



International Journal of Indian Medicine

www.ijim.co.in

ISSN: 2582-7634

Volume - 5, Issue - 8

Aug 2024



IJIM

INDEXED



International Journal of Indian Medicine



International Category Code (ICC): ICC-1702

International Journal Address (IJA): IJA.ZONE/258276217634

YAM-NIYAM ON PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH

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ABSTRACT:

The ethical principles of Yam and Niyam, as outlined in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, serve as foundational guidelines for personal and societal conduct in the practice of yoga. This article explores the significance of these principles within the broader context of yoga and their relevance to contemporary life. The five Yamas—Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (honesty), Brahmacharya (sexual continence), and Aparigraha (non-possessiveness)—emphasize moral and ethical behaviors that foster a harmonious existence. In parallel, the five Niyamas—Shauch (hygiene), Santosh (contentment), Tapa (austerity), Swadhyaya (self-study), and Ishwar Pranidhan (devotion to God)—encourage personal discipline and inner growth. Through an analysis of scriptural references and contemporary interpretations, this article highlights the transformative potential of adhering to these principles. The integration of Yam and Niyam into daily practice can cultivate a greater sense of self-awareness, emotional stability, and holistic well-being. Furthermore, the relevance of these ethical guidelines is examined within the context of modern challenges, including stress, mental health issues, and societal disconnection. By understanding and applying the teachings of Yam and Niyam, individuals can navigate the complexities of contemporary life with greater resilience and purpose. This exploration not only contributes to the field of Yoga Studies but also offers valuable insights for personal development and social harmony.

KEYWORDS: Yam, Niyam, Patanjali, Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya, Aparigraha, Shauch, Santosh, Tapa, Swadhyaya, Ishwar Pranidhan, holistic well-being.

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How to cite this article: Shah M. Yam-Niyam on Psychological Health. Int J Ind Med 2024;5(8):01-06 DOI: <http://doi.org/10.55552/IJIM.2024.5801>

INTRODUCTION:

According to archaeological evidence, yoga originated in India as early as 3000 B.C. It first appeared in the Upanishads (600–500 B.C.), part of ancient Hindu scriptures, and is referenced in the Mahabharata (400 B.C.–400 A.D.) as well as the Bhagavad Gita. Around 300–200 B.C., Patanjali codified yoga in the Yoga Sutras, defining it as the study of the true "Self" and outlining methods for directly experiencing this state. Jain Acharyas also used the term yoga to refer to spiritual practices. Yoga is a priceless gift from India's ancient tradition, representing the unity of mind and body, thought and action, and balance between restraint and fulfillment. It promotes harmony between humans and nature and takes a holistic approach to health and well-being. Derived from the Sanskrit root "Yuj," meaning "to control" or "to unify," yoga involves a system of development for the body, mind, and spirit. It is often described as "Chitta Vritti Nirodhah," meaning the cessation of mental disturbances, which today is understood as a method for achieving relaxation of both mind and body. Yoga also plays a significant role in many religious practices. The principles of Yam and Niyam in yoga have been largely overlooked due to the fast-paced lifestyle of the modern world. This research delves into the concept of Yam-Niyam across various Indian scriptural texts, with a particular focus on Jain teachings, as these principles are most rigorously practiced within the Jain community today. Jainism, as a religion, is inclusive and welcomes anyone who chooses to follow its teachings, regardless of birth. While the culture and history of Jainism are ancient, scholarly research on Jain philosophy is relatively new but rapidly expanding. Investigating how yoga is understood and practiced within Jainism will significantly contribute to the fields of Yoga Studies, Ayurveda, Religious Studies, and

Philosophy. Yoga is the mastery and integration of the mind's activities, and the primary purpose of the first five steps of yoga is to develop 'samyama,' a tool that enables deeper levels of non-attachment. This tool acts as a sharp instrument of discernment, helping one move beyond ignorance ("avidya") through deep introspection to uncover the true self, the essence of being. It aids in distinguishing between the transient and the eternal, and between what is impure and pure, preventing confusion between the two. This clarity helps people understand what leads to misery or happiness and to differentiate the self from what is not the self. When practiced systematically, yoga can unlock the divine potential within humans, as this divinity already exists in a dormant state. Yoga has the power to calm the mind, increase concentration, enhance productivity, and foster an overall sense of well-being and happiness. Most people may not understand the distinction between limitations and true freedom. Yoga starts by removing these self-imposed restrictions, and the study of Yam and Niyam helps liberate individuals from such constraints

Objective: To review Yam Niyama and yoga and its relevance in psychological health.

