



11

YAMA AND NIYAMA

In the previous lesson, you have learned about some selected slokas and sutras from Yoga Sutra and Hath Yoga Pradipika. Patanjali Yoga is the system which consists of eight stages. These are Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. It is therefore widely called Ashtanga yoga (the yoga of eight stages). In this lesson you will learn Yama which is social discipline and Niyama which is personal discipline.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- explain Yama and Niyama;
- differentiate between the first three Yama-Ahimsa, Satya and Asteya; and
- explain the first three Niyama of Shoucha, Santhosha and Tapas.



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11.1 YAMA

Yama is the first step of Ashtanga Yoga. Yama means social code. There are five Yama; Ahimsa, Sathya, Asteya, Brahmacharya and Aparigraha. Among these five Yama, you will learn the first three yama i.e. Ahimsa, Sathya and Asteya.

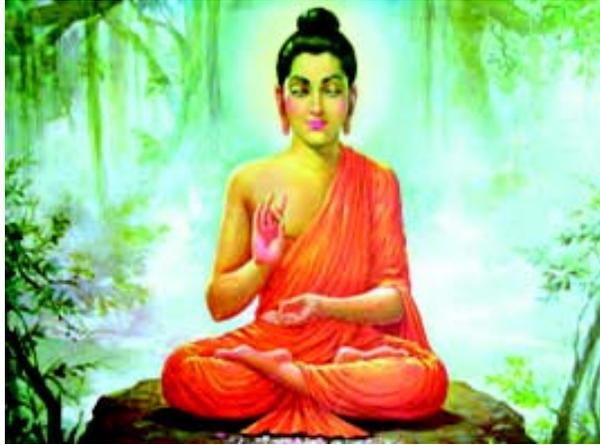
I. AHIMSA (Non Violence)

Ahimsa means following nonviolence in action, speech and even in the mind. Let's read a beautiful story of Buddha and Angulimala. This story explains the meaning of Ahimsa and its implications in our life.

Buddha and Angulimala

This story begins at the University of Taxshila, which was a great university in ancient India. Ahimsaka was a brilliant student. He excelled in all his subjects. Because of this, the other students became jealous. They made up stories to make the teacher believe that Ahimsaka was evil. The teacher believed these lies and decided to get rid of Ahimsaka. The teacher knew that Ahimsaka always listened to his elders, so he decided to give Ahimsaka an impossible task, so that he would never return home. The teacher called Ahimsaka and told him that in order to graduate, he needed to collect one thousand little fingers. Instead of giving up, Ahimsaka set out to collect one thousand little fingers. However, he soon discovered that most people wouldn't easily give up their little fingers. So he hid in the forest and murdered people to get their fingers. He found that he had nowhere to store these fingers. So he put them on a string around his neck, to keep

count. Because of this terrific necklace of fingers, he was nicknamed Angulimala, meaning 'finger garland'. One day, Buddha left his monastery for a walk in the forest. Although



Angulimala lived there, Buddha was not afraid, he continued on his way. On this particular day, Angulimala only had one more finger to collect, so when he saw Buddha entering the forest, he dashed out to murder him and claim his finger, and complete his task. But no matter how fast he ran behind Buddha, he never seemed to be able to catch up with him. Finally, tired and angry, Angulimala screamed for him to stop. Buddha turned and quietly told Angulimala that, it was time for him to stop his killing and violence. Angulimala was so touched by these words that he immediately threw away his weapons. He followed Bhagwan Buddha back to his monastery, where he became a monk.

We can see from this example that Buddha who was follower of nonviolence transformed Angulimala into a monk who was a murderer. Nonviolence is the personal practice of being harmless to self and also others in any condition. So practice nonviolence.

II SATYA (Truthfulness)

Satya is the second of the Yamas, following Ahimsa. Satya means truthfulness. Let's learn the meaning of Satya through a beautiful story of Kabir and a thief.



