

LIVING THE YAMA - NIYAMA

Notes on the lectures given by
Yogacharya Dr Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani

During the Summer Intensive Yoga Classes
At Yoganjali Natyalayam, Pondicherry, India
May 2013

Notes taken and formatted by
Meena Ramanathan

Yoganjali Natyalayam, (the premier institute in Pondicherry, teaching the ancient Indian arts such as Yoga, Bharatanatyam and Carnatic music) conducts Summer Intensive Sessions in the month of May every year for the young students. This year (2013) in the theory session (usually conducted by our beloved Ammaji), Dr. Sir (Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani) taught the importance of "Living the Yama and Niyama" in our day-to-day existence. Excerpts from those sessions were compiled and are presented below.

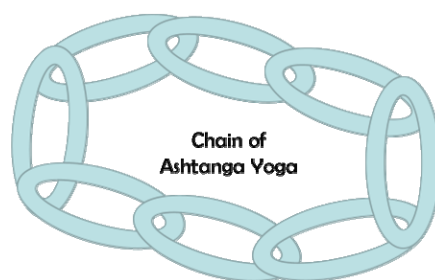
Day 1:

Bhagawan Krishna has defined Yoga as “*Yogah karmasu koushalam*”, meaning that Yoga is action done skilfully, and, to the best of one’s ability (BG II: 50). One completes the task, with the basic understanding of the yogic concepts in mind, following their *dharma*, to the best of their ability. An action becomes skilful indeed, when the Yogic concepts are applied practically while performing it, using one’s sense of discernment (*viveka*). This enables the individual to give their best thus empowering the action and the resultant effect.

The conscious implementation of the ‘Theory of Yoga’ in our day-to-day life, is a way of life indeed, and this is one of the definitions of Yoga given by Yogamaharishi Dr Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj. Yoga has to be lived every moment, 24x7. We cannot opt to live Yoga for 22 hours and take two hours off, go loot the bank, and then say, “Yoga is my way of life”, can we? Swamiji called this complete adherence to the Yogic principles in one’s life as ‘No-Option’ Yoga. No excuses allowed at all, absolutely! Once we choose the path of Yoga, (despite the fact that it is going to be difficult), we have to move forward, cutting across and through the hurdles, obstacles and difficulties that come in the way of our spiritual evolution. We cannot re-trace our path as we are left with no other option but to propel ourselves forward with conviction, energy and strength.

When we do anything skilfully, and to the best of our ability, what is the next immediate thought that comes to our mind? What do we expect? Reward, appreciation, or a pat on the back, isn’t it? Can we simply do our duty and not expect anything in return? Can we be that? Doing the best, with the best effort, with complete involvement, most skilfully, and then not expect any result? Well, Lord Krishna says that it should be *nishkama*, i.e without attachment to the rewards, the fruits of our action. We must be able to do our best, even when no one notices it, or appreciates our efforts. There is a Chinese saying which carries a similar meaning. *To do a good deed, without anybody noticing it and to have it discovered by accident, that is the greatest joy.* This indeed is the concept of Karma Yoga too.

Ashtanga Yoga of Maharishi Patañjali is the path to liberation (*kaivalya*) that consists of eight limbs (*ashta anga*). If we consider each limb as a separate link, then this is a chain with eight links; each link as important as the other; one leading to the other; one connected to the other. What if one of the links in this chain is weak? Can the chain still remain sturdy and tough? *A chain is only as strong as its weakest link.* All the links need to be developed in the best possible manner, and have to be strengthened by our complete awareness and consciousness. You can also think of the limbs of Yoga as spokes in a wheel that are all required for the wheel to move smoothly. Each spoke is vital and must be strong, otherwise the wheel gets warped and bent out of shape.



Some people think of *Ashtanga Yoga* as a ladder with eight rungs giving a sense of hierarchy to the concept. This is fine, but I have heard a ‘big name’ in Yoga once say, “I started with *yama* and then ascended to *samadhi* but then have come down and

gone up the ladder many times". It is absurd to even think that you can climb up these steps, then come down and start to climb them all over again, and keep doing so. That may be fun, that may be ego boosting, but it is not Yoga for sure.

Day 2:

When we start off on the Yogic path, the *Yoga Marga*, we are tender; we are vulnerable and need protection. When a plant is tender, it can be broken easily, and that is why we keep a protection around the young plant, till it becomes a tree, and the damage is not caused. The main threats we have are the *dwandwa*, the dualities that exist in the world, for they throw us off balance and hinder our progress if we are not careful.

A classic example for the *dwandwa*, the imbalances or extremes of our subconscious and unconscious mind is the see-saw that we have all played on as children. Maharishi Patañjali has not only warned us of this but given the clue to balancing it. He has given the benefit of perfection in *asana* as *tato dwandwa anaabhigaatha*. This results from the attainment of the 'state of *asana*', i.e *sthirasukhamasanam*. Once stability has been achieved, externally and internally, the pair of opposites, the *dwandwa* ceases to affect us anymore. They don't even exist for us anymore as we are in perfect harmonious balance. We have become one with the *samatvam* mentioned by Lord Krishna and become worthy of *sthita prajna*, steady wisdom.

The *dwandwa* come in pairs. They are the extreme ends of the same element, or can be said to be the two sides of the same coin. For example, if we consider the pair, day and night; one remains unnatural without the other. To have praise without blame and blame without praise is impossible, as abnormal and unnatural as a coin with just one side.

There is a popular story attributed to the Red Indians of North America, about each individual carrying a good wolf and a bad wolf within themselves. It is said that ultimately the wolf that we feed wins over the other one. The devil inside, urges us to do bad things especially when no one is watching. But the angel within us chides us through our conscience, reminding us that it is not the right thing to do. The bad wolf starts justifying, giving us numerous reasons as to why we should do the wrong thing. A debate goes on within, a big battle, as big as the Kurukshetra. "To be or not to be" asks Hamlet whereas for most of us it is, "to do or not to do". These are the twin horns of dilemma, the good and the bad being the two horns in the middle of which we find ourselves stuck.

Some more pairs of such opposites are: North—south; right—left; *ha – tha*; *loma – viloma*; *shivya-shakti*, *surya – chandra*; *prana – apana*; *dwaita – adwaita*; male-female, possible—impossible; white—black; complete—incomplete; create—destroy; pleasant—unpleasant; east—west; heads—tails; like—dislike; in—out; up—down; balance—imbalance; individuality—universality; head—heart; duality—nonduality; thoughts—emotions; cations—anions; happiness—sadness; positive—negative etc. In fact as one of the young kids said, even *guru – sishya* may be considered a pair of opposites, for does the teacher exist without the student and vice versa.

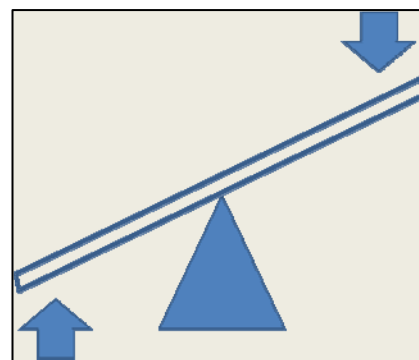
Under heaven all can see beauty as beauty only because there is ugliness. All can know good as good only because there is evil. Therefore having and not having arise together. Difficult and easy complement each other. Long and short contrast each other; High and low rest upon each other; Voice and sound harmonize each other; Front and back follow one another. Therefore the sage goes about doing nothing, teaching no-talking. The ten thousand things rise and fall without cease, creating, yet not possessing. Working, yet not taking credit. Work is done, then forgotten. Therefore it lasts forever.

- Tao Te Ching (Chapter 2)

Duality is the most natural thing in the universe. Each and every cell in the human body is made up of cations and anions, and health is a dynamic state of well-being wherein these individualistic manifestations of universal duality are in a harmonious balance. This is known as polarity. This is life. Our challenge as a human being is to grow beyond differentiation, beyond duality, to go beyond the *dwandwa*, to transcend them through the experience of the ultimate universal unification, and attain a state of balanced harmony in *dwandwathita* (*dwandwa-athita*). There is a constant, natural interplay going on between the opposites. *Samkhya* and *Yoga* call the manifestation of two-ness, duality as *dwaitham*. *Yoga* accepts the existence of duality, but it teaches us the necessity to go beyond the pairs of opposites and enables us to experience the non-dualistic, universal oneness of *adwaitham* in *kaivalya*. The whole process of *Yoga* is to move from a limited, individualistic sense of duality to an unlimited, universal experience of non-duality. Trying to balance the opposites, and learning to transcend them, is indeed *Yoga*.

There are eight limbs in *Ashtanga Yoga* and *yama* and *niyama* being the first two. The *yama-niyama* help feed the good wolf within us and deprive the bad wolf of nourishment. It is a dual action; support the good, the positive and neglect and emaciate the bad, the negative.

