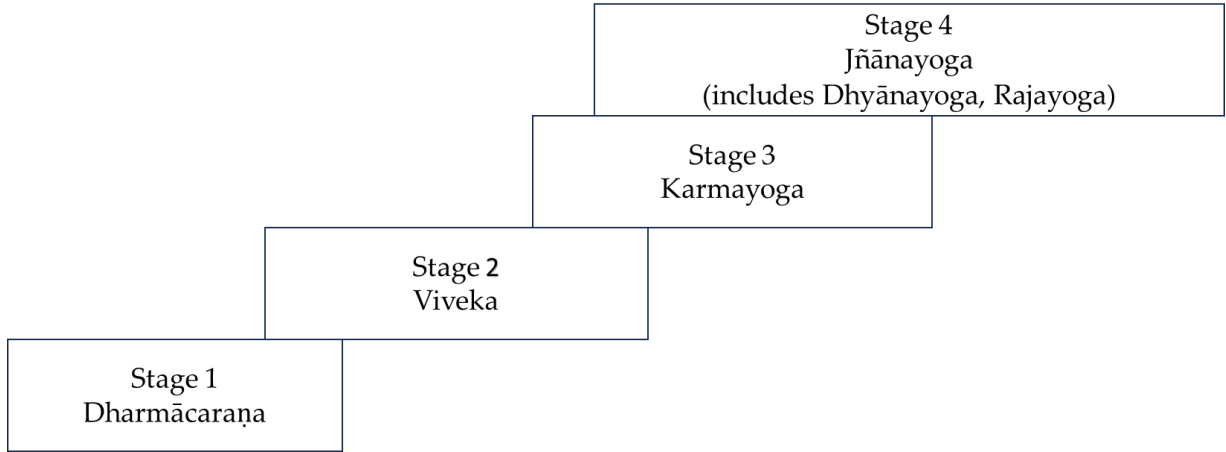
As regards to *Bhaktiyoga*, the vision of *Bhakti* in the *Bhagavat Gītā* has to be appreciated. As we will see, as per the *Bhagavat Gītā*, this whole process of *Yogaśāstra* together is *Bhaktiyoga*.

Thus, the progressive methodology that is *Yogaśāstra* which itself is *Bhaktiyoga*, can be represented as below.



### OVERLAP OF PROGRESSIVE STAGES

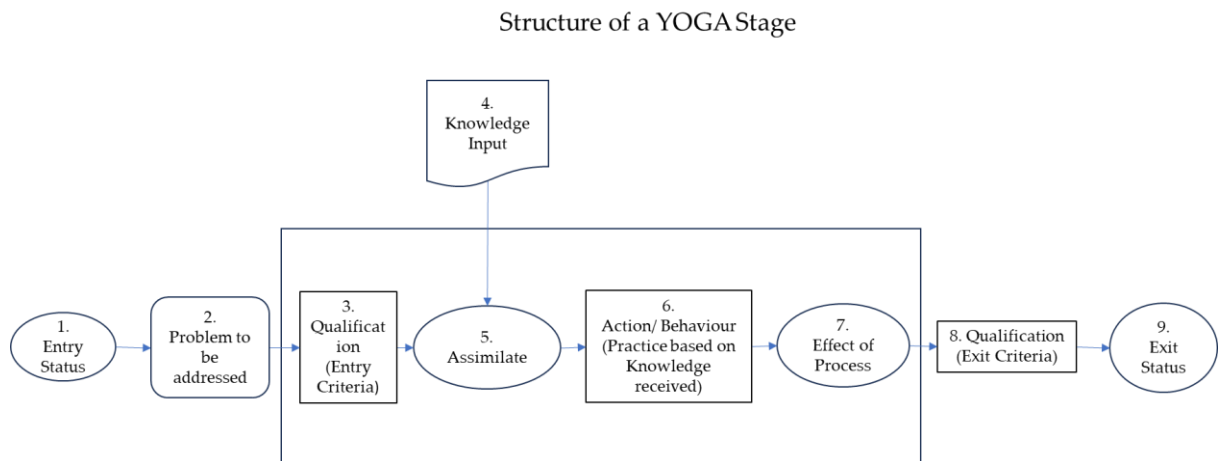
In reality, these are not watertight compartments as qualification of next stage gets acquired progressively. Hence the next stage to some extent can be started even before exiting the earlier stage fully. While all these steps of *Yogaśāstra*, namely *Dharmācāraṇa*, *Viveka*, *Karmayoga* and *Jñānayoga* can be pursued with overlap, the mastery of the earlier step makes it easier to practice the subsequent step. The earlier step makes one qualified for the next step. So, in reality the process may become something like what is depicted below.