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Kabir and thief

Kabir, the poet - saint was humming a Doha (a couplet) as he sat weaving in his hut. It is natural for saints to revel in divine thoughts, even while engaged in work. Suddenly, the front door of his hut was thrown open and



there stood a ruffian, “Quick, show me a place to hide, the policeman is after me!” demanded the intruder rather rudely. Kabir calmly pointed to bales of cotton huddled together and said, “There! There you will be safe!” The intruder hid there. Now the police man entered the hut and asked “I am trying to nab a thief, I saw him running in this direction. Did you see him?” Kabir, in his unique style, casually pointed to the bales of cotton. The policeman looked at Kabir’s face and thought that Kabir was lost in his own world, like saints are. So he did not take him seriously and left hurriedly. After sometime, the thief emerged safely from the bales of cotton and confronted Kabir, “You are a saint. You are supposed to protect anyone who takes refuge in you, even if he be a sinner. Why did you reveal my hiding place to the police? What if I had been exposed?” “My dear friend”, Kabir spoke to the robber affectionately. “I spoke the truth, since I was sure that the only truth was capable of protecting you. If I had uttered a lie, it would have landed both of us in trouble. Truth alone saves us in the long run. Falsehood leads to ruin and sorrow.” The thief gave up his wrong ways and became Kabir’s disciple.

We can see from this example that Kabir who was follower of truthfulness transformed a thief into his disciple. If you are not truthful to yourself it will harm you. So practice Satya.

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III ASTEYA (Dishonesty)

Asteya is the third of the Yamas, following Satya. Asteya means non-stealing. The Story of woodcutter which shows that how a woodcutter's non-stealing attitude makes him rich. This story gives you a clear understanding of non-stealing.

Woodcutter and his axe

Kalidas was a humble woodcutter. He was living in a village named Udayapur. The village was near by a dense forest. All the villagers were depending upon the forest for their livelyhood. Kalidas was going regularly to collect firewood. He was selling the wood in the near-by market. With that little earning he was managing his family.

Like usual routine, one day he had gone to the forest to collect the firewood. He was cutting a tree near the river and misfortune struck him on that day. His axe slipped away from his hand and was lost in the river. He was a poor woodcutter and he had only one axe. On that day he lost his only axe in the river. Thinking about the future he started weeping. His crying was so intense that it disturbed the water goddess. The river goddess came in front of





Kalidas and asked the reason for his crying. Kalidas explained everything in detail to the river goddess. After listening to everything the water goddess plunged into the river. After a while she came out from the water with a golden axe.

She showed the golden axe to Kalidas and asked “Is it yours?” Kalidas examined the golden axe and said “No my lord, it’s not mine.” Keeping the axe aside, the river goddess plunged into the river a second time. This time she came with a silver axe. She showed the silver axe to Kalidas and asked again “Is it yours?”

Kalidas examined the axe again and said “It is not mine. I am a poor woodcutter. How can I own a golden or silver axe! I have only an iron axe.” Listening to this the river goddess plunged once again inside the river. This time she came back with the iron axe of Kalidas. When Kalidas saw his axe he became very happy. He showed his gratefulness and respect to the river goddess. Seeing the honesty of Kalidas the river goddess gave the golden and silver axe as a gift to him with his original iron axe.

We can see from this example that woodcutter who followed the attitude of non-stealing got a boon from God. So it is good to practice Asteya.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 11.1

1. Who was trying to hide in Kabir’s hut?
2. Who was following thief?
3. Who was Kalidas?
4. Why Kalidas refused to accept golden axe?
5. Why angulimala was following Bhagwan Buddha?

11.2 NIYAMA

Niyama is the second step of Ashtanga Yoga. Niyama means personal code. There are five Niyama, they are Shoucha, Santhosha, Tapas, Swadhyaya and Ishwarapranidhana. Among this five Niyama you will learn the first three with a story which will help give you a clear understanding Niyama.

I. SHOUCHA (Cleanliness)

The first of the five Niyamas is shoucha, which means cleanliness or purity. Shoucha removes negative thoughts and makes us healthy. Right from small things like brushing teeth etc., fixed rules and regulations have been placed, such that utmost cleanliness prevails in the society.