How do we get a balance when dealing with the extremes, the opposites? How do we bring the see-saw to the central axis, the fulcrum? The answer is; one must use pressure and force to pull down the side that is raised and push up (kick up?) the side that is lowered. We can define stress as, "An imbalance between need and capacity." Stress is a state of imbalance, a manifestation of the *dwandwa*. How can we overcome it? We have to either bring down our need or we have to enhance our capacity. In fact, if we could do both, it would be ideal. Concentrate and work initially on decreasing the needs and requirements, and simultaneously keep increasing the effort to improve the individual capacity. This is a tough process but enables us to slowly and steadily build up balance, equilibrium and attain homeostatic equanimity. When we live the *yama-niyama*, we settle into and begin to enjoy a beautiful internal *sukha sthanam*, a niche where we have mental equanimity and physiological equilibrium. This is the state of *samatvam*, a state that lies buried under all the self accumulated garbage. This is a real treasure within us that we need to find, by digging deep into our own self.



Day 3:

Dwandwa are natural. They are part and parcel of life and living. When one of the pair exists, the other follows too. Puja Swamiji Gitananda Giri used to tell us, “You don’t solve your problem; you outgrow them”. As we grow, our problems become smaller and smaller. It can safely be said that the modern stressed out life-style make mountains out of molehills, whereas Yoga enables us to make molehills out of the mountains!

Human life is like a video game. We face many challenges, many obstacles and hurdles, but we learn to cross them, outgrow them and resolve them. As we grow, the difficulty level of the problems keeps growing too. Be it in a video game or in our life, we need to go (grow) beyond all of them eventually.

Lord Krishna tells us about the Yogic state of equanimity or equilibrium. He describes the one who has transcended the *dwandwa* as a *dwandwathitha*. Such a person is one who has outgrown the pairs of opposites, one who has overcome the hurdles and problems caused by the extremes. Such a being, having equipoise in success and failure, is one who has truly attained to the state described in the Bhagavad Gita in verse II : 48 as, “*Yogastha kurukarmani sangham tyaktva dhananjaya, siddhaya asiddhaya samabhutva, samatvam Yoga uchyate*” Lord Krishna calls this state of being, a balanced approach to any and every situation as *samatvam*. *Yama-niyama* enable us to attain and maintain such a balanced state of being, every moment of our life. This is true of every sincere *sadhaka*.

The *pancha yama* are *ahimsa*, *satya*, *asteya*, *brahmacharya* and *aparigraha* while the *pancha niyama* are *soucha*, *santhosha*, *tapa*, *svadhyaya* and *ishwara pranidhana*. Lets us try and understand the *yama-niyama* and then see how they can be lived every moment of our human life.

Ahimsa, the first of the *yama* is a state of non-violent-ness. *Himsa* is the sub human tendency to hurt and cause harm. We are often hurting others. This may take many forms and may be mild, moderate or severe. This includes the making fun of others that often hurts them emotionally and psychologically. Remember, hurting oneself is also *himsa*. Blackmailing someone emotionally is also *himsa*. We think that causing external ghastly looking wounds alone is violence. We think that only hitting, kicking, pushing or killing people is violent. Do we ever contemplate the hurt our words cause to others? The human tongue is the mightiest weapon and the blows we feel through such harsh words are stronger than the ones caused by swords. Sometimes the unsaid words and silence hits harder than any of these.

Tiruvalluvar , in his Tamil classical text Tirukkural has said,

யாகாவா ராயினும் நாகாக்க காவாக்கால் சோகாப்பர் சொல்லிழுக்குப் பட்டு. (127)

Yaagaavaaraayinum naakaakka kaavaakkaal sokaappar soll izhukkup pattu

Whatever besides you leave unguarded, guard your tongue; otherwise errors of speech and the consequent misery will ensue.

தீயினாற் சுட்டபுண் உள்ளாறும் ஆறாதே நாவினாற் சுட்ட வடு. (129)

Theeyinaar sutta punullaarum aaraathe naavinaal sutta vadu

The wound which has been burnt in by fire may heal, but a wound burnt in by the tongue will never heal.

Day 4:

There is an intricate difference between “reaction” and “response”. When we speak in terms of *ahimsa*, it is “response” and when we deal with it in terms of *himsa*, it is “reaction”. In any given situation, we need to respond accordingly and in an appropriate manner and not react or succumb to the bait. The ability to respond (responsibility) is a human trait while reactivity is subhuman. Reactivity just needs a spinal cord while responsibility requires a functioning cortex and neo cortex.

What do we human beings normally do...???

We listen to 10 %

We understand or misunderstand 50 %

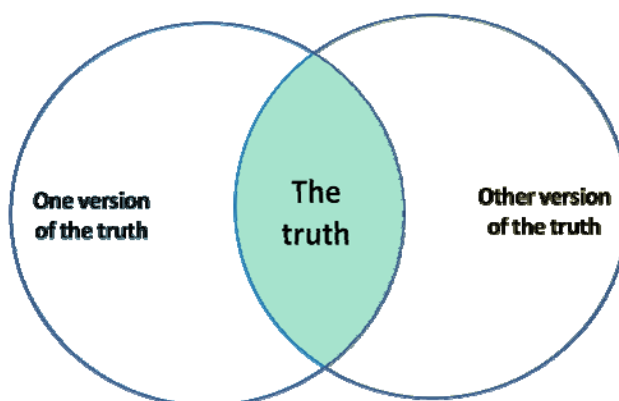
And we react 100 %

The second of the *yama* is *satya* or truthfulness, a steadfast adherence to reality ‘as it is’. Knowing, understanding, speaking and maintaining the truth is the most difficult task for most individual. We give up thinking it is not possible, but in fact, it is... if we take it up as a challenge. There are many who have lived a life of truth and struggled to do their best despite the hardships that came up as a consequence.

The First War of Indian Independence took place in 1857. Well, we in India call it that, however, the very same historical incident is referred to by the British as the Sepoy Mutiny! Who is right? Who is wrong? Isn’t it a matter of perspective? We must never forget that history is written by the victors! Any given incident can be represented in many different ways according to the person relating it. It depends on whether they are the affected party, an onlooker or if they are reporting it based on hearsay. No wonder, there are usually so many versions of any event in the world.

We talk about and discuss so much about Sachin Tendulkar or Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Amitabh Bachchan, or Kamal Hassan and other media celebrities. We talk about them, we form opinions about them as if we have been with them or seen them from close quarters! But in reality, all that we know about them is what we have been fed through magazines, periodicals, websites etc. We form an opinion about someone without even knowing anything let alone the actual reality about them. The actual truth can be analysed only, and only if the reality is known, and this too after it has been analysed from various aspects and angles with a 360° perspective. Do we have that?

In courts, when a case is being argued, the judge forms an opinion about the whole issue after hearing the same incident described by both parties to the dispute. Often other witnesses may be called for testimony if they were present and saw it. To find the truth, the judge needs to find the truth as applicable in the version related by each of the parties and each of the witnesses, and finally zero in on the actual truth as far as possible. This requires great power of analysis and discernment and the application of a greater, wider perspective before they can announce the final judgement.



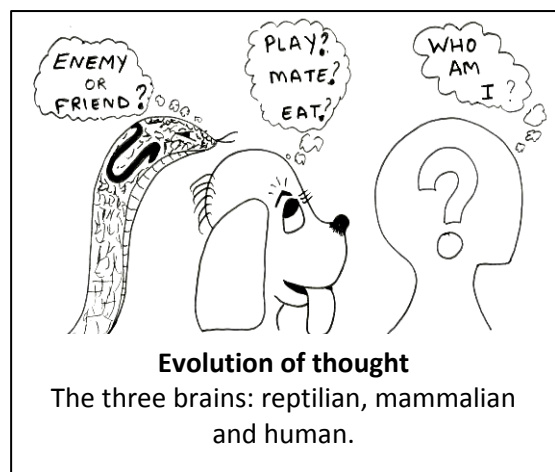
To know something as it is, a perspective from multiple angles needs to be obtained. This is the process of cognition and Maharishi Patañjali explains three different ways in which we can cognize the world around us through *pramana*.

1. *Pratyaksha* - Knowing through direct observation and perception.
2. *Anumana* - Knowing through inference (for e.g.- we see the sun in the middle of the sky and know that it is noon time while if we see the moon, we know it is night).
3. *Agama* - Knowing through reliable testimony, that which is learnt from scriptures or through someone who has experienced it.

It is quite amazing that no two individuals on this planet have the same fingerprints or iris patterns, not even twins. More than 7 billion people living in this planet and no two alike! There are billions and billions of permutations and combinations existing, and yet we expect everyone to believe and accept ONLY ONE TRUTH?

