

Elements Of Yoga In Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

Objective: The current study makes an effort to search for the yogic elements in the Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa. The genesis of the study is to find out its similarities and differences with comparison to Patañjali's yoga. Using the databases from the original Sanskrit book of Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa, Patañjali's yoga sutra and other yogic texts, a thorough search of the literature was carried out, and we find that the Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa's Yama and Niyama are different from Patañjali's Yama and Niyama, but the aim of the practice is the same, that is, Liberation.

Key Words: Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa, Aṣṭāṅgayoga, Yama, Niyama, Bhakti and Mokṣya.

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I. Introduction

Yoga, as a discipline aimed at spiritual evolution from ancient times to the age of yoga, is a very foundational aspect of India's thought and faith traditions. It is usually considered not only a set of physical or meditative activities but also an intellectual and cultural science of self-transformation in terms of liberation (*mokṣha*). One of the oldest classical frameworks for yoga (*Aṣṭāṅgayoga*) is based on a system derived from the *Patañjali Yoga Sutras*, and this system represents a formalisation of yogic history. In the Yoga Systems, there is the relationship of the eight limbs (*yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra, dhāraṇa, dhyāna, samādhi*) in which the mental fluctuations stop, and in the end, one enjoys absolute freedom in that discipline (*dhāraṇa/dhyāna*). The basis of a group is the ethical and disciplinary frameworks, and it is what determines the attitude toward people, so that others think and live their lives, and also what life inspires and inspires yoga.

The significance of yoga, however, goes beyond the classical philosophical systems, and it is deepened substantially in Puranic teachings, and the spiritual context is a broader religious aspect of the religion with it. The *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* is at the core of these and gives you a deep and cohesive explanation for yoga because it teaches you discipline, devotion (*bhakti*), and spirituality. And in the Bhāgavata, the spiritual framework of *Aṣṭāṅgayoga*, and in particular the ethical background of yoga, also gets explained; and *yama* and *niyama*, in particular, are developed and further justified so that we can see the philosophical aspect.

To this end, we concentrate on the yogic aspects in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* in order to understand why this is so, particularly with reference to the *Aṣṭāṅgayoga* section. This study addresses the differences and similarities we have made in depicting the *Bhāgavata* and the *Patañjali Yoga Sutras*, around the core *yama* and *niyama* sciences and the classical yogic science. This study is to show how the Bhagavata not only protects the classical way of living but also remakes it within a new, devotional, and socially embedded framework in a way that makes its purpose more effective.

Meaning and definition of Purana

Purāṇa, which is referred to in Sānskrit as "ancient" or "old," represents a vast collection of ancient literary works that embody the essence of India, its religion, and theology. The classical Mahāpurāṇas and Upapurāṇas include 18 texts. Among these, the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* (SBMP) stands out in some respects. Purāṇic literature covers a wide range of subjects, including cosmology, mythology, genealogy, ethics, ritual practices, and traditional branches of knowledge such as astronomy and medicine (as well as grammar). This entire concept is also connected to yoga as a means to attain liberation (*mokṣa*). The SBMP, in particular, is considered by many as the foundation of *Vaiṣṇavism*, as it emphasises devotion to Viṣṇu as the most authentic way to achieve spiritual vision (*bhakti*), spiritual progress, and liberation, and as the most meaningful path.

The text is organised into twelve skandhas (cantos), comprising about 18,000 verses, in which Śuka (Śukadeva) narrates to King Parīkṣit. This dialogue provides philosophical insights and theology. Unlike the Vedic tradition, the SBMP offers a perspective on Vedic *Dharma* from a devotional standpoint.

The text extensively discusses various types of yoga, including Aṣṭāṅga Yoga, Mantra Yoga, Dhyāna Yoga, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, and Jñāna Yoga, which can be unified under a single conception of yoga.

However, our focus here is on *Aṣṭāṅga Yoga* in the SBMP and its relation to the classical system as found in the *Pātañjala Yoga Sūtras* (PYS).

II. Methodology

For this study, we conducted a thorough literature search using databases from the Ministry of AYUSH, Sodha Ganga, PubMed, and Scopus. Only reputable yoga and science journals that have undergone publishing and peer review are included. Additionally, books must be published, identified by their ISBN, and published by a certain publishing firm. Collect data from primary and secondary sources. Books, articles, and other materials are secondary, while older texts such as the PYS, SBMP, *Haṭha yoga*, and other yoga-related literature served as fundamental sources.