## THE STRUCTURE OF INDIVIDUAL YOGA

*Yogaśāstra* addresses needs at various stages. Since *Yogaśāstra* has to address the effects of different levels of confusion and misunderstandings, it has to do different jobs at each stage of progress. Hence, the different components of *Yogaśāstra* have specific purpose, which is relevant at that stage of progress and play different roles in my progress. Each component of *Yogaśāstra* is an individual *Yoga* or *Sādhana* by itself. It removes the obstacle at that stage and makes me ready for the next stage, successfully steering the seeker to the ultimate goal of *Mokṣa*.

The structure of these stages or *Yogas* can be represented as in the diagram below.



1. Entry Status - A *Jīva* in the process of evolution is at a particular stage, e.g. *Asura*, *Ārta*, *Arthārthī*, *jijñāsu*, *Jñānī* etc.

2. Problem to be addressed – The most significant problem to be resolved at this stage so as to be able to progress further.
3. Qualification or Entry Criteria – There is certain amount of readiness necessary so as to be ready for a particular *Yoga*.
4. Knowledge Input – At this stage certain knowledge relevant for this *Yoga* is to be acquired.
5. Assimilation of Knowledge - This knowledge needs to be properly assimilated and appreciated.
6. Action or Behaviour – Based on the insight acquired with this knowledge, certain action or practice is to be done.
7. Effect of *Yoga* - This knowledge along with appropriate action creates its effect and resolves the Problem being addressed at this stage.
8. Exit Criteria – With the problem being resolved, the *Jīva* acquires certain qualification which is Exit Criteria at this stage and he becomes ready for next stage.
9. Exit Status – He gets a status which is subsequent status in the process of evolution.

Let us now briefly see each individual Stage of *Yogaśāstra*.

## DHARMĀCARAṆA

*Dharmācaraṇa* is following the universal code of conduct, morals, and ethics. It consists of Values to be practised. There are several Values mentioned in the *Bhagavad Gītā*.

The focus of *Dharmācaraṇa* is the human mind and behaviour.

*Dharmācaraṇa* develops a *Sāttvika* (serene or balanced), peaceful mind and Intellect, free from internal conflicts. I get a relatively composed state of mind. It gives me mental strength and I get the capacity to reason out my way of living, *Viveka*. I get *Manuṣyatva*, a quality of a good Human Being.

*Dharma* sustains myself, society, and Creation. It is in the interest of all.

## VIVEKA

*Viveka* is rational thinking and having an objective view of the world, my body, my mind, and my pursuits by understanding their nature and seeing their defects and limitations using rational enquiry.

The focus of *Viveka* is objectivity and correcting our perception of the world, my life and my expectations.

With *Viveka*, I can see the exaggerated positive or negative values I attach to things in the world and I correct them. With this, I grow out of the inappropriate longings or aversions for them. This is maturity called *Vairāgya* (growing out).

With *Vairāgya*, I get prepared for spiritual progress. I become ready for *Karmayoga*.

## KARMAYOGA

*Karmayoga* is doing *Swadharma* as *Īśvarārpaṇa-Karma* with *Prasādabuddhi* towards the *Karmaphala* (visible and invisible result of action).

- *Swadharma* is doing what is appropriate for me to do in a given situation, considering larger interest, my duty and my own aptitude and nature.
- *Īśvarārpaṇa-Karma* is doing *Karma* (action) as service to *Īśvara* with an appreciation that it is *Īśvara's* will and one is the instrument for *Īśvara* to make it happen.
- *Prasādabuddhi* is an attitude towards the result of action, as the *Prasāda* (gracious gift), the acknowledgement from *Īśvara* and accepting it with reverence, independent of what it is.

The focus of *Karmayoga* is *Īśvara*.

*Karmayoga* gives me a serene and peaceful mind, undisturbed by anything around, and a clear intellect. I lose all impurities one by one and reach a stage where I get the purity of mind and intellect. This is *Antaḥkaraṇasuddhi*.

My mind and intellect are now ready and become capable of acquiring and absorbing *Ātmajñāna*.

## JÑĀNAYOGA (INCLUDING DHYĀNAYOGA OR RĀJAYOGA)

*Jñānayoga* is removing my *Ajñāna* (ignorance) about Self, by acquiring *Ātmajñāna*.

*Jñānayoga* consists of –

- *Śravaṇa*: Learning *Ātmajñāna*, the knowledge of the Absolute Reality of the Self, Creation and *Īśvara*, the Truth, from the *Sadguru* and from the *Vedāntik* texts, the scriptures.
- *Manana* means: Gaining complete clarity by reflecting on the knowledge acquired, doing analysis, introspection, and resolving all the doubts.