No one can have a monopoly on the truth as it has multiple angles, multiple dimensions and to truly understand it, one needs to analyse it from innumerable perspectives. It is not just a 360° perspective but needs to be from a 360° of the 360° itself. Maybe then, we can finally say that we know the truth. As this whole process is next to impossible, we usually end up trusting statements we get from reliable people and then go on to accept it as the truth. People like to make science seem like “the truth” but how many teachers of science who talk about atoms and subatomic particles, protons, neutrons and electrons; have even actually seen them? They are just faithfully repeating the published findings of others in the name of ‘the truth’ and using the respectable label “according to modern science”!

Animals react. That is their nature, call it instinct or whatever. A snake hisses and strikes, a dog barks and bites, a cat snarls with a raised tail and a monkey chatters and grabs everything in its reach. They don’t think about what they are doing, for all that matters to them is survival. They don’t care whether you are a boy or girl, educated or uneducated, well meaning or ill meaning etc. When you enter their territory, you are perceived as an unsafe stranger, and they react. When you are felt to be a threat, they attack. That’s it. Animals don’t have the patience to think or analyse or wait. The moment they feel their safety is at stake, they charge at you. We



as human beings are blessed with a capacity for thought, for discernment and for response-ability rather than mere reactivity. Do we really use it? Do we really act as humans should? When we look around us, do we see humans thinking and analysing? More often than not we see ourselves reacting, shouting, fighting and hurting one another without any care for the actuality, the truth itself. Remember, it is always best to respond to a situation rather than react to it, as all reactions will be followed by negative repercussions sooner than later.

Day 5:

Himsa means violence or hostility and it may be through action, word or even thoughts. Miscommunication between what we think, what we say and what we do is a dichotomy that leads to *himsa*. All our thoughts, words and actions have to be in a coordinated state of integration if we are to be in control (*ahimsa*) and consciously prevent *himsa* from manifesting. When we live this, violence truly ceases in our very presence as promised by Maharishi Patañjali (Yoga Darshan II: 35).

Utter the truth, utter the pleasant truth but don't utter the unpleasant ones. Do not speak that which is unpleasant. Bad thoughts that have been pent up or suppressed over a period of time bursts or unleashes out in a terribly unpleasant manner.

The Vedic literature abounds with thoughts on the truth and how to express it and the Manu Smriti says, "*satyam bruyat priyam bruyat na bruyat satyam apriyam priyam cha nanrutam bruyat esha dharmah sanatanah*" (4:138). This is usually translated as follows: Speak only the truth that is pleasant to others. Do not speak the truth that might be unpleasant and never speak untruth just to be pleasant to others. This is the path of eternal morality called Sanatana Dharma. Ammaji, the living *siddha* of Pondicherry says that this needs to be understood in a different manner and that, "Even the unpleasant truth must be presented in a pleasant way". This is very important for many people in trying to follow *satya* implicitly end up knowingly or unknowingly inflicting *himsa*, or painful hurt on the recipients of their words.

We must keep in mind that all five *yama* and five *niyama* are not separate entities. They cannot be divided as each one is connected to the other and all of them are intricately and beautifully inter-linked with one another in a seamless manner. Learning to understand the interconnectivity of this matrix of humane-ness is what life is all about and when we do our best to follow them, we grow as humans and blossom in our inherent divinity.

Asteya is non-stealing. To take things that don't belong to us is indeed a bad habit, but people seem to hardly ever notice it consciously. They take someone's pen, pencil, eraser, glue etc and don't return it. They ask their friend for change during shopping but conveniently forget to return it. They think it is fun and normal and hence don't consider it *steya*, or stealing at all. But, isn't it actually stealing? If we borrow something and don't return it, that is stealing. It is so common for us to use other people's ideas and pass them off as our own. Using someone else's ideas or concepts is *steya* and is called plagiarism or intellectual theft in modern times. Universities the world over have had to install anti-plagiarism software as their students were just lifting ideas from any and everyplace they could find instead of doing their assignments themselves. Wasting others' time, making them wait for you is a form of stealing too as you are stealing their valuable time for your selfish actions or motives. Does your laziness and incompetence steal others time, energy and ideas? Stealing other people's affection, emotions, love etc are stealing too. In fact it is the worst form of emotional blackmail. But, do we ever realise that? We may not, because we have all been conditioned from our childhood and have been taught

that looting a bank or taking jewels out of lockers etc is stealing but have never been made aware of the subtler aspects of this concept

Brahmacharya is often translated as celibacy but it is not just that. *Brahma* refers to the principle of creativity, the universal principle of the higher self while *achara* means 'to live' as in *achar vichar, ahar vihar*, the four cardinal principles of the Yogic lifestyle. Hence *brahmacharya* literally means to live in tune with the universal creative principles. The word creativity here refers to physical, mental and emotional creativities – all of them put together. If we become a fit vehicle for the universal creative impulses, the natural inherent capacity of such creativity to flow through us is enhanced, and then one is truly living *brahmacharya*. The first 27 years of an individual's life is classified as *brahmacharya*. The *chatur ashrama* concept then has *grihasta* from 27 to 54, *vanaprastha* from 55 to 81 and *sanyasa* from 81 above, unto at least 108 yrs, as it is a sacred number. The *brahmacharya* period is the time for concentrating and streamlining all that bubbling youthful vibrant energy into learning and understanding the creative principles. All the *sapta rishi*, the seven great seers of ancient India were married and had families. These lineages continue to this day in modern India today and are identified by the *gotra*. The concept of *brahmacharya* as celibacy may be traced more to the Buddhist and Jaina traditions, and in Hinduism, more from the time of Sri Adi Shankara in the 8th century.

Aparighaha is the principle of non-covetedness. The term 'covet' means to want something that does not belong to us. Need is something basic, it is justifiable and may be considered legitimate under the *chaturvidha purushartha*. Every individual wants to lead a comfortable life and hence needs certain things to do so. But then, greed is a different story altogether. In greed, we grab, we hoard and take from others, thus hampering their legitimate needs for our selfish purpose. This is termed *parigraha* and is very much an animal or subhuman tendency. If you watch monkeys when they eat, they grab everything they can and stuff their mouths in a gross manner. Even after storing a lot in their expandable cheeks, they continue to grab and stuff while scaring the others away. Similarly we can call it storing if we are keeping just what we need, but beyond that it is surely hoarding. When we do so, we are overcome with greed, with *parigraha* taking over. Need is acceptable, but not greed. Greed causes incessant stress as our desires and wants are too much, and are never-ending for they will never be satiated. We get something, and then we start looking out for something else. The list goes on, and on, and on. To paraphrase Mahatma Gandhi, "There is enough for every single person's need, but not enough for even one single person's greed".

Let's enjoy a play on the term GOD. 'God' spelt the other way around becomes 'Dog'. Both take good care of us, despite every situation and turn of events. They still continue caring for us even when they are thrown out, disrespected or neglected. Whatever happens, they are always with us. Why can not we all develop such qualities of fatefulness, trustworthiness and heartfelt conviction?

In Tamil, it is said, "*Peraasai perunashtam*" meaning that when our greed exceeds the limit, we lose everything. Stories abound about the goose that laid the golden egg, the greedy farmer, the greedy woodcutter's wife and of course Midas and his golden touch. Greed leads to destruction and we need to be conscious to know whether our desire is needy or greedy. At what point does our need change into greed? It is

indeed our duty to point it out to others too, if they are exceeding the limitations and boundaries of need. The seamless crossover from need to greed costs many their very lives. The concept of *trupti* or internal satiety (the hypothalamus, the *ajna bindu*, the seat of the psycho-neuro-endocrine-immune axis may be the key here) is to be inculcated in our daily life if we are to curtail our desires and reduce the tendency towards overpowering greed.

We can never live by dividing or splitting up the *yama-niyama* or the various aspects related to them. For example in human physiology: while we inhale, our heart is functioning, our blood is circulating, our trillions of cells are doing their functions as usual; all of them going on together, all happening simultaneously. It is not like, one is just breathing now, and then after this the heart starts to beat, followed by the blood circulating, and then the cells start their activities. Is it happening so? Sounds foolish, doesn't it? But that is how it is when we try to split up the various parts and aspects of *yama-niyama*. It can never be that we practice just *ahimsa*, master it and then go on to practice *satya* and so on. All of them are inter-connected, all linked up, chained up, one to the other, and in fact each one augments the other and they complement each other. Then how can they be separated? Will our *sadhana* carry any purport then?

Similarly all the concepts and aspects of Yoga must go hand-in-hand with each other; one leading into the other, the understanding of one becoming better as we begin to understand the other. This is what Yoga is all about and this is what life is all about, the interconnectivity between all aspects of the manifest, and unmanifest universe. You cannot compartmentalize life. You cannot compartmentalize Yoga. It is all-connected and all-encompassing at all-times. Hence the Yoga life is rightly termed, 'No-Option Yoga'. It is only 'Either, or' for there is in reality no other alternative. You cannot substitute one for the other in life. Every aspect must be lived to the best of one's ability, with conviction and humility.