Shoucham is of two kinds- external cleanliness that includes the cleanliness of the body, objects and the surroundings and the internal cleanliness that involves the purification of the mind. Most people keep their house clean and neat. But this attitude is not extended to the external surroundings. People throw garbage beside their homes and they spit and urinate at the side of the roads. Many throw plastic and other garbage on the roads even when the dustbins are available. These are clear actions of “ashaucha” or “non-cleanliness”. It is true that proper toilet facilities are not available everywhere and hence many people prefer to go out in the open. But this attitude has become so ingrained in some people that they do not use toilets even when they are available. Cleanliness is not limited to keeping the house and surroundings clean. It also applies to various human actions



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like causing environmental pollution. Human beings have made the air, water and earth dirty and polluted by their actions.

Actions like throwing garbage only into the dustbins, not spitting and urinating in the open, unless it is absolutely necessary or there is no other alternative available. Trying to avoid those actions that may cause, water, noise or air pollutions etc. can go a long way in helping the society. These actions are termed as “Bahya Shoucha” or “external cleanliness”.

Shoucham is also internal cleansing where we abstain from jealousy, hatred, anger, greed, arrogance and develop the attitude of love, compassion, friendliness, cheerfulness etc.

II. SANTHOSHA (Contentment)

Santhosha is the second of the Niyamas. Santhosha means contentment. The following Story of a happy man conveys a beautiful picture of Santhosha.

Secret of Santhosha

In a small village, in the valley, lived a man who was always happy, kind, and well-disposed to everyone he met. He always smiled, and had kind and encouraging words to say, whenever it was necessary. Everyone who met him, left feeling better, happier and elated. People knew they could count on him, and regarded him as a great friend.

One of the village dwellers was curious to know what his secret was, and how he could always be so kind and helpful. He wondered, how is it that he held no grudge toward anyone, and was always happy.



Once, upon meeting him in the street he asked him: "Most people are selfish and unsatisfied. They do not smile as often as you do; neither are they as helpful or kind as you are. How do you explain it?"

The man smiled at him and replied, "When you make peace with yourself, you can be in peace with the rest of the world. If you can recognize the spirit in yourself, you can recognize the spirit in everyone, and then you find it natural to be kind and well disposed to all."

"If your thoughts are under your control, you become strong and firm.

The personality is like a robot programmed to do certain tasks. Your habits and thoughts are the tools and programs that control your personality. Become free from being programmed, and then, the inner good and the happiness that reside within you will be revealed."

"But a lot of work is necessary. Good habits have to be developed. The ability to concentrate and to control the thoughts has to be strengthened. The work is difficult and endless. There are many walls that need to be climbed. It is not an easy task." lamented the villager.

"Do not think about the difficulties, otherwise this is what you will see and experience. Just quieten your feelings and thoughts, and try to stay in this peace. Just try to be calm, and do not let yourself be carried away by your thoughts."

"Is that all?" asked the villager.

"Try to watch your thoughts and see how they come and go. Stay in the quietness that arises. The moments of peace will be brief



at first, but in time they will get longer. The peace is also strength, power, kindness, and love. In time, you will realize that you are one with the universal power, and this will lead you to act from a different dimension point of view consciousness, not from the selfish, small, limited ego."

"I will try to remember your words," said the villager, and continued, "there is another thing that I am curious about. You do not seem to be influenced by the environment. You have a kind word for everyone, and you are helpful. People treat you well, and never exploit your goodness."

"Being good and being kind do not necessarily point to weakness. When you are good, you can also be strong. People sense your inner strength, and therefore, do not impose on you. When you are strong and calm inside, you help people, because you can, and you want to. You act from strength, not from weakness. Goodness is not a sign of weakness, as some people erroneously think. It can manifest together with power and strength."

"Thank you very much for your advice and explanations", said the villager, and went away happy and satisfied.

We can see from the above story that, village man who understood the secret of happiness was not only happy but people around him were also happy.

III TAPAS (Austerity)

Tapas means the austerity. Tapas is a continuous positive effort done by any seeker, till he reaches his goal. The following story of Panini gives you a clear understanding of Tapas.