Aṣṭāṅgayoga in Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa

In the BMP canto:11, Chapter:19 there is a discussion between Lord Kṛṣṇa and Uddhava, where Lord Kṛṣṇa Explaining about *Yama* and *Niyama*, such as: abstaining from harming others,

अहिंसा सत्यमस्तेयमसंगो ह्रीरसंचयः ।

आस्तिक्यं ब्रह्मचर्यं च मौनं स्थैर्यं क्षमाभयम् ॥[33]

शौचं जपस्तपो होमः श्रद्धाऽऽतिथ्यं मदर्चनम् ।

तीर्थाटनं परार्थं तुष्टिराचार्यसेवनम् ॥[34]¹

Speaking truthfully but politely, refraining from stealing (even mentally) what belongs to others, absolute detachment, modesty, refraining from collecting or storing anything in one's possessions, faith in *sāstras*, celibacy, firmness in *dharma*, forbearance, and fearlessness are known as *Yama*. Purification of the mind, as well as purification of the body, repetition of a mantra or God's name, austereness, religious offering (to gods), deep faith and acclaim for *sāstras*, hospitality, performance of God's (*Kṛṣṇa*) worship, visits to sacred places, working for the well-being of others, contentedness, and Giving service to preceptors are known as *Niyama*. There are twelve of each of the *Yamas* and the *Niyamas*.²

In canto-3, Chapter 28 is named as " *Aṣṭāṅgayogaki Vidhi*" The whole Chapter is dedicated to *Aṣṭāṅgayoga*. It is a discussion between Lord Kapila and Devahuti. Such as:

मौनं सदाऽऽसनजयस्थैर्यं प्राणजयः शनैः ।

प्रत्याहारश्चेन्द्रियाणां विषयान्मनसा हृदि ॥ [5]

स्वधिष्यानामेकदेशे मनसा प्राणधारणम् ।

वैकुण्ठलीलाभिध्यानं समाधानं तथाऽऽत्मनः ॥[6]³

One must observe silence and develop steadiness through various yoga practices, gradual control of breath, and mental disassociation of senses from their objects into the heart. Fixing the mind and vital air in one of the six plexuses (such as the *mooladhara cakra*), then focusing one's thought on the Lord Kṛṣṇa's *lilas* (stories), for the attainment of *samādhi* (or *samādhānam*).⁴

It goes on to add that "प्राणायामः परं बलम्"⁵ *Prāṇāyāma* is the Ultimate strength. " Practice of breath control is to burn the impurity in the body; Dharana is to burn the sins; *Pratyāhāra* is to burn the attachment to objects of the senses; and meditation is to burn the undivine attributes. Once yoga has purified and stabilised the yogi's mind. He should focus on the Supreme Lord's form while meditating with his eyes fixated on the tip of his nose. The yogin should focus his thoughts entirely on God by meditating on the attractive and gracious full image of Lord Kṛṣṇa for the attainment of liberation.⁶

Comparison between SBMP's *Aṣṭāṅgayoga* and PYS'S

Similarity

The theory or fact that the SBMP is related to yoga may be very similar to the classic view of the PYS. At the level of similarity, the SBMP acknowledges the fundamental shape of the eightfold path of order and ethics (*yama*), observances for meditation and positions that require meditation and breath control for sensory

¹ ' *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa* ' Part-2, (2023) Gita press, Gorakhpur, Canto-11, Ch-19, Page no-832

² 'The Bhagavat Purana', (2003) Motilal Banarasidas Publication, Part-V, Canto-11, Ch-19, Page-2033.

³ Shreemadbhagvat Mahapurana' Part-1, Gita Press, Gorakhpur, 2023, Page no. 374.

⁴ Tagare. G.V.(Tr), *The Bhagavat Purana*, (2003) Motilal banarasidas publication, Part-I, Canto-3, Ch-28, P- 385-390

⁵ BMP (Sanskrit), Part-2, (2023), Gita press, Gorakhpur, Canto-11, Ch-19, Page no-832