When we want to relieve our stress, we clench our fists, take in a deep breath and throw all the tensions out with a mighty whoosh. When we fist our fingers to hold tight and throw, we use all our fingers together and not just thumb and index finger or some others. In fact, if we try to catch hold of anything with just one or two of the fingers, what can we actually hold firmly? What can be caught tightly? Nothing much! That is why we need to use all five fingers simultaneously to make the fist together, and thus get a firm, unflinching grip. Just as we need all our five fingers to work together to hold and throw out the unwanted stuff, we need all the *pancha yama* to work together to achieve the goal. It is as if each of the *yama* is a finger, and we then need all to be clasped together to serve the purpose. To catch hold and throw out the subhuman tendencies, we need all *pancha yama* working together. Similarly, we need all the *pancha niyama* working together to catch the higher aspects of humane-ness and absorb them inwards, deep within ourselves. Let go of the animal tendencies through the *pancha yama*. Grow on and go on to catch the intricacies of the higher life through the *pancha niyama*. When we live the *yama-niyama* consciously, they empower us to become an *adhikarin*, one who is fit for the higher life through *Adhikara Yoga*.

Day 6:

Yama deals with saying, NO to the lower tendencies. This is within one's own power. Yet, many cannot do it as it needs a lot of perseverance. They simply try to ignore it, and justify such ignoring through futile reasoning. As Ammaji so rightly puts it, "ignorance is the refusal to see". Most so called humans, or rather 'featherless bipeds' as Aristotle put it, don't want to change. They don't want to really become human as it is so much easier to be subhuman and live in the comfort of their old, animal conditioning. This can be understood better once we realise that we humans still have reptilian and mammalian remnants in our central nervous system that consists of the brain and spinal cord.



These three types of brains or complexes within us can be understood as follows:

- Reptilian Complex- the old primitive brain. The spinal cord and the brain stem is part of this. The reptiles are cold-blooded. They don't have a developed hypothalamus to regulate their body temperature. They react to external stimuli and their reactions are more reflexive like for example, the knee-jerk reaction. These are automatic reactions and are immediately displayed without any thought whatsoever.
- Mammalian Complex - This is a remnant from our mammalian days and is shared with our mammalian brethren. Mammals are warm-blooded. They like to play around and have lot of fun. Their reactions are based on emotions and fears. When we react based on our emotions and are impulsive, this is the brain that is dominant at that moment in time. We often later, regret things we have said or done under such sub-human, thoughtless impulses.
- Human Complex - this is made up of the neo-cortex, especially the frontal neo-cortex that is found to be active in contemplative and meditative sessions. If there is enough time given for the stimulus to travel up to the human brain (unlike in reflexive reactions), then we do not react, but instead we respond decently as humans should. This is because the neo-cortex has the ability to look at things with a bigger and wider perspective. "Altitude defines your Attitude". The human brain is high up both in location and in the attitudes and qualities. Lower altitude limits one's vision. When we take up a higher position, when we literally move up, we begin to respond as we have gotten to see and understand the bigger picture. This is a step-up transformation in the human consciousness and not many seem to have made it. Reaction limits our vision; whereas response expands it proportionally to the conscious growth.

We are an interesting combination of all these three complexes. The *pancha yama* help control the old reptilian brain as well as the animal instincts such as the instinct to react. Human beings are capable of responding in an appropriate manner and while responding the human complex works.

Tiruvalluvar advises us to be human when he says, “The best way to deal with those who have done evil to you, is to put them to shame by showing them kindness in return and to forget both the evil and the good done on both sides”. (இன்னாசெய்தாரை ஒறுத்தல் அவர்நாண நன்னயஞ் செய்து விடல் -Inna seithaarai oruththal avarnaana nannayam seithu vidal. Kural- 314)

Is this not what being human is all about? For many this may seem farfetched and even impossible. To respond in the proper decent way, that is to be truly human. Even towards those who have wounded and hurt us. The Christ Yogi said something similar and again it was reiterated by Mahatma Gandhi when they advised us to return even the evil with good. Difficult, of course yes; but impossible, NO.

All the five *yama* help us consciously curtail our sub-human reactivity while the *niyama* enable us to respond in a more humane manner. The *pancha yama* may be summed up as:

- ॐ No, I Won't be violent (*ahimsa*)
- ॐ No, I won't tell lies (*satya*)
- ॐ No, I won't steal (*asteya*)
- ॐ No I won't waste my energy (*brahmacharya*)
- ॐ No, I won't be greedy (*aparairaha*)

செய்யமாட்டேன் செய்யமாட்டேன் ஹிம்சைச் செய்யமாட்டேன்
சொல்லமாட்டேன் சொல்லமாட்டேன் பொய்ச் சொல்லமாட்டேன்
திருடமாட்டேன் திருடமாட்டேன், என் சக்தியை வீணாக்க மாட்டேன்
பேராசைப் பெருநஷ்டம் என்றுணர்ந்து நான்
அதனைக் கொள்ள மாட்டேன்
அச்சமில்லை அச்சமில்லை அச்சமென்பதில்லையே
இயமத்தை வாழும்போது அச்சமென்பதில்லையே

*I will not be violent, I will not speak untruth,
I will not steal nor waste my energies.
Having understood that greed leads to destruction, I will not be so.
When I live the Yama-s, where is fear anymore? Fear not, I fear not.*

Day 7:

Yama is a necessary step in our evolution from a sub-human to the human and humane state of being. It may be also understood as the commencement of such a journey that is then taken forward by the *niyama* and other limbs of Yoga. If at all you wish to call Yoga an exercise (which is not true at all), you may term it as an exercise to exorcise the subhuman tendencies and to develop and strengthen the human and divine qualities. What do we actually exorcise here? We try to remove and get rid off the negative tendencies, the instinctive reactions that are remnants of our evolutionary past as we evolved through the different stages of life and its various forms. Those tendencies were necessary at that stage of evolution, but once we have taken the human incarnation are just heavy baggages, mere garbage that need to be discarded.

The latent, dormant tendencies in our reptilian brain can be cleaned out when we perform techniques such as *bhujanga asana*, *sarpa asana*, *sarpa kriya*, *bhujangini mudra* or *makara asana*. They help us get to get rid of these snake-like or crocodile-like tendencies hiding deep within our psyche. This is an additional dynamic process that facilitates the reduction of animal (sub-human) tendencies further strengthening that brought about by the living of the *yama*. Of course when we live the *niyama* along with the *yama*, we are improving the human qualities and this further brings the imbalanced see-saw back to a state of equanimity.

Soucha is cleanliness of the self (both internally and externally) and the surroundings. As is often quoted, "Cleanliness is next to Godliness". This cleanliness must be at all the levels of existence: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. It should manifest in both the intra-personal as well as in inter-personal activities.

Santhosha is a quality of contentment or internal satiety. This may be also termed as *trupti* or satisfaction with what we have. Someone who is constantly in this state of mind is called as *nitya trupta* by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita. This is found in a list of noble qualities that I personally consider to be qualities of a spiritually healthy person.

Tapa is often defined as austerity or penance but I think the biggest *tapa* is to be disciplined. Keeping your word, being on time, not giving up when the going gets tough and the ability to be steadfast under all circumstances are all manifestation of the *tapa* in my book. The poem IF by Rudyard Kipling is a great example of *tapa* in my opinion.

*If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
..... If you can fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds' worth of distance run-
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it, and - which is more - you'll be a Man my son!*

Swadhyaya is a necessary aspect of spiritual growth and is a constant internal feedback mechanism that lets us know where we are going and keeps checking up on each moment and movement of our existence. It is like our own spiritual GPS system that lets us know where we are at any moment and where we need to go and how to go there. The scriptures do help, but just reading the scriptures without applying the teachings towards self analyses, is not *swadhyaya*. Abraham Maslow hit this point from another angle when he said, "What is necessary to change a person is to change his awareness of himself". This is to me what *Swadhyaya* is all about.

This is not to be merely a self criticism session, but can also see the positives when they manifest. Yet one needs to also watch out for the subconscious mind is very clever and tries to throw us off the spiritual path by hook or crook. To avoid these pitfalls, one needs to have a great deal of *vairagya* or dispassionate non attachment, for without that, no objectivity is possible. If we are not objective towards our own subjective experiences, we will easily get side tracked by the *antaraya*, the obstacles to *sadhana*. If we lack *viveka* and *vairagya*, we will lack the introspectional, self-analytical abilities and then *antaraya* such as *branti darshan* make us believe that we are on the right path by manifesting 'red herrings' such as "oh I am in *samadhi*", "oh I can see auras", "oh I am so spiritual" etc. before we realise it our *sadhana* has slackened and we are back to 'square one' like in the game of snakes and ladders.

