



By Paul Rodney Turner

As a young monk, I learned first-hand just how powerful food is as a communicator. The faces of our guests would literally light up with joy as I and the other monks served them a delicious vegetarian lunch at the Krishna temple in North Sydney. For some, it was to be their first experience of a “meat-less” Sunday lunch, but nobody seemed to mind once they cast their hungry eyes over the food on their plates.

As boldly advertised, the feast really was “out of this world”—two succulent curries, colourful and aromatic basmati rice, cauliflower fritters, tamarind-date chutney, puffed whole-wheat bread, salad, rosewater-scented sweet dumplings, and the *pièce de résistance*—hot strawberry halava smothered in icy cold mango sweet rice pudding!

The “Sunday Feast” atmosphere was always thick with anticipation and yet a comforting calmness would engulf us all once the serving began. It seemed that our guests were fully satisfied just viewing the gourmet vegetarian feast. The feasting had started with their eyes! This was no ordinary food; it was *prasadam*—food that had been prepared with loving intention and then offered to God. It emanated a powerful, loving energy that drowned us all. The entire gathering had, for a moment, become one very happy family.

True, it was not exactly the healthiest of lunches, but still a great improvement on what most of our guests would normally eat. It was a once-a-week thing and, boy, did they make short work of the monstrous plates we’d serve them!

During the last twenty years, I have visited over fifty countries, and participated in some of the world’s

greatest natural disaster relief efforts, including the 2004 Asian Tsunami. Food for Life Global served hundreds of thousands of freshly cooked vegan curries, rice, and dhal at refugee camps set up by the Sri Lankan army. Men, women, and children from both sides of the civil conflict lived and ate together during these early days of the relief. Once again, it was food that was uniting them.

### THE POWER OF THE TONGUE

*Spirituality begins with the tongue.*

As simple as that statement sounds, it is absolutely true and, if fully understood, it will change your life forever. The tongue has two functions: tasting and vibrating. So, essentially, we are talking about two things we do every day: eating and talking. As mundane as they appear, like everything else we do in life, these two activities can be perfected and purified. Therefore, by systematic regulation, the tongue should always be engaged in only tasting the purest of foods and vibrating the purest sounds, of which, according to every spiritual tradition, the holy

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# Food YOGA

## Nourishing the Soul

If we make the effort to focus on this very essential part of our lives—eating—**incredible and transformative things can happen to us.**

sound of God’s name is paramount. But let’s first discuss what India’s yoga manifesto, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, says about pure food.

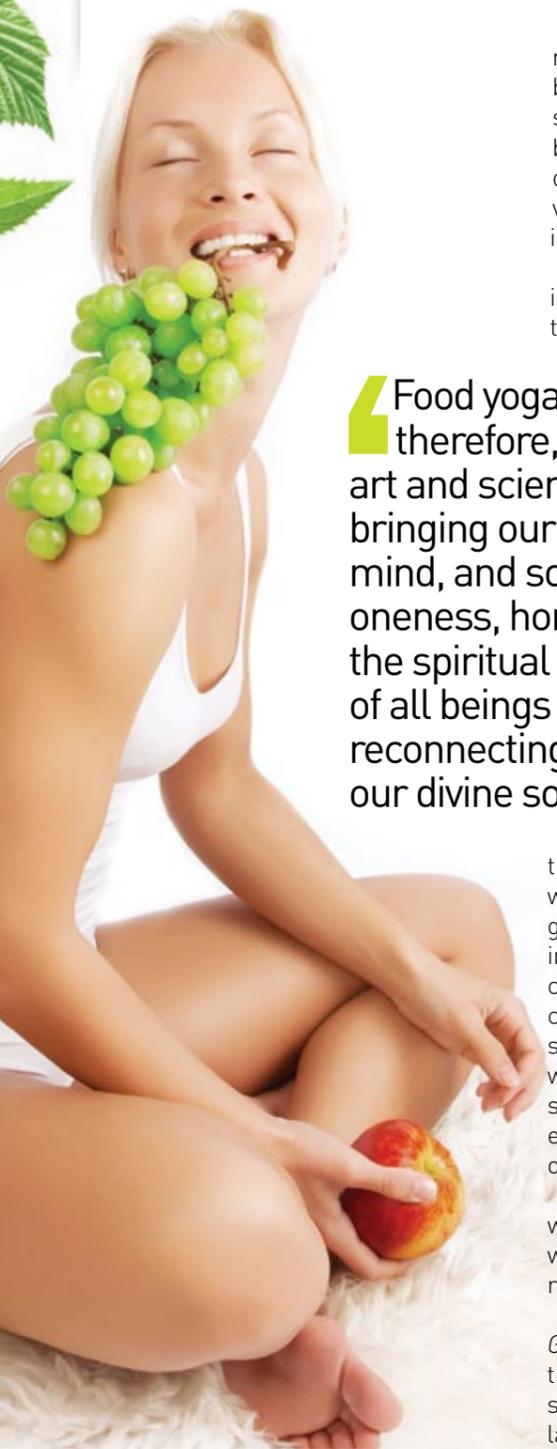
*If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit or water, I will accept it. [9.26]*

