



Yama And Niyama : The Ethical Codes Of Conduct Towards Spirituality And Health

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Good deeds done for reward bring heaven. Good deeds done without desire bring liberation.
(Upanishad Wisdom)

Ayurveda is not merely a science but is a method of living and has a unique approach towards liberation. To develop health and self-realization, Sadhana and Ayurvedic therapies are suggested. Further developments in spirituality and healing are gained by following the rules of virtuous behavior.

Yama and Niyama are the part of Astang Yoga.¹ These are the dos and don'ts or ethical disciplines which have existed in the human race since the beginning of civilizations. These are common sense code of conduct. By following these traditional percepts, we work towards individual of the body, mind and soul.

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Introduction:

Ayurveda, a science of life, has been testified by the test of time and stands by virtue of its underlined concepts and principles. The concepts have been evaluated through a series of investigation and conclusion has been made in the purview of better health care. In the due course of time different contemporary thoughts have also been incorporated to glorify and justify the science. Different philosophical concepts have been taken and adopted with proper alteration for the need of science. The concepts of *Astang Yoga* have been incorporate within the ayurvedic concepts and it has been depicted as the means of achieving a final liberation. Spiritual angle of the health has been discussed on the light of these *Yama* and *Niyama*. These and their subdivisions have been categorically described in the prevention of different diseases. The current topic deals with the detail description of the *Yama* and *Niyama* and their clinical utility.

Review:

Yama (Self Restraint)-

It is lay stone of *Yoga*. It the first step in the eightfold path of *Patanjali*. *Yama* told us what to avoid in deeds because wrong deeds would do harm to the individual and the society. The observance of *Yama* disciplines the five organs of actions which are the legs, mouth, the organs of regeneration and the organ of excretion. It is natural for the organs of action to control the organs of perception and of the mind. If the mind wishes to harm to something but the organ of action refuse, then no harm will be done. Therefore *Yama*, is said to be foundation or root of tree of *Yoga*. By doing *asanas* alone, without incorporating of *Yama and Niyama*, there will be very little advancement upon the spiritual path.

It is self restraint of five canons²:-

1. *Ahimsa* (Non-violence, Non-injury, Harmlessness)
2. *Satya* (Truthfulness)
3. *Asteya* (Non-stealing)
4. *Brahmacharya* (Practice of Continence)
5. *Aparigraha* (Non-acceptance or Non-greed)

1. *Ahimsa* (Non-violence, Non-injury, Harmlessness)

It comes first because one must remove one's brutal nature first. One must be non-violent and develop cosmic love. Only then he becomes fit for *Yoga*. It is non-harming, not causing trouble to the people, animals or the environment or not feeling envy. One's job must be considered in this respect because this rule doesn't applicable to persons who may kill like soldier, fish farmer. In this regard, *Acharya Chakrapani* also said that-

fgalk fof/kjfgk izkf.kihMk%A³

Those whose job doesn't involve killing are advised not to kill. It should be done by mind, words and body. It results in no one feels enmity to you.

2. *Satya* (Truthfulness)

The whole phenomenon is *Maya* or illusion, *Asat* or unreal and the aspirant should be aware of this fact because it is said that-

czāIR;a txfUeF;kA

This is also applicable to an individual that he should say what that means. Sincere words are meant to clarify one's ideas. It can be realized only by speaking truth and observing truth in thought, word and deed. There are thirteen forms of truth- truthfulness, equal vision, self control, and absence of envious emulation, forgiveness, modesty, endurance and absence of jealousy, charity, thoughtfulness, disinterested philanthropy, self-possession and unceasing and compassionate harmlessness. These virtues are attainable only by the unselfishness.

Truth means strength to abide by positive principles. Speak the truth, but let it not be pleasant and speak not pleasing falsehood-this is eternal religion. If you are established in truth, all the other virtues will cling to you.

By saying truth in all conditions, one's words become reality if you practice it for 12 years at least and there will be no burden in one's mind.

3. *Asteya* (Non-stealing)

This is another form of self-restraint. Desire, thirst or *trishna* is root cause of stealing.

In this regard, *Acharya Chakrapani* said that-

Lrs;a ijnzO; xzg.kaA⁴

If one remove a thing secretly without the knowledge of the owner and you don't want others to know this act that is stealing. A *Yogic* practitioner must be free from all the forms of stealing. Even a sensitive mind becomes blunt by continuous stealing. Even a little dirt, a little theft affects the mind of a *yogic* practitioner seriously. So he will be very careful. Then alone, he can get success in *Yoga*.

The stealer's mind becomes full of disturbing, disgraceful and poisonous thoughts and he become psychologically ill.