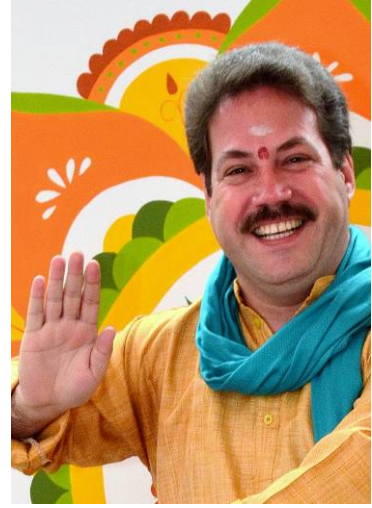
Ishwara pranidhana may be understood as having the will to do one's best and yet have an acceptance of the higher divine will and its decisions. So many people ask why God doesn't answer their prayers and I just wonder why don't they realise that God has actually answered them, but the answer was NO"? remember all of us are alive, fighting and doing our best only through that divine will. Swamiji calls it as *atman prasadanam* as it is the blessings of the divine self that we receive when we open up to the cosmos. *Prasadam* is that which we get as a blessing from the Divine, but first of all, we need to offer something in the first place. Only then will we get back the *prasadam*, as a blessing. We need to do our best and then leave the rest in the hands of the Divine. The operative part is "do your best". So many are like the person who blamed God that they had never won a lottery but didn't realise they had to at least buy the ticket in the first place!

The term *samadhi* may be used to refer to a state of total absorption or to a state where we have elevated ourselves to become *sama* (equal) to the *adhi* (the highest divine). *Samadhi* is the 8th *anga* of *Ashtanga Yoga* and hence it gives the mental idea that you can get to *samadhi* after completing the other seven. However, Patañjali also gives us a shorter route to the same destination by giving us *Kriya Yoga* consisting of *tapa*, *swadhyaya* and *ishwara pranidhana*. He then goes even further and gives us the shortest route to attain *Samadhi* by saying that one is blessed with *samadhi* when one perfects *ishwara pranidhana*, the last of the *niyama*. This may be equated to the path of *Bhakti Yoga* as mentioned in the *Bhagavad Gita* as it deals with the concept of total unconditional surrender of the lower self to the higher self, thus merging into a state of oneness with the Divine.

Our *prarthana* and *sankalpa* (prayers and positive affirmations) may be done in the *likhita*, *vachika* and *manasika* manner that are written, oral or mental forms respectively. *Manasika* is the highest form of the three as it is the most subtle. However it is also the most difficult one to practice properly as none can help correct us if we are doing it wrong. That is why we prepare to achieve that third stage through the practice of the first two. There are so many who are busy writing, saying or thinking the prayers but forget to do their *dharma*. No amount of prayer will help you if you are doing it at the cost of your *dharma*. *Swadharna* first says Lord Krishna very clearly in the *Bhagavad Gita*. The most important thing is to see the Divine in every being, and every being in the Divine. *Bhakti* is not merely the ability to see divinity in one form, but the willingness and ability to see it in all forms, in every way possible and in everything possible.

All the positive aspects of being human and the qualities needed to blossom as humane beings are compiled together as the *niyama*. This takes a lot of incessant, unrelenting effort and commitment. Hence, *abhyasa* is essential. *Vairagya* is essential for living the *yama* and *abhyasa* for living the *niyama*.

Fear is a characteristic tendency of the animal nature. Peace, joy and contentment are qualities of the human being. As we make the efforts to elevate our self towards the Divine, we get rid of fear and move into a state of peace and joy. This is why all iconographical representations of the Divine in Indian culture have the right hand in *abhaya mudra*, the hand gesture assuring the devotee, "Fear not, I am there with you".



The transformation of sub-human to human may be elucidated as follows:

Bhaya → *Abhaya* → *Shanti* and *Santosha*.

Day 8:

One way in which we can differentiate an animal from a human being is the concept of *dharma*, usually translated as 'duty', a positive quality that has become a negative word in modern times as its essential meaning has been misconstrued. As Ammaji puts it, "Dharma is doing the right thing, for the right person, in the right way, at the right time". A word that better conveys the inner meaning of *dharma* is, 'responsibility', the ability of a person to respond in an appropriate and conscious manner. Response is a vital quality that we humans have. The lower, basic instincts of an animal make it react, and don't let it respond. Animals are thus more prone to be instinctive and impulsive. We as a human being, have a choice, either to react or to respond. What do you choose?

The *dharma* of a student is to study well and follow all that has been taught to them with implicit discipline. The *dharma* of a child towards a parent is to listen to them, help them doing small errands and to be the best child possible with an extremely pleasing and pleasant behaviour. Similarly the parents have their *dharma* towards their offspring. They have to pave a path for the children to follow, have to take care of them, educate them, bring them up as responsible human beings etc. Every teacher has a *dharma* towards their students. Every human being has a *dharma* towards themselves, to those around them and towards the society they live in.

In the Yogic science of name, number and form known as *Yantra*, certain calculations are made to find out the *dharma marga* or major lesson we are to learn in this lifetime. This enables us to understand our life better, fulfil our responsibilities better and evolve in a more conscious manner. Abraham Maslow said so rightly, "A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately at peace with himself. What a man can be, he must be". This is to my mind, the

fulfilment of ones *swadharma* and the living of ones *dharma marga* to the best of ones ability. Every human being has their own specialities and limitations. If we can understand our own shortcomings, we will certainly be able to understand in an empathic manner the shortcomings of others. If we want the world to look up to us, respect us, love us; then it is our *dharma* to give that appreciation, respect and love to all and thus earn it back multi fold.

So many individuals have low self-esteem. To masquerade it, they let it manifest as a superiority complex. They try to dominate and control others. They get maximum gratification in arguing and justifying their stands and go on fighting to register their supremacy. Though there may be no opponent in sight, they imagine everyone to be one. If you wear green glasses, everything looks green and if you wear red ones, everything looks red. Such people perceive everything through their warped vision and love to play the 'victim' in their own misconstrued reality. Indirectly they want to dominate and hold everyone's attention. In order to divert the attention of others, they fight and make a big mess. They make mountains out of mole hills by magnifying non issues all the time. All of this is nothing but a mere attention seeking ploy. If an individual is self-confident and has positive self esteem, then they will have control over themselves and do not need to control or dominate others. They will then be in a position to help others grow and not curb their growth by squeezing the life out of them.

As we saw earlier, *soucha* refers to cleanliness. What is a child's cleanliness *dharma*? To be clean, brush their teeth, have their bath etc. This becomes the *soucha dharma* of the child. As an adult, the same gets a bit more intense than just the basics that are fine for children. If we see an object lying down someplace, we should pick it up and put it back in its place. If we see garbage on the ground, it is our *dharma* to put it in the dustbin. If people do not follow their *soucha dharma*, they are mere 'featherless bipeds' and not really human.

As a human being we also have the *dharma* to try and be as happy and as contented as possible within our limits. This is our *santosha dharma*. Animals are never contented or satisfied as their need to survive at any cost will never let them have *trupti*. If one is physically, mentally and emotionally clean, they will be contented. If someone has a problem being contented or happy, there is an imbalance between their needs and their capacity. This leads to their getting stressed out and then they blow their lid in the most inappropriate manner. The Bhagavad Gita calls a spiritually healthy person a *nitya trupti*, one who is eternally contented. This is a *sattwika* quality and not a *tamasika* inert one. Being content, remaining silent and happy does not mean that they are dull, inactive and incapable of effort. They have the ability to 'accept', a great *sattwika* quality.

Duhkham is the opposite of *sukham*. One, who is contented, is always in a state of *sukham*, a self-satisfied state of being. *Santosha* can never attained be from outside, it has to spring from right within us. Many human beings walking the earth today are just animals in disguise. They have never evolved out of their primitive tendencies. The earlier we understand this, the better we can learn to live in this mad dog eat dog world, riddled with cat fights during the rat race! Remember, even if you win the rat race, you are still only a rat!

Tapa is an extremely tough task. It is doing something difficult because it is the stretching of our limits in order to go beyond them. It is the self effort that enables us to outgrow our own self restricting boundaries and limitations. Trying to be on time is a good *tapa* to work on as it is indeed a discipline, a penance. Trying to keep one's word no matter what happens is another. This is a quality solely esteemed by human beings as animals give up anything that is too tough. They never do a task beyond their capacity, nor even try to do that. We have to be human to make that choice, to consciously make a choice to do that which is good even if it is difficult.