Lecturing on this verse, Vedic scholar Srila Prabhupada explains: *The process of achieving a permanent state of spiritual bliss is herein described. It can be attempted even by the poorest of the poor, without any kind of qualification. The only qualification required is a heart filled with pure devotion for the Lord. One’s material circumstances are not important. The process is so simple that a leaf, water or fruit can be offered to the Lord in genuine love and the Lord will be pleased to accept it.*

Another point of interest from this verse is the allusion to a raw, plant-based diet. There are no other foods mentioned here but a leaf, flower, or fruit. Commentators on the *Gita*, however, assert that Krishna’s declaration suggests all kinds of wholesome vegetarian foods.

Let’s look at the original Sanskrit: *patram* – leaf; *pushpam* – flower; *phalam* – fruit; *toyam* – water; *yah* – whoever; *me* – unto Me; *bhaktya* – with devotion; *prayacchati* – offers; *tat* – that; *aham* – I; *bhakti-upahritam* – offered in devotion; *asnami* – accept; *prayata-atmanah* – from one in pure consciousness.





Food yoga, therefore, is the art and science of bringing our body, mind, and soul into oneness, honoring the spiritual equality of all beings and reconnecting with our divine source. 7

Obviously, a raw plant-based diet is not conducive to all climates and all body types; however, the mounting scientific evidence supporting the benefits of a balanced plant-based diet consisting of whole fruits, vegetables, grains, seeds, and nuts is overwhelming.

The other function of the tongue is to vibrate. All humans understand the power of the spoken word. Its sonic energy can be harnessed to inspire, to manifest, to heal, and to manipulate the subtle and physical worlds. Both the original Hebrew and Sanskrit alphabets, considered to be given by the gods, state that acts of creation begin in sound. Thus, the Bible states, "In the beginning was Logos [Word]," whereas the *Vedas* claim that the great Architect, Lord Brahma, was inspired by the *Gayatri mantra* to create this material universe. Sound corresponds to ether or sky, the subtlest of the five material elements which develop progressively from subtle to gross (ether, air, fire, water, earth). Sound is, therefore, the basis of all creation.

An important part of the training within the ancient mystery schools was to control speech, including regulating words and their meanings.

Paul Von Ward, in his book *Gods, Genes, and Consciousness*, explains that many ancient cultures had similar views about the power of language. "Priests and shamans used primal sounds, producing an appropriate word to cause manifestation or action in the physical realm." He suggests that "incantations and chants are examples of this belief, as are mantras<sup>1</sup> in Hinduism and Buddhism."