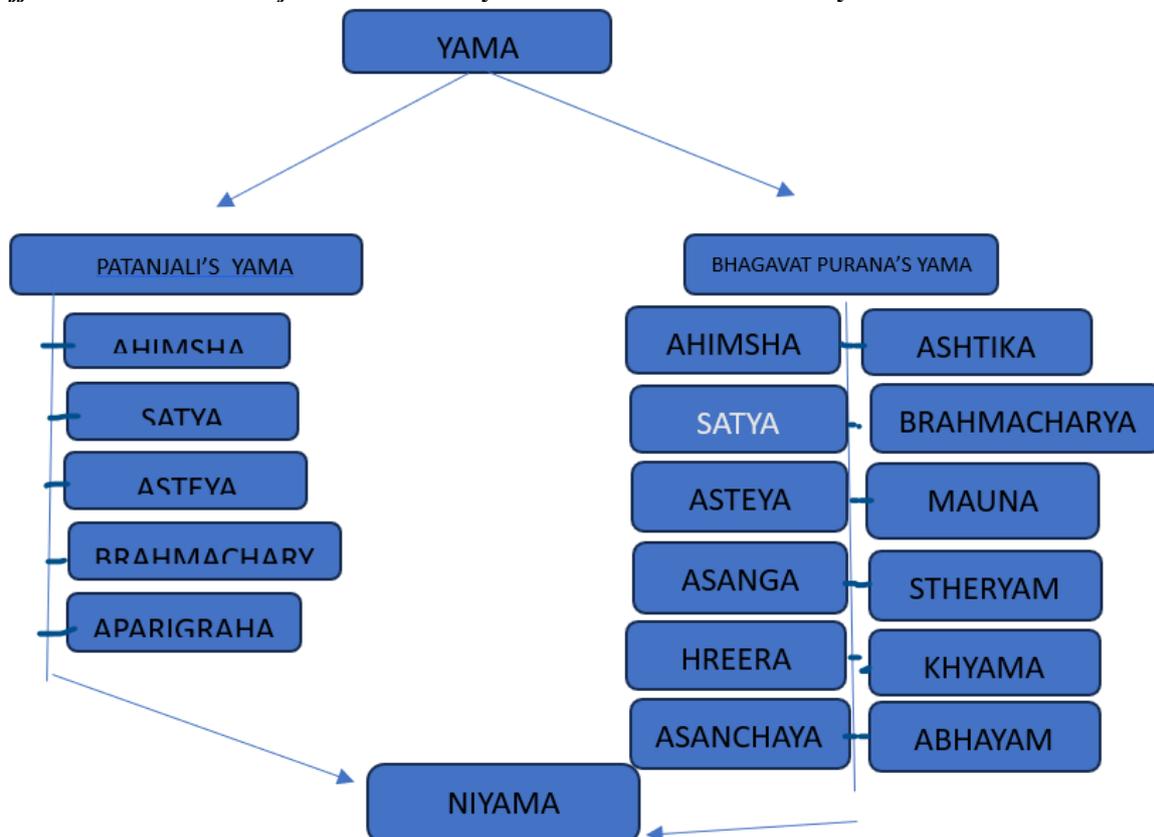
⁶ Tagare, G.V.(Tr), *The Bhagavat Purāṇa*, (2003) Motilalbanarasidas publication, Part-V, Page-2034.

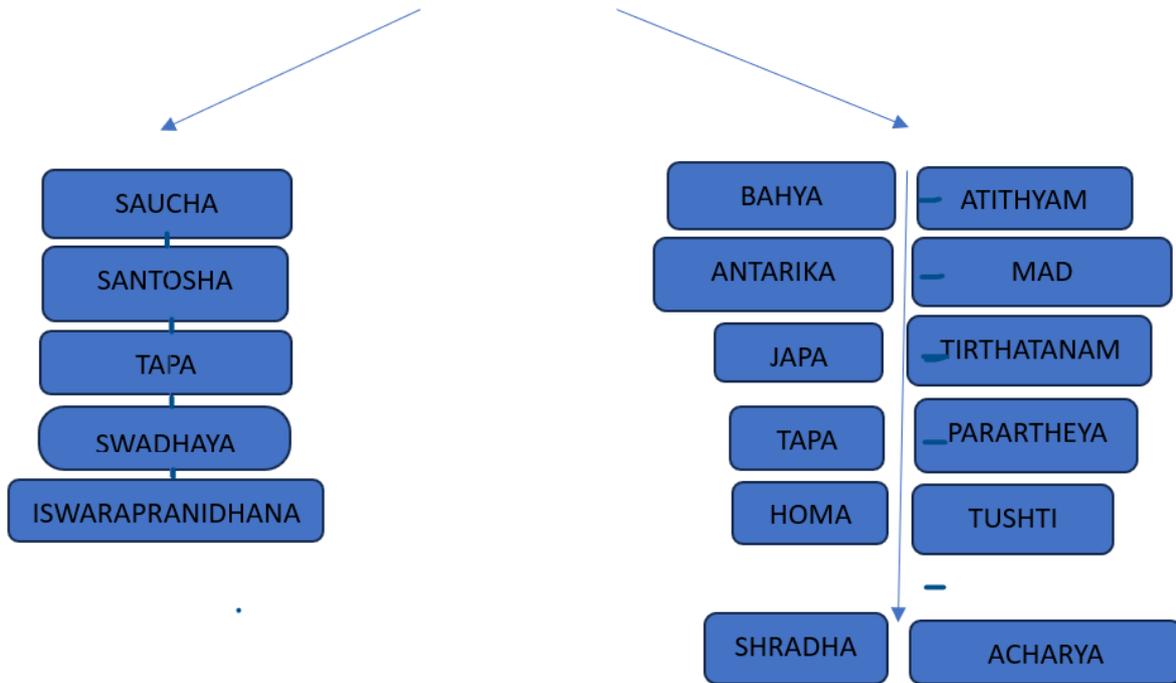
withdrawal, concentration, meditation, and *samādhi*, which is the influence made at the heart of the Pātañjala system. The mental discipline of the yogic mind and the mindfulness to discontinue mental disturbances are essential for each other in life. And the ethics of Yoga philosophy are also common (i.e., self-control, purity, austerity). But different about a philosophy in nature and the practical basis. Although the Yoga System of Patañjali is dualistic philosophically and the practice is much more optional of Īśvara, In the SBMP, yoga is deeply theistic with worship for a particular God as a focus of a supreme god (Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa). For this context, *Bhakti* is much more of a technical but intuitive aspect of life as opposed to *Aṣṭāṅgayoga* and is usually perceived here as the path more accessible to the whole world. In this way, meditation is given the form of an object in the Bhāgavata, and not an abstract concept with nothing to do with words or even images of the other forms that they did in the more psychological analysis of Patañjali. Similarly, *samādhi* is also transformed from blind absorption in Bhagavān from one-sided meditation into loving spiritual nature (*kaivalya*). And so is the Bhāgavata in terms of this, in some sense, being more of an ascetic and technical view. The SBMP thus not only goes to *Aṣṭāṅgayoga* but interprets it in a devotional, theologically richer way, connecting yogic discipline with the wider mission and meaning of life in *bhakti* and religion in general.