Lord Yama explains about the good and tough path, in contrast to the pleasurable and easy path when he teaches Nachiketa in the *Kathopanishad*. *Shreyas* is that which is the path of goodness whereas *preya* is that which the pleasurable and easy path. Animals prefer to take the *preya marga* as it is easy and filled with sensual pleasures. Only, and only, the human being has an ability to choose the *shreya marga*, knowing that it may be difficult and painful. This needs a lot of conscious effort and perseverance but it ultimately leads us to the destination we are seeking. 'Man-know thyself' is an ancient saying. We must try to know our strengths and understand our limitations, and resolve to never fall prey to the *preya marga*.

Ishwara pranidhana involves doing our best and then graciously accepting whatever we get as the Divine's blessings. This is a surrendering to that ultimate Divine, an intricate quality that is possible only in the most developed of human beings. Animals are wonderful, beautiful and I do love them as they are, unconditionally. However, they are still at a particular level of evolution while humans are at another level, hopefully a much more elevated one. "Arithu arithu maanidaraaip pirappadu arithu" says the great Poetess Avvaiyar who praises the rarity of a human birth and further the rarity of such humans having capacity for generosity and penance.

இருப்பேன் இருப்பேன் சுத்தமாய் இருப்பேன்
கொள்வேன் கொள்வேன் மனதில் திருப்தி கொள்வேன்
கடின தவமிருப்பேன் தன்னைத்தான் அறிய முயற்சிப்பேன்
அவனருளால் அவன்தான் வணங்கி அனைத்தையும் ஆனந்தமாய் ஏற்பேன்
சாந்தமுண்டு சாந்தமுண்டு என்னிடத்தில் சாந்தமுண்டு
நியமத்தை வாழும்போது சாந்தமுண்டு என்றுமே

*I will be, I will be, I will be clean, I will be clean,
Contentment is a state of mind that I will hold close to my heart.
I will be well disciplined and try to understand my inner being
Accepting with joy all that is given by the divine will.
When I am so, I will be peaceful, I will be at peace for
When I live the niyamas I will have peace eternally.*

Day 9 :

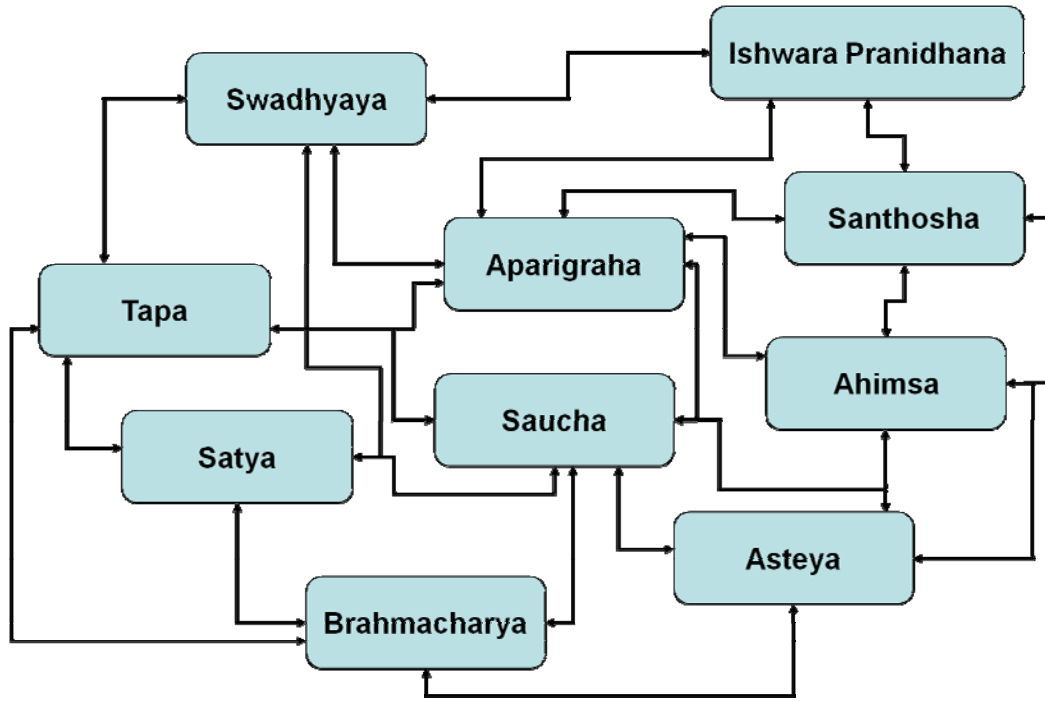
When we say *dharma* is the right way to live by fulfilling our responsibility, we need every moment awareness and consciousness to live it. It requires great understanding, dextrous ability and maturity. For this we need to be ready to learn every moment of life and such learning takes place through a three step process: *shravana, manana and nididhyasana*

- *Shravana* refers to the processes of hearing or rather listening. We hear something, perceive the sound and then begin to understand that something is being said as the perception reaches the brain. Of course this depends on whether one has listened to it, understood the reality of what has been said and also depends on the individual capacity and level of perception. Many hear, but few listen. For so many, the greatest of words simply stop at the ear drum, the tympanic membrane.
- *Manana* means to understand the concept mentally, to take it to heart. The concept is totally comprehended and absorbed, its value and purport realised and accepted wholeheartedly and consciously. We often memorise things and say we have 'by hearted them' or learn them 'by heart'.
- *Nididhyasana* means to imbibe and assimilate that which was heard and understood. This is the stage where the individual starts executing the concepts practically, begins to live them and becomes them. This is the 'walks the talk' stage of learning where there is no difference anymore between the concepts and their practical application. It is a state of being and hence the term *asana* is there too. We are established in a state of being wherein we are living the concept every movement without any dichotomy, no *dwandwa* exists as we are firmly established (*sthira*) in our *sukha sthanam*. Once Bhagavan Ramana Maharishi was asked as to which was the best *asana*. Without a second thought, he answered "*nididhyasana*". What a wonderful enlightened answer indeed! This is the state of being we must aspire for, when we live the *yama-niyama*.

An animal is locked up in a cage, the cage of its conditioning, its instinctive behaviour. The *Shaivaitic* Saint Tirumoolar elucidates this beautifully in his *Tirumandiram* using the terms *pati, pasu and pasa*. *Pasu* is the animal (the individual) bound by *pasa*, the noose of the *maya*, of bondage to our conditioning. *Pasa* is binding the *pasu* in this *samsara sagara*. *Pati* is the Divine Lord who cuts the noose of *pasa* and releases the *pasu* from the tight-throttling bondage of *pasa*. When we live a life of conditioning, we are mere animals bound by its tight hold. We human beings and animals have four things in common: hunger, thirst, sleep and the procreative instinct. As a human we have the opportunity to use our *buddhi*, our intellect and reasoning ability to open our cage, unbind ourselves and cut the noose of conditioning. We have an opportunity for freedom, for liberation for *kaivalya*. When we use our pre-frontal cortex, our human brain we realise that we are bound by our conditioned reactions. Once the realisation dawns, cutting off from the tether holding us is easier and then we can try to become truly humane.

Goldfish are often found in homes and offices, kept in small round glass bottles or tanks. The fish gets used to this restrictive atmosphere and after some time if you

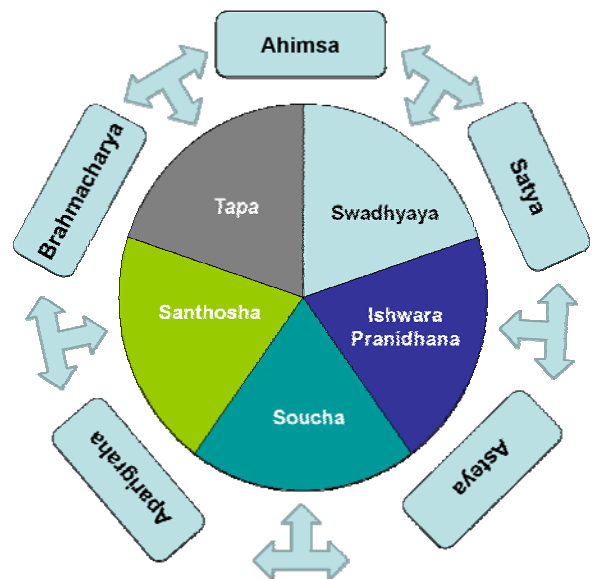
were to put that same fish into a big body of water such as a lake, it still goes round and round as it is not able to break free of its conditioning. This may be called the ‘goldfish mentality.’ This continues infinitively until an external force throws it off tangentially, and then it realises it is free to go where it desires. Similarly we humans are often imprisoned in our conditioning and the *yama-niyama* are the tools that can help us to consciously break free of our shackles.