### FOOD CARRIES THOUGHTS

Every word we speak makes a thought-form in the etheric and

<sup>1</sup> *Sanskrit*: Consisting of two words, *man* (mind); *tra* (to deliver).

astral dimensions, and therefore our words and thoughts affect the food we prepare. With this in mind, it is actually not the physical substance of food that has the power to unite, but rather the *intention* that it carries. Even food that is considered ignorant, like the rotting flesh of an animal or food that has been contaminated by a plethora of artificial

ingredients, can still have some power to create unity if only temporarily—if it is infused with loving intention. This is clearly evident during holidays like Christmas and Easter. However, the unifying effects are short-lived, as any good intention is quickly overwhelmed by the feelings of fear, pain, and sadness of the animal that are also present in the meat.

For the most lasting and transformative effect, therefore, food needs to be completely free of any negative feelings, including those of the slaughtered animal. The purest food is that food that has been not only prepared with loving intention, but also prayed over.

Author and filmmaker David Wilcock believes that by investing positive energy into food, we can make it more healthful for ourselves and others: "You can change the structure of your own food by intent . . . That's why it is so important to bless your food, because you can take the existing stuff you are already using and make it much more potent, by making it yours, by putting your energy into it."

Because food is mostly water—the most powerful conduit of thought



energy<sup>2</sup>—all food is in one way or another impacted by how it is grown, handled, packaged, prepared, cooked, and served. Every person who interacts with a food on its journey from seedling to your plate intrinsically affects the food's energetic quality, and subsequently, your physical, mental, and spiritual health. Each

person's thoughts (psychic energy) add to the palette of conscious thoughts that eventually makes their way into your body.

### EATING YOUR WAY TO HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS

Since eating is one of the two main functions of the tongue, and hence is central to our survival, it is logically one of the *most efficient and effective* mediums for initiating change in consciousness. Each of us has had the experience of sitting down to a meal cooked with love and felt an immediate transformation of consciousness, followed by a feeling of reciprocal love for the person who prepared the meal. The fact is, when food is prepared with loving intention, it can communicate in any language. Such food has the ability to break down barriers and turn anger into love, fear into trust, and ignorance into enlightenment. This is no more evident than in the loving exchange between a mother and child.

<sup>2</sup> Homeopathy is an example of how water continues to carry the energetic signature of a foreign substance long after the substance has been removed.

If we make the effort to focus on this very essential part of our lives—eating—incredible and transformative things can happen to us. Biodynamic Guru Peter Proctor believes quality food helps people make moral decisions and have moral thoughts: "It's not just stuff to fill your stomach. It actually gives you a real quality of thought and you realize that this is what the world needs."<sup>3</sup>

When you are living consciously, beginning with conscious eating, you will do so in all your thoughts and actions. Your life will be consistent and in harmony with your environment. Food is the most basic necessity of life. Its only purpose is to nourish the body, mind and soul. Food, therefore, should give us life, cleanse our body, and uplift our spirit. Eating food should never be just about fueling the physical body.

According to all yoga traditions, food that is old, decomposed, and consisting of dead flesh will pollute the body and consciousness, while food that is fresh, nutritious, and free of any suffering will enrich the body, cleanse the mind, and satisfy the soul.

The *Bhagavad-Gita*<sup>4</sup> states that all foods can be classified according to their inherent quality and the way they affect our body and mind.

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Foods characterized by goodness increase the duration of life, purify one's existence, and give strength, health, happiness, and satisfaction. Such nourishing foods are sweet, juicy, fattening, and palatable.<sup>5</sup>

*Passionate people like foods that are too bitter, too sour, salty, pungent, dry and hot. Such foods cause pain, distress, and disease.*<sup>6</sup>

*Food cooked more than three hours before being eaten, which is tasteless, stale, putrid, decomposed, and unclean, is food liked by unenlightened people.*<sup>7</sup>

*Foods liked by unenlightened people are essentially those foods that are decomposing and impure. As may be guessed, meat and fish are foods belonging to this lower mode and therefore should be avoided if one truly desires enlightenment and the most sacred connection to the natural world.*

### BODY, MIND AND SOUL HEALTH

Eating can also be a form of yoga, and this is supported by the very tradition in which yoga was born. The term *yoga* comes from the Sanskrit root, *Yuj*, which literally means "to join." In the spiritual sense, it is the process by which the relationship of the individual soul with the Supreme Soul is realized by the Yogi.