Methodology: A comprehensive review was conducted using various classical texts on Ayurveda, Yoga, Pranayama, and Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. Additionally, relevant published articles from both national and international journals were analyzed to gain deeper insights.

Yam and Niyam:**Yam:****1) Ahimsa (Non-Violence) –**

Ahimsa means not to kill anyone. Killing generates pain; hence ahimsa can mean not to cause pain to anyone.

Ahimsa pratishthayam tatsannidhou vairatyagah || P Y S 2-35.

One, who observes ahimsa, succeeds in eliminating feelings of enmity. If ahimsa is followed for a long time, not only the sadhaka, but even his surroundings are affected and enmity is eliminated in the minds of all who come in contact with him.

2) **Satya (Truthfulness) –**

Satya should also be considered in depth. It does not only cover speaking the truth. Proper understanding of the talk and the mind is the truth. So, the truth, which results in the destruction of someone or something, is also not the truth. Patanjali Rishi has stated the results of the truth as under: Satyapratishthayam kriyaphalashrayatvam || P Y S 2-36

Asteya (Honesty) –

Asteya means theft. Asteya means not stealing anything. However, asteya has a comprehensive meaning and is not limited to not stealing something from the other and keeping it in possession. It means not keeping anything with self, which does not belong to the self. Hence, yoga states that one should not even imagine the theft. The following aphorism states the effects: Asteyapratishthayam sarvratnopasthanam || P Y S 2.37

Brahmacharya (Sexual Continence) –

Yoga sadhaka should follow continence, but this does not mean that he should renounce family life and become a monk; such an action is not expected in Yoga science. So, we need not stretch the meaning of continence to this level. Patanjali Rishi has stated the following aphorism: Brahmacharyapratishthayam viryalabhah || P Y S 2.38

One who observes continence, gets illuminated and acquires various siddhis.

Aparigrah (non-possessiveness) –

Aparigrah means not hoarding anything. Storing things, which are not required by us, is known as parigrah. Yoga sadhaka should try to follow aparigraha with efforts.

The results are described as follows:

Aparigrahsthiarye

janmakathantasambodhah || P Y S 2.39.

One who learns and follows aparigraha in entirety gets the knowledge of past, present and future. He also knows about his past birth.

Niyam: Acharya Patanjali has given five yams in the Ashtangyoga, Niyamas are also five and are means of personal discipline.

1. **SHAUCH** (Hygiene): Shouch is of two types external and internal. One should be clean internally by renouncing possessions and vicious desires and externally by proper use of water and other cleansing agents.
2. **SANTOSH** (Gladness): It is a state of mind and inner mental peace. It means the absence of desire to possess more of the necessities of life than are necessary for its preservation. It implies that one should work honestly and to one's full capability and then be satisfied with the result of one's efforts.
3. **TAPA** (Graveness): It is the capacity to face all odds and difficulties in the performance of righteousness. It implies that one should have the strength and fortitude to remain unaffected by the opposites of life. In short, the practice of good conduct, in the face of all difficulties is TAPA.
4. **SWADHYAYA** (Study of good literature): It means study of scriptures, other religions literature, etc. In general, study of all good literature which guides a person towards moral values, good conduct, righteousness may be deemed as SWADHYAYA. It purifies the mind and spirit by enhancing true knowledge, right understanding, and discrimination.
5. **ISHWAR PRANIDHAN** (Renunciation to God): It means total devotion of all thoughts and actions to the God. In other words, it involves absolute faith in God. It means resignation to the will of God. It includes true and sincere worship of God and complete dedication to him with full faith, love, and devotion.