Panini

Long ago, there lived a great scholar and astrologer by the name Pani, on the banks of the river Indus. By the grace of Lord Shiva, Pani's wife delivered a healthy son. The son came to be known as Panini, the offspring of Pani. The little boy was very active and was the apple of his parents' eyes. He grew up to be a sweet child whose smile reminded one of the full moon. One day, a great scholar, astrologer and palmist visited Pani. He was a great friend of Pani. Pani and his family treated the great man courteously. He was served the best food and was treated with the best services. After lunch, the great man called the child Panini and asked him to sit with him. Panini readily agreed and sat with the great man. The great man looked at the right palm of the child. He sat there gazing at the palm for several minutes. The expression on his face changed from that of cheerfulness to that of concern. Looking at this change, Panini inquired the great man about what was bothering him. The great man looked at Pani with pitiful eyes and said "Oh Pani! My friend! You are such a renowned scholar and people around the world come to you for advice. Alas! Fate has it that this child of yours will remain illiterate. He has no education line on his palm." Pani asked his friend- "Please forgive me. I am not saying this because I doubt your expertise, but would it be possible that you haven't checked my son's palm correctly?" The great man looked at Pani, whose eyes tried to hold their grief back, and said "My friend! I have checked the boy's palm thoroughly, not once but twice and there is no education line here. He is bound to remain illiterate." Pani could no longer hold his grief. He closed his eyes and muttered under

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his breath "If the lord wishes it to be so, so be it!" Panini, who was listening to the conversation, gently asked the great man "Sir, could you please tell me where on my palm the education line would be, if it had been?" The great man showed the child the location of the education line on his own palm. He felt sympathetic towards the child, who was so well mannered and soft spoken. The child ran out of the house and returned back in a few minutes. He held out his right palm and asked the great man "Will I be a scholar now? Will I be able to uphold my father's name?" The great man and Pani looked at the child's hand and were shocked. Blood was oozing out of the palm and where there had to be the education line, there was a deep line which was etched with a sharp stone. The two men had no words. As he grew up, Panini was educated by his father and Pani was astonished by his son's eager quest for knowledge. To attain more knowledge, Panini meditated on Lord Shiva and performed penance for many years. Impressed by the devotion he showed, Lord Shiva appeared before Panini. But Panini was so engrossed in his meditation that he did not notice the Lord's arrival. In order to wake Panini, Shiva sounded his Damaru. The Damaru beats reverberated and Panini woke up from his trance. The sound made by Shiva's Damaru kept resonating in Panini's ears. Panini bowed to the Lord and the Lord blessed him and disappeared. Panini is believed to have formulated the rules of Sanskrit grammar in fourteen verses, which are believed to be the sounds of Shiva's Damaru, and called them Maheshwara Sutrani. These Sutras are also known as Ashtaadhyaayi, meaning eight lessons, the foundational text of the grammatical branch of the Vedanga.

We can see from the above story that, how Panini with complete positive efforts achieved the goal. By this we can understand that with tapas or positive efforts one can achieve his goal.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 11.2**

1. Write the name of two types of Shoucham?
2. Write the name of five Niyamas.
3. Who wrote Ashtaadhyaayi?
4. Why astrologer was shocked after checking Panini's palm?
5. Who made the sound of Damaru?

**WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT**

In this lesson you have learnt about the Yama and Niyama. You have read about Ahimsa through the 'Buddha and Angulimala' story, Satya with 'Kabir and thief' story and Asteya with 'Woodcutter and his axe' story. You have also learnt the meaning of Shoucha. Santhosha with 'Secret of Santhosha' story and Tapas with 'Panini' story have been explain. These all stories have explained Yama and Niyama.

**TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. What are Yama and Niyama?
2. Which are the three Yama's explained in this lesson?
3. Which are the three Niyama's explained in this lesson?
4. Why Panini made a cut on his hand?
5. Why river goddess returned all axes to the wood cutter?

Notes



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**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****11.1**

1. The thief
2. A woodcutter
3. He refuses because he believed in Asteya.
4. So that he can complete his collection of 1000 fingers.
5. Policeman

11.2

1. i) Internal cleanliness
ii) External cleanliness
2. Five Niyamas – Shoucha, Santhosha, Tapas, Swadhyaya and Ishwarapranidhana.
3. Panini
4. Because there was no education line
5. Lord Shiva