Unfortunately, too many yogis in the West miss this point and thus they do not enjoy the full benefits of what yoga offers. What most people understand as yoga practice is really just the beginning stages of yoga. Yoga is a life-long journey of reconnecting with God.



<sup>3</sup> Documentary film (2010): *One Man, One Cow, One Planet*.

<sup>4</sup> *Bhagavad-Gita* is a Vedantic scripture comprising the instructions given by Sri Krishna to Arjuna during the Kurukshetra War. It appears as part of the *Mahabharata*.

<sup>5</sup> *Bhagavad-Gita As It Is* (17.8) edited for clarity.

<sup>6</sup> *Bhagavad-Gita As It Is* (17.9) edited for clarity.

<sup>7</sup> *Bhagavad-Gita As It Is* (17.10) edited for clarity.





kindness a human can do, and eating food is one of the few things *all* humans have in common.

All the world's great spiritual traditions have elaborate food-offering rituals carefully designed to expand consciousness. From the Holy Eucharist to Passover, to *Diwali*, Christmas, Thanksgiving, and even the mushroom ceremonies of the Shamanic traditions—all use food as a means to represent or please the Divine and to expand the consciousness of their followers.

The path of food yoga is about reconnecting with your food in such a way that it nourishes your body, mind, and soul. The lack of this is, I believe, a major flaw in most lifestyle or nutrition programs being espoused today.

Because food is so fundamental to our existence, the offering of food has been an integral part of every spiritual tradition since the beginning of recorded history. Food yoga, therefore, is the art and science of bringing our body, mind, and soul into oneness, honoring the spiritual equality of all beings and reconnecting with our divine source. It is about focusing on the more divine aspects of eating, beginning with an acknowledgement of a benevolent presence in our lives and evolving to an appreciation of that presence through the offering of pure food, much the same as when you honor a friend in your home. Giving food is the most fundamental act of

My volunteer work for Food for Life Global has taught me just how powerful food is as a uniter and healer of our body, mind, and soul. In fact, the mission for the charity is not to feed hungry people, but rather, to **unite the world through pure food**. A food yogi is one who lives a balanced and conscientious life fueled by the uniting power of pure foods that have been prepared with loving intention.

Food yoga is, in essence, a discipline that embraces all spiritual paths by accepting one core truth—that food in its most pure form is *divine* and therefore an excellent medium for spiritual purification.

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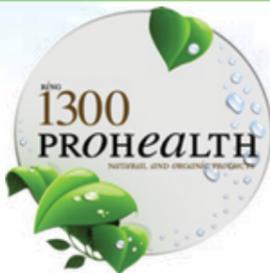
Food yoga is an art form—as the individual expresses love and devotion using food as the medium—and also a science, as we learn to appreciate the beauty and interconnectedness of all things, coupled with an unceasing awareness of the Energetic Source from which all things emanate.

Priya Vrata (a.k.a. Paul Rodney Turner) is the International Director of Food for Life and the founder of Food for Life Global, the world headquarters for the charity. Food for Life is the largest plant-based food relief organisation in the world, with projects in over 50 countries that serve up to two million meals daily. Paul was born in Sydney, Australia, in 1963 and grew up in Whalan, a part of Sydney's western suburbs.

Visit [www.foodyogi.org](http://www.foodyogi.org) for more information

**CALL TO EVOLUTION** FOOD YOGA NOURISHING THE SOUL

1. Drink 1 litre of pure water daily for every 30kg of body weight to maintain a good hydration.
2. Start a small herb garden and increase this over time.
3. Shop locally and support your local organic farmers.
4. Your body and mind are a product of what you've eaten.
5. Engage the tongue in tasting only pure foods and vibrating pure sounds.



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