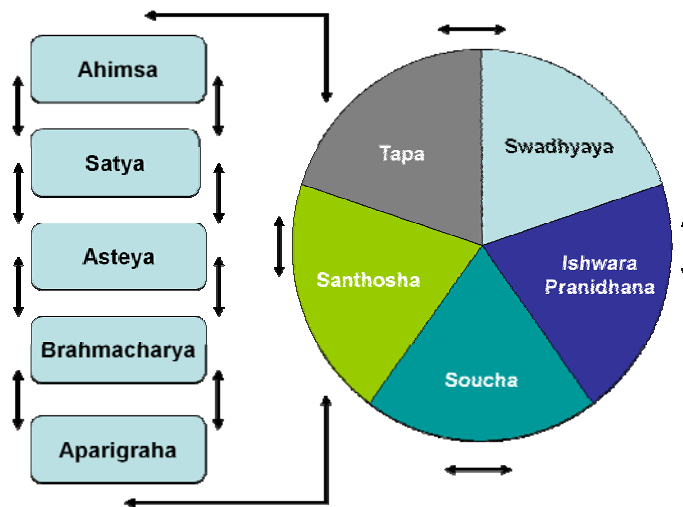
All the *pancha yama* and *pancha niyama* are inter-connected, are inter-linked with each other. They are linked through innumerable permutations and combination in an intricate living matrix. For e.g. *aparigraha*, non-covetedness, being non-greedy, can be correlated with *santhosha* or contentment and this in turn to *ishwara pranidhana* too. One who is not greedy, who is happy when their needs are fulfilled, is bound to end up being contented. Once the supreme happiness and contentment sets in, surrendering and accepting everything as the Divine Will is simpler. Similarly quite an array of inter links and connectivity can be explained as depicted in the figure above.

Day 10:

We can conceptualise the *niyama* as if they are constantly moving like a wheel with the *yama* circling around then in such a way that each one is connected to each other at different points in time. This is constantly in motion and ever changing like the universe itself. Another way to look at this concept is to consider the *yama* as constantly going up and down like an elevator



while the *niyama* are constantly rotating like a wheel. They are both constantly interconnected with each other. Maharishi Patañjali gives immense importance to each of the *yama-niyama*. He describes the ways to *samadhi* in a two pronged way; one through *Ashtanga Yoga* (with eight limbs) and the other through *Kriya Yoga* (*tapas, swadhyaya, ishwara pranidhana*). *Kriya Yoga* destroys all impurities such as the *kleshas*. It is important to cleanse away these impurities so that we can see the inner Divinity of our own inner self. We are not able to usually see it because of the dirt hiding, masking and shrouding the inner luminance.



Kriya Yoga cleanses away these impurities and we get to view the inner self clearly. Each of the *yama-niyama* has a *sutra* that describes it and its potentialities and Patañjali gives so much importance to them that we can say that Patañjali's Yoga has sixteen limbs and not just eight (ten *yama-niyama* plus six other limbs).

These concepts are not to be simply heard, discussed and forgotten. They have to be digested, understood, absorbed, assimilated and executed in all our daily activities. The ear drum is the first door. The drum vibrates when sound waves created by our words hits it. This in turn vibrates the small bones inside the ear and then that is transferred by the auditory nerve to the brain by nervous conductivity. Up to the point of the tympanic membrane, the ear drum, every sound is just a noise. It is only after that stage that it can be deciphered and the actual significance of what it implies be understood. Noise becomes music when understood and music becomes noise if not. *Shravana* becomes *manana* only when the concept is understood. When we open our mind to understand the noise, and begin to perceive it as music, the next door to the mind gets opened, and we reach the next higher level of understanding. Yoga integrates all the aspects of human physiology and psychology. Once we live the *yama-niyama*, we begin to manifest the fruits of perfection in each one of them. This is described by Patañjali in great detail. He uses the word *prathishtayam*, means to establish firmly in a reverential manner. This term is usually reserved for the process in which the idol in a temple is firmly secured in its place of worship. Only after the *pratistha*, can all the rituals, ceremonies and *puja* be done.

Thus when he says, "*ahimsapratishtayam tatsamnidhau vairatyagah*" it implies that we are establishing ourselves steadily in a sacred state of non-violent-ness. He promises us that violence will cease to exist in our presence once we establish ourselves in that niche of non-violent-ness. If we become established in *ahimsa*, violence gives up on its own. We don't have to run around chasing it or beating it to death anymore! When we realise *ahimsa*, then *himsa* cannot exist anymore. *Ahimsa* and *himsa* can never co-exist. It is similar to the fact that light and darkness cannot co-exist. Once

light appears, darkness melts away on its own. When you have 'become' *ahimsa*, when *ahimsa* is 'you', there will be no *himsa* wherever you go. In the olden days, hermitages of *rishi* and *muni* were built in the middle of forests. All wild animals of the jungle used to co-exist peacefully with each other in the *ashram* along with the *ashram*-mites. This was because *ahimsa* had been perfectly established in the atmosphere of the *ashram*, with the spirit of *ahimsa* emanating so powerfully through the sages. Gandhiji also believed in the same and manifested it during so many episodes of our struggle for independence. The brutal Angulimala was a robber who used to cut off and wear a garland of the fingers of people whom he had waylaid, robbed and murdered. He underwent a total transformation the moment he set his eyes on the Buddha, whose powerful aura of *ahimsa* was so expanded, that Angulimala gave up *himsa* and became a great follower of Buddha. When an individual becomes firmly established in the particular *yama-niyama*, the cosmic Divinity then can come through them and the very place they live, becomes sacred.

Satyapratishtayam kriyaphalasrayatvam means that the fruits of our actions come true when we are established in truth-full-ness. If one is perfect in *satya* whatever they utters becomes the truth. It is that you become so conscious that you only speak that which is possible and never say anything that is impossible. It is not like a magic trick, that you say something impossible and it becomes possible, because you person have uttered it. It is not so. One established in *satya*, one says only that which is right and possible in tune with *dharma*.

Asheyapratishtayam sarvaratnopasthanam, means that all treasures will come towards the one who has established themselves in non-stealing-ness. When we have no desire for that which is not ours, all wealth flows towards us. Basically it is because our needs and necessities have become so minimal, that anything else that we get is an extra bonus. All these treasures and riches are safe in our possession, for we know their worth, will appreciate them, and never mishandle them. Hence, the universe is happy to bless us with everything.

Brahmacharyapratishtayam viryalabhah, means that great vigour is obtained when established in the creative principle. When we are established in this *yama*, we gain lot of energy, vitality and strength. Money, time and intelligence are all different types of energy. Remember $E = mc^2$, the most famous equation of Albert Einstein, equating energy and mass. We all have certain amounts of energy and we need to spend it usefully. When we conserve and channelize our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual energy, we are blessed with *veerya*. There manifests great *tejas*, a glow that makes you attractive, the energy that attracts everyone towards you. Remember, the term *acharam*, means an orderly and clean lifestyle. *Brahmacharam* is such a life that is clean and energy filled.

When talking about *aparigaha*, Patañjali says, "*aparigrahasthairye janmakathanta sambodhah*", meaning 'When established in non-coveted-ness we realise past and future life experiences.' We gain knowledge of previous and future births because we have lost all greediness. The universe is now sure that we will not misuse such knowledge and hence we are blessed with it. This ability will be a natural outcome, the moment we grow beyond the sub-human tendency of greedy grabbing beyond our needs. When we are constantly greedy, self-centred and grabbing all the time,

we forget our humaneness. The moment we go against this animalistic tendency towards grabbing and stuffing, we will steady ourselves in non-coveted-ness.

People are afraid of perfection because it seems too difficult to attain. But what is more important is to make that effort, to strive for it. That is our *dharma* as a human being. That is when our lives become worth living. That is when we justify our human incarnation. Unless and until we try to do something, how will we ever know whether it is possible or not? Most people never try. No wonder they say it is impossible without ever realising that it is saying, “I’m Possible”.

Day 11:

Niyama are evolutionary ethical observances that help the human tendencies to flower into higher humane ones and grow into the Divine ones too. *Soucha* is the self-effort to clear away the impurities giving us a pure and clean body, mind and emotions. Purity of thought, word and deed is also form of *soucha*. Patañjali assures us that such purity brings about bodily indifference and a dispassion towards bodies of others (*sauchat svangajugupsa parairasamsarga*). He further says “*sattvashuddhi saumanasya ikagryendriyajayat madarshana योग्यात्वा नि*” meaning that we become cheerful, attain perfect one-pointed concentration, get sensory control and we become fit to see the divinity, the inner being, the soul within us and stop being materialistic. When we are perfect in this *niyama* we attain *sattvashuddhi*, which is the highest level of purity. We now become fit to witness our own real self, the *atman*, resulting in the experience of *atma darshana*.