4. *Brahmacharya* (Practice of Continence)

For liberation from life and death cycle and to meet *Brahma*, whatever code of conduct followed, is called *Brahmacharya* like avoiding eight fold of coitus in thought, words and action. As said by *Acharya Chakrapani*-

czā.k eks{kk; p;Za czāp;ZeqiLFkufxzgkfnA⁵

Brahmacharya is included in three standing base pillars for body stability.⁶

Married couples also have a form of *Brahmacharya* as discussed in the *Ayurveda*. When controlled, the part of human energy, which is expressed in sexual union, becomes transmuted into a special energy called *Ojas Shakti* and is stored up in the brain. All great spiritual giants of the world have practiced celibacy and that is the reason why they were able to electrify the whole world through the power of their *Ojas*. A *Yogic* practitioner with an abundance of this energy keeps his audience spell bound. There is a peculiar charm in his smile and power in his words emanating from his heart. He produces a very profound impression in the minds of all.

What is wanted is restraint and not suppression of sexual desire. In restraint, no sexual thought will arise in the mind. There is perfect sublimation of sexual energy. But in suppression, the aspirant is not safe. When favorable opportunities occur, repressed desire manifests with rebound force and there is danger of miserable downfall.

What is wanted is deep inner life. Open yourself to higher spiritual consciousness. Feel the divine presence and divine guidance in your life. Become like a child, speak to HIM freely. Pray for light,

purity, strength, peace and knowledge. You will be established in *Brahmacharya*. A result of this is power to infuse energy and knowledge unto the humbler one grows.

5. *Aparigraha* (Non-acceptance or Non-greed)

It is opposite to *Parigraha*. *Parigraha* is covetousness or need. *Aparigraha* is a mental state, in which the sensual cravings are dead. It is to cease from wanting or chasing after material wealth or fame because it keeps one's mind attached or bound (i.e. Not free or at peace) but in *Parigraha*, leads to anxiety to preserve, fear of loss, hatred, anger, untruthfulness, stealing etc.

Aparigraha puts an end to all these and bestows peace and contentment. It removes at one stroke fear, attachment, disappointment, anxiety, jealousy, anger, lust and depression.

Aparigraha is indeed an aid to the practice of *Ahimsa*, *Satya* and *Asteya*. When the cravings are not satisfied one becomes angry and hates those entire persons who stand in their way of attaining things. All harmed by him in different ways. He speaks untruth and begin to steal things. *Aparigraha* removes all these. It is the foundation of all *Yogas*, just as *Dhyana* or meditation is the meeting point of all *Yogas*.

Being the first limb of *Yoga*, the five *Yamas* are the foundation of spiritual life on which the superstructure of *Samadhi* is built. Following the *Yamas*, means sticking to ideals and principles happens. It is about development of positive traits that will transform the human nature into the divine nature annihilate cravings and negative qualities. When the years are truly practiced, the heart is filled with cosmic love, goodness and light.

***Niyama* (Observance)**

Niyama is the religious observance. It is the second step in the path of the eight fold path of the *Patanjali*. It controls the organs of perception which are eyes, ears, nose, tongue and the skin. It is observance of five canons⁷:-

1. *Shaucha* (Internal and External purity)
2. *Santosha* (Contentment)
3. *Tapas* (Austerity or Rigor)
4. *Swadhyaya* (Study of religious books and repetitions of *Mantras* or Study of Scriptures)
5. *Ishwarpranidhana* (self-surrender to GOD and HIS worship)

Niyama also prescribes mental exercises to train the mind to control emotions.

1. *Shaucha* (Internal and External purity)

It reflects internal and external purity both. External purity means pure food and cleanliness. Cleanliness means brushing of teeth twice daily, Cleaning of nose and nasopharynx by drawing salted water (It removes *Malas* of these places), scraping of tongue, a bath early in the morning helps one to get into the meditative mood quickly. With the practice of *shaucha*, one gradually gives up attachment to the body and it become easier to maintain *Brahmacharya*.

Removal of lust, anger, greed, jealousy etc. constitutes internal purity. Internal purity is more important than external purity. It makes the mind one-pointed, bestows serenity, cheerfulness, poise happiness. It instills love, patience and magnanimity. Therefore develop internal purity through vigilant effort. A pure or *sattwic* mind can be attained through spiritual practices.

2. *Santosha* (Contentment)

It cuts the roof of all desires and one should be satisfied with what is obtained through luck or the grace of GOD. It bestows peace, one pointedness of mind, serenity and satisfaction. It brings success in the practice of *Yamas*.

Contentment does not mean satisfaction but willingness to accept things as they are and to make best of them. Divine light will descend in a contented mind alone. A contented person is satisfied with his lot. He is happy in whatever condition he is placed, he doesn't crave for things he doesn't have. Contentment is a mystic stream of joy that cools three fires of *Samsara* and joins with the ocean of immortal bliss.

The mind is always restless on account of greed. Greed is a kind of internal fire that consume one slowly. Contentment is a powerful antidote for the poison of greed. It is said that there are four essentials that guard the domain of *Moksha* : Shanti (Peace), *Santosha* (Contentment), *Satsanga*

(Company of true persons) and *Vichara* (Enquiry). If you can approach any of these essentials, you can get hold of the other three.

As a result of contentment, one can gain the incomparable felicity.