- *Dhyāna* and *Nididhyāsana* (Also called *Dhyānayoga* or *Rājayoga*): Assimilating the *Jñāna* and becoming one with it, by contemplation on the *Ātmasvarūpa*, *Brahmasvarūpa* and; while living in the world, being constantly awake to the Truth that everything is *Brahman* and I am *Brahman*. The focus of *Jñānayoga* is *Ātmajñāna*.

My root problem is *Ajñāna* of True Self, because of which, I exist as a mortal suffering *Jīva*. *Ātmajñāna* destroys *Ajñāna*. Once my *Ajñāna* goes, my *Ātmasvarūpa* is revealed and I get *Jñānaniṣṭha* (stabilised in knowledge), that is, I get established in *Ātmasvarūpa*. I awaken to the reality that I am *Sat-Cit-Ānanda Svarūpa*, I am *Muktaḥ*.

This knowledge releases me from all sufferings and limitations and gives the realization of that state of everlasting peace and happiness. I attain *Mokṣa*. I realise that, I am that which I am seeking. I become *Jīvanmuktaḥ*, one who has become *Muktaḥ*, in this life.

## BHAKTIYOGA

*Bhaktiyoga* is seeking *Īśvara* with growing clarity, ultimately recognising oneness with *Īśvara Svarūpa*. This is *Mokṣa*. The whole *Yogaśāstra* itself is *Bhaktiyoga*.

*Bhakti* means devotion to *Īśvara* and is the process of seeking *Īśvara*. *Bhakta* is a devotee who is seeking *Īśvara*.

The focus of *Bhaktiyoga* is increasing clarity and knowledge about *Īśvara* and finally identify with *Īśvara*. The stages of maturity in *Bhaktiyoga* are:

- *Kāmyabhakti* of *Saguṇa* (with attributes), *Sākāra* (with form) *Īśvara* with *Dharmācāraṇa* and *Viveka*. It deepens my *Śraddhā* (faith) in *Īśvara*.
- Then *Niṣkāmyabhakti* of *Saguṇa*, *Nirākāra* (formless) *Īśvara* with *Karmayoga*. It gives me *Antaḥkaraṇaśuddhi* and *Jijñāsā* (quest to know the Truth).
- Ultimately *Jñānabhakti* and *Ekabhakti* of *Nirguṇa* (attributeless), *Nirākāra* *Īśvara* with *Jñānayoga*. It leads me to *Ātmajñāna*.
- With *Ekabhakti* with *Dhyāna* and *Nididhyāsana*, I recognise my identity with *Īśvara*. I become *Jīvanmuktaḥ*.

I attain *Mokṣa*, the ultimate seeking of a *Jīva*.

Having realised *Mokṣa*, nothing further is to be gained, as the ultimate purpose is realised.

## CONCLUSION

Thus, *Yogaśāstra* of *Bhagavad Gītā* is a very systematic methodology for a *Jīva*, a worldly person, to evolve from any stage and realise the ultimate seeking of a *Jīva*, *Mokṣa*, the liberation.

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### Brief Profile of the Author:

**Uday Karanjkar** is author of the book titled ‘Gītā Bodh’ which is conceptual presentation of The Bhagavad Gītā and Vedānta. The unique approach of the book makes it very easy for a seeker to grasp the total vision of the Bhagavad Gītā and Vedānta with clarity. The book has been highly appreciated. It is based on his 30 years of research and analysis of these text under the guidance of Pujya Swami SatSwarupananda ji. Based on his work Uday has been conducting Gītā sessions for several years.

He is a highly successful corporate leader. In his illustrious career of 37 years, he has handled a variety of senior management and expert responsibilities across various Engineering and IT industries. Last he was head of the Enterprise Systems Group in a leading IT industry. He was born in 1955 at Nagpur. He is an Electronics and Telecommunication engineer and a Post-Graduate in Industrial Engineering from NITIE Mumbai. Currently he lives in Pune, India. He is a passionate artist and loves painting watercolour landscapes and making sculptures. He loves the Himalayas and enjoys nature and trekking.

**Statements and Declaration:** For a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of the subject, please refer to the book ‘Gītā Bodh’ by the author. This article is an extract from the author’s upcoming book on this topic. This article, in part or full, should not be published in any form, without prior permission of the author.

### Glossary of Sanskrit Terms Used:

Please note: Since some Sanskrit words may not have a direct equivalent term in English language, we have mentioned the nearest English translation in this glossary. Also, some Sanskrit terms may have multiple meanings. This glossary lists the closest meaning in the context of this paper.

*Antaḥkaraṇaśuddhi*: purification of mind and intellect from hold of compulsive desires and all faulty notions

*Ajñāna*: ignorance about the Reality of Self

*Ārta*: distressed person who is suffering very much

*Arthārthī*: seeker of earthly possessions like wealth, power, position

*Aṣṭāṅg Yoga*: the eight-limbed path of conscious living and spiritual practice that guides one towards Self-knowledge. It is presented in the Yoga Sutras which was compiled by Patanjali.