Differences

An interesting contrast of the SBMP, as it deals with *Yama* and *Niyama*, lies in the comparison with the PYS. While Patañjali thinks of these as five ethical disciplines like nonviolence, truthfulness, non-stealing, celibacy and non-possessiveness (*Yama*), cleanliness, contentment, austerity, self-study and surrender to God (*Niyama*), an emphasis is there in Bhāgavata that can be made much broader in terms of twelve *Yamas* or twelve *Niyamas*. *Yamas* in Bhāgavata are truthful but subtle speech: not even to be violent and ungrubby but just about others; modesty but very humble; self-sacrifice, belief in the word of the god and in God and in other works. And the *Niyamas* have both internal and external disciplines like ritual chanting, austerity, respect for scriptures, hospitality, service to others, contentment and devoted service for him/her (a mother of all). An evolution of a short ethical code in Bhāgavata through a much richer ethical code for a community to have no less and more devotion: one which will marry a person’s discipline with something from the practice and to serve. In contrast to the more philosophical and technical presentation of the theology of the Pātañjala system (a technical and utilitarian system), *Yama* and *Niyama* are re-imagined in the Bhāgavata as a whole of virtues based in devotion and morality. For easier comprehension, differences are displayed in a flow chart in Figure 1.

Differences between Patanjali’s Yama and Niyama and SBMP’s Yama and Niyama.





[Figer-1]

III. Conclusion

In the Pātañjala Yoga Sūtras and Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa, Aṣṭāṅga Yoga also undergoes structural and interpretative changes in a similar manner within the yogic tradition. Although the eight limbs of yoga are virtually identical in yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra, dhāraṇā, dhyāna, and samādhi, the nature of the basic yama and niyama is different in the Pātañjala system.

Moreover, although our conceptual and motivational model for practice is the same as that followed, the spiritual direction of our practice is different. The Pātañjala Yoga Sūtras are a rather complex and psychologically involved practice designed to stop mind-set modification and achieve kaivalya, or the isolation of puruṣa. By contrast, the Bhāgavata is more theistic, where yogic practices serve as an enabler that gives me space to experience and engage in the loving worship of the divine. I think this is a move from introspection to a deep life filled with love and worship, where I go closer to the spiritual mind and consciousness, to its spirit that I am going to feel.

However, despite these differences, the goal in the two systems, though divergent, is to accomplish an ultimate dream, i.e., liberation from a life of bondage. But the aim for both systems is different, and in the Pātañjala view, kaivalya and mokṣa are about union or association with the Supreme in the Bhāgavata. The so-called Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa reframes and improves upon it rather than the old Gautama, the classical structure of the Pātañjala Yoga Sūtras. As of now, Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa can be seen as a model of spiritual and theological knowledge-building in addition to the physical Śrīmad Mahāpurāṇa, and they shall be very useful.

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