3. *Tapas* (Austerity or Rigor)

It is one of the three methods of dynamic *Yogic* practices. It is originally referred to being able to bear extremes of heat and cold, hunger and thirst etc. As said by *Acharya Chakrapani-riÜpkUnzk;.kkfnA*⁸

In this quotation, extreme hunger is beared.

Tapas mean austerity or even practice of penance. *Yogi* of *tapas* is brilliant like a blazing fire. *Tapas* also mean restraint of the senses and meditation. It leads to control of minds.

Austerities like occasional fasting and endurance. Standing on one leg, rising on hand up for a long time is also *Tapas* of an ignorant person. The unintelligent *Tapasvi* is always irritable, short-tempered and proudy. So practice intelligent *Tapas*.

Mental *Tapas* is more powerful than physical *Tapas*. The one, who bears extreme heat and cold, does physical *Tapas*. He increases his power of endurance, but he may not able to bear insult. One will be easily upset by a harsh or unkind word for he has disciplined only the physical body. To keep a balanced mind in all conditions of life, to bear insult, injury and persecutions, to be ever serene, contended and peaceful, to be cheerful in adverse condition, to have fortitude in meeting danger, to have presence of mind and forbearance, are forms of mental *Tapas*.

Bhagwat Gita defines austerities as a threefold process involving the body, speech and mind.⁹

Body- Worship of GOD, holy persons, *Gurus* and the wise; act with purity, simplicity, continence and non-injury.

Speech- That which doesn't cause harm or pain to others, is true pleasant and beneficial and regular scriptural study.

Mind- Cheerfulness, kindness, silence, self-control and purity of hearts.

As a result of *Tapas*, mental and physical impurities are vanished.

4. *Swadhyaya* (Self-study)

It is not just study of scriptures and books written by the realized ones but also enquiry into the nature of the self. Reading scriptures such as *Bhagwat Gita*, *Yoga vashistha* and *Upanishads* in beneficial for developing a spiritual understanding or framework. *Swadhyaya* is asking the question, "Who am I?"

Swadhyaya is indirect *Satsang*. By practicing *Sadhana*, as instructed by one's *Guru*, is actually a deepest level of study because it is learned through direct experience within oneself. When you can't get the direct company of the realized and the wise, *Swadhyaya* clears doubts and strengthens the flickering faith. It fills the mind with *Sattwa*, inspires and elevates the mind, helps in concentration and meditation, cuts new positive grooves in the mind and makes the mind run in these grooves.

5. *Ishwarpranidhana* (Thinking of GOD as the Be-all and End-all)

It is surrender to GOD. This is the practice where the devotee consecrates everything to the higher force and credit of all actions to be supreme soul. One no longer has a will of his own and this helps eliminate the desire for the consequence of action. (E.g. I am not the doer, I am only the instrument. GOD is doer). It doesn't mean that one should not use this as an excuse for living irresponsibly.

In surrounding his will to the divine, the devotee's will become one with the cosmic will. He becomes one with the Lord Almighty. There is no loss in surrounding, one's will to GOD. Self surrender makes the devotee feel the reality of divine grace and the Lord's readiness to bestow help on him at all times. The divine influence streams into his being and moulds it to make it a fit medium for divine realization and divine instrumentality.

Thus, one becomes less attached to the material world and more devoted to the divine grace.

The above said ten restraints and their corresponding practices are necessary to maintain bliss consciousness, as well as all of the good feelings towards oneself and other attainable in any incarnation. These restraints and practices build character. Character is the foundation for spiritual unfolding. Once character develops then knowledge (*Gyan*) can be easily obtainable and there is no liberation without knowledge.

“_rs KkukUu eqfDr%A” (Upanishad Wisdom)

Discussion:

Liberation has been considered as the primary goal of human life by the orthodox school of philosophy. The union of subjective-self with the universal-self is remaining the main focusing point of the human. Liberation in the other way can also be interpret that the liberation of the self out of the body from the recycling of the repeated birth. For achieving these goals, different rules and regulations have been advocated to give desire momentum of the body. Human beings are encircled by various desires and without get rid of those desires. Human cannot be able to fix the self towards a single point. The stages described in the *Astang Yoga* are meant for the preparation of the body to achieve these goals. The initial five stages are described for the physical and mental purifications. The last three are described for mental and spiritual purifications. *Yama* and *Niyama* are described the first two steps. The practice of *Yama* enhances the moral aspect and also helps to develop the ability to justify the grasping of the impulses of senses. *Niyama* is the practice of controlling the mental emotions and practice of which prevents improper indulgence of mind into different objects. Hence, practice of *Yama* and *Niyama* uplift the status of self-realization and thus finally prevents the *Asatmendriarthasamyoga* and the disease.

Conclusion:

On the basis of above facts it may be concluded that *Yama* and *Niyama* can be accounted as the primary steps of achieving spirituality. Though it is described in the context of *Astang Yoga*, in spite of, those should be adopted in the daily common life. The practice of these will enhance the physical, mental and spiritual status of a human and thus will help to achieve the ultimate status of health.

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