*Asura*: those who live for themselves without any ethics and do nothing for others

*Ātmā*: Self

*Ātmajñāna*: knowledge of the True nature of Self

*Ātmasvarūpa*: one's True nature

*Bhagavad Gītā*: often referred to as the *Gītā*, it is a 700 verse Indic scripture, which is part of the epic – Mahabharata and is a dialogue between the Lord Shri Krishna and Arjuna.

*Bhakta*: a devotee who is seeking *Īśvara*

*Bhakti*: devotion to *Īśvara*; process of seeking *Īśvara*

*Bhaktiyoga*: seeking *Īśvara* with growing clarity, ultimately recognising oneness with *Īśvara Svarūpa*

*Brahman*: the sole, ultimate, unchanging reality underlying all phenomena; *Sat-Cit-Ānanda*

*Brahmasvarūpa*: of the nature of *Brahman*

*Brahmavidyā*: the knowledge that my true nature is *Sat-Cit-Ānanda* or I am *Brahman*

*Dharma*: morals and ethics

*Dharmācāraṇa*: following the universal code of conduct, morals and ethics

*Dhyāna*: contemplation

*Dhyānayoga*: contemplation on the Truth, my True nature as the Truth of all.

*Ekabhakti*: the stage of *bhakti* when one awakens to the Truth that everything is *Brahman* and I am *Brahman*

*Īśvara*: God

*Īśvarārpaṇa*: as service to God

*Jijñāsā*: quest to know the Truth

*Jijñāsu*: seeker of knowledge of the Truth

*Jīva*: a living being

*Jīvanmuktaḥ*: one who has gained Self-knowledge and is, therefore, liberated while living

*Jñānayoga*: removing ignorance about Self by acquiring knowledge of one's True nature and assimilating the same

*Jñāna*: knowledge

*Jñānabhakti*: the stage of *Bhakti* when you gain the knowledge of the True nature of Self

*Jñānī*: a person who has attained knowledge of Self

*Jñānaniṣṭha*: stabilised in knowledge

*Kāmyabhakti*: devotion with desire or expectations

*Karma*: action

*Karmaphala*: visible and invisible result of action

*Karmayoga*: doing *Swadharma* as *Īśvarārpaṇa-Karma* with *Prasāda* towards the *Karmaphala*

*Manana*: contemplating on the knowledge acquired to gain complete clarity by reflecting, doing analysis, introspection, and resolving all the doubts

*Manuṣyatva*: quality of a good human being

*Mokṣa*: liberation; enlightenment

*Muktaḥ*: liberated person

*Nididhyāsana*: assimilating the acquired knowledge by contemplation and being awake to it all the time

*Nirākāra*: formless

*Nirguṇa*: attributeless

*Niṣkāmabhakti*: selfless devotion

*Prasāda*: gracious gift

*Prasādabuddhi*: attitude of accepting all results of action with reverence, independent of what they are, with an appreciation that it is the *Prasāda* from *Īśvara*

*Pūrnatvam*: completeness

*Rājayoga*: *Nididhyāsana*

*Sadguru*: true guide, a person who has attained enlightenment, who gives the knowledge of the Truth

*Sādhana*: disciplined or dedicated practice

*Saguṇa*: with attributes

*Sākāra*: with form

*Samskāras*: notions; mental impressions

*Śāstra*: the spiritual texts

*Sat-Cit-Ānanda*: immortal-awareness-blissful

*Sāttvika*: serene or balanced

*Śraddhā*: faith

*Śravaṇa*: learning or acquiring knowledge (traditionally through listening, but it also includes other means like reading etc.)

*Svarūpa*: true nature

*Swadharma*: doing what is appropriate for me to do in a given situation, considering larger interest, my duty and my own aptitude and nature

*Upanishads*: ancient Indic texts which appear at the end of Vedas and explain the *Brahmavidya*

*Vairāgya*: growing out of the inappropriate longings or aversions

*Vedānta*: it is the culmination of *Vedic* wisdom. It is covered in the *Upanishads*, the *Brahma Sutras*, the *Bhagavad Gītā* and some explanatory texts by Authorities

*Vedāntik*: belonging to *Vedānta*

*Veda*: the world's most ancient spiritual text originating in ancient India. It is the collection of four ancient Indic scriptures containing hymns, prayers, liturgical formulae and philosophy of life.

*Viveka*: rational thinking

*Yoga*: (1) to join; union (2) disciplined or dedicated practice

*Yogaśāstra*: the systematic methodology to be adopted to attain '*Mokṣa*' i.e. liberation or enlightenment