Scientific Integration of Yam and Niyam:

The principles of Yam and Niyam offer a comprehensive framework for ethical living and personal discipline, which have significant implications for both mental and physical health. Scientific research supports the benefits of these practices in various ways:

Mental Health:

Practices like Ahimsa and Santosha promote empathy, contentment, and inner peace, which are linked to reduced anxiety, depression, and stress levels. Honesty (Satya and Asteya) fosters trust and strong relationships, essential for emotional support and mental resilience.

Physical Health:

Maintaining hygiene (Shauch) prevents diseases, while physical discipline (Tapas) enhances self-control and perseverance, contributing to overall health and longevity. Non-possessiveness (Aparigraha) reduces material stressors, promoting a simpler and healthier lifestyle.

Cognitive Benefits:

Self-study (Swadhyaya) enhances cognitive functions, critical thinking, and self-awareness, while practices like Brahmacharya support mental clarity and focus. These contribute to better decision-making and problem-solving abilities.

Spiritual Well-being:

Devotion and surrender (Ishvara Pranidhana) provide a sense of purpose and connection, which are crucial for spiritual fulfillment and psychological well-being. Spiritual practices are associated with lower stress levels and higher life satisfaction.

Overall, the integration of Yam and Niyam into daily life through yoga practice can lead to a balanced and healthy lifestyle, supported by both traditional wisdom and modern scientific understanding.

DISCUSSION:

The exploration of Yam and Niyam, as outlined in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, reveals a profound intersection between ethical conduct and personal discipline in the practice of yoga, with significant implications for mental and physical health. Each principle serves not only as a guide for spiritual development but also as a foundation for holistic well-being. For instance, Ahimsa, or non-violence, fosters empathy and compassion, which have been linked to lower levels of anxiety and improved emotional regulation. Similarly, the practice of Satya, or truthfulness, enhances trust and strengthens interpersonal relationships, crucial for emotional support and resilience. Asteya, or honesty, goes beyond refraining from theft; it encourages a mindset of integrity that promotes personal dignity and self-worth. Brahmacharya emphasizes moderation, which, when applied, can lead to enhanced focus and clarity, enabling practitioners to navigate life's challenges more effectively. The principle of Aparigraha encourages simplicity and non-possessiveness, reducing material stressors and promoting contentment, a quality scientifically associated with higher levels of happiness and well-being. Meanwhile, the Niyamas, including Shauch (hygiene), Santosha (contentment), Tapas (discipline), Swadhyaya (self-study), and Ishvara Pranidhana (surrender to God), provide a comprehensive framework for personal development that promotes both physical and mental health. The scientific literature supports the positive impact of these practices, highlighting their roles in reducing stress, enhancing cognitive functions, and fostering spiritual fulfillment. Overall, integrating Yam and Niyam into daily life through yoga practice not only enriches one's spiritual journey but also significantly contributes to a balanced, healthy lifestyle,

aligning traditional wisdom with modern psychological and health research.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the integration of Yam and Niyam into the practice of yoga offers a comprehensive framework for achieving holistic well-being and personal growth. As foundational elements of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, these ethical precepts and personal disciplines not only guide practitioners in their spiritual journeys but also promote mental and physical health. The principles of non-violence, truthfulness, honesty, moderation, and non-possessiveness foster an environment of empathy, integrity, and contentment, which are crucial for resilience and emotional stability. Furthermore, the Niyamas encourage self-discipline, self-study, and a deep connection with the divine, enhancing one's overall quality of life. The scientific literature supports the beneficial effects of these practices, linking them to reduced stress levels, improved cognitive function, and increased happiness. By embracing these teachings, individuals can cultivate a harmonious balance between body, mind, and spirit, leading to a more fulfilling and purposeful existence. Ultimately, the enduring wisdom of yoga serves as a valuable tool for navigating the complexities of modern life while fostering inner peace and resilience.

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Source of Support: None declared

Conflict of interest: Nil

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