When elaborating *santhosha* he tells us, “*samtoshadanuttamah sukhlabha*”, meaning thereby, ‘unexcelled ease and bliss awaits those who perfect the virtue of contentment’. When we are content with whatever we have; physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually, we attain the perfect state of *sukham* with our self. This is a blessed state of being. If we do not make this giant leap as a human, we end up in a perennial state of *duhkha* or sorrow. This is not a mere *tamasika* contentment experienced by those who do nothing, who stay quiet, who make no effort at all. We often make efforts to attain a state of contentment, but again this is done with heavy expectation, aimed at achieving that state or expecting recognition. This may be classified as a *rajasika* contentment. The next level is the *sattvika* one, where we forgo or overcome our expectations too. From the outside, both *tamasika* and the *sattvika* forms look similar, but they are oceans apart. One is absolute laziness and emptiness while the other is filled with an infinite sense of completeness.

The purifying fire of intense discipline destroys all impurities resulting in mastery over body and senses (*kayendriyasiddhir ashuddhikshayat tapasaha*). The heat of *tapa*, disciplined self-effort destroys all impurities and is one amongst the three aspects of *Kriya Yoga*. It fades out the power of the *klesha* and empowers the potential for *samadhi*. This is furthered by *swadhyaya* that puts us in touch with our inherent Divinity through introspectional self analysis (*swadhyayad ishtadevata samprayoga*). Perfection in *swadhyaya* is said to result in communion with our favourite perspective of the Divine, that aspect of the Divine that we resonates best with, our *ishtadevata*.

Samadhisiddhir ishwarapranidhanat means that, “*Samadhi* is attained when we perfectly can surrender to the Divine’. We elevate ourselves into that highest state of being, where we are equal to the highest (*sama+adhi*). *Ishwara pranidhana* is the total surrender of the will of the puny, weak and insubstantial individual self to that of the Divine Will. This is the message of *Bhakti Yoga* where the devotee becomes ‘one’ with the Divine through complete and unconditional surrender. This is a state where one has overcome one’s individuality and is ready for the merger with the universality.

Patañjali says, “*vitarkabadhane pratipakshabhavanam*” thus advising us to cultivate *pratipaksha bhavanam*, the contrary view, when negative thoughts of a devolutionary nature arise that, left unchecked, cause suffering (Yoga Darshan II:33). When we try to live the *yama-niyama* we come across a lot of difficulties and obstacles obstructing our progress on this path of evolution. The magic tool that Maharishi Patañjali gives us to overcome these obstacles is *pratipaksha bhavanam*. He advises us to cultivate the opposite attitude when faced with negative, devolutionary, bestial tendencies. If we need to live in tune with the *yama-niyama* this is the only solution. We are constantly pulled and pushed from all sides thus distorting our entire persona. The *yama-niyama* help us to take the central path, the path of moderation. They prevent us from swaying with the *vitarka*, the deviants that throw us off balance and prevent our journey down the central path. *Himsa* is the *vitarka* of *ahimsa*, *asat* is the *vitarka* of *sat*, *steya* is the *vitarka* of *asteya* etc.

When these deviants distract us from the middle-path of *yama-niyama*, we have to immediately implement the opposite attitude of *pratipakshabhavanam*. For example, when someone hurts us, we need to try and understand why it was done and reason it out, instead of repeating the same to them. *Chittavriti* in our own mind deviate us by luring us to do the unnecessary things. When we give up or stop the practice of *yama-niyama* it feels so easy and we think we feel relieved. But in reality, it is self engendered destruction. Once a negative thought sprouts in the mind, put it out immediately by commanding yourself to stop it with a big “NO” and never let it continue. ‘A stitch in time saves nine’ and we must put an end to such negative thoughts, the moment they enter our mind. When we understand that a negative thought or evil idea has entered our mind, we need to come out of it immediately, and this can happen only if we are conscious. If we handle them softly the *vitarka* will not get out. We need to use force and drive them out forcibly just as we would drive an unwanted, dangerous animal out of our house. Being polite will not work with these negativities. The powerful force of conscious emotion and unswerving devotion to the highest ideals needs to be used, to kick them out, once and for all.

Day 12:

The *asura* at the feet of *Nataraja* called *Muyalagan*, is in fact *asmita*, our ego. *Nataraja* is the energy of change, growth, positivity. While dancing, when Shiva takes his foot off the *asura*, he slowly raises himself up and tries to dominate the situation. At this point, Shiva puts his foot down immediately to keep it under control. The conscious effort cuts down the



ego whenever it springs up. Remember that the word ‘success’ has no ‘I’ in it; but failure has ‘I’ in it. Whenever we succeed, we must realise it is due to a group effort and not just an individual’s work. This is also a type of *pratipakshabhavanam*. It is practically impossible to replace emotions and thoughts of hatred with love. Only highly conscious people can understand that these are just reflections of our own internal demons. If someone reflects something bad onto us, then we must try and understand what contribution we may have made to the manifest situation. When people fight with us, when they hate us, it may be because of what is inside us. We need to contemplate how we may be responsible for what is happening, and try to learn a lesson from it. Trying to escape is an animal tendency, but taking responsibility for a mistake, is human.

‘When the going gets tough, the tough get going’. *Shraddha* (faithful conviction) and *virya* (courageous valour) are attitudes we need to adopt, to face the world and to continue on this difficult path. Start to analyse things, especially when something negative happens and try to understand what your role is in it, instead of blaming someone else for it. We should never be like the slippery eels that slip and escape off and run away from responsibility. Escapism is a *vitarka*, a mechanism to protect one’s ego. It is a manifestation of the *abhinivesha klesha* that wishes that only we should survive at any cost, irrespective of what happens to others. It is the worst and lowest form of the bestial nature, the survival instinct. We need to decrease the bad wolves within us by the *yama* and empower the good wolves through the *niyama*.

There is no difference between the Yoga philosophy and the Yoga life. Once you begin living it; the Yoga philosophy becomes Yoga life. If we do not practice it then it is not Yoga, it is mere theory, sheer non-practical airy-fairy philosophy. When there is fear, *bhaya*, there is no peace, no *shanthi*. It is a subhuman, bestial tendency because animals can never be peaceful due to the power of their impulsive survival instinct. They are always afraid, always in fear. Let’s be human, let’s be peaceful, and let’s be at peace with ourselves and with the world.

Day 13:

Pratipaksha bhavanam is based on a Yogic concept called *raga-dwesha* (that which we like because it is pleasant and that which we don’t like because it is unpleasant). What we get caught up in the pair of impostors, *raga-dwesha*, we are thrown off balance by this *dwandwa*. We need to consciously pull one down and push the other one up to bring the equation back to balance. The tool with which we bring back balance is *pratipaksha bhavanam*.

One needs to have intelligence and discernment when applying *pratipaksha bhavanam*. It is easy to say, “Replace all thoughts and actions of hate with love” etc but one needs to be careful in how one does it. There is a good story to illustrate this point. There used to be a terrible snake in a village which bit every one in sight. One day, a Swami came that way and started lecturing to the people about good qualities such as non-violence, peace etc. When the snake came there, all the people ran away. The Swami asked the snake why it was biting everyone and it answered that that

was its *guna*, its natural tendency but that it was ready to change itself after hearing his discourses. The Swami was happy and advised the snake to follow *ahimsa* and the snake promised to do so. A few days later, the Swami chanced to see the snake lying by the side of the road in a nearly dead, badly bruised and beaten up condition. When he asked the snake what had happened, it replied that the people in the village had lost fear of it because it had stopped biting them, and hence gathered courage to beat it up and leave it for dead. The Swami was shocked out of his wits at this violent action by the so called human beings but reminded the snake that, "I told you not to bite anyone, I never asked you not to protect yourself with a hiss"! *Ahimsa* is not just limited to not harming others, but includes you not letting them harm you too. This reminds me of the popular statement, "To err is human, but to forgive is Divine". I agree with that but always add, "And, to forget is to be stupid" as you have then forgone a chance to learn a lesson from the experience.

Patañjali gives great respect and reverence to the *yama-niyama* when he terms them as the *mahavratam*, the great vows (*Yoga Darshan* II: 31). He says, "*jatidesakalasangamaya anavachchinnah sarvabhauma mahavratam*" meaning, 'these are the universal vows not limited by class, location, time frame or circumstances'. It is a great *tapas* that has to be followed always, has to be lived 24 hours and all your life and there is no escape, no other option but to follow them, if we need to be human beings and not mere featherless bipeds.

The concept of *pratipaksha bhavanam* is an amazing teaching and must be inculcated in the *sadhana* of day-to-day living. Even if we cannot replace negative thoughts with emotion-laden positive reinforcements, we must at least make an attempt to stop them in their troublesome track! I have personally found that a strong "STOP" statement works wonders in helping block out the negative thoughts that otherwise lead us into the quick-sand-like cesspool of deeper and greater trouble. Patañjali has beautifully given us a perspective of the mechanisms of this in *sutra* II: 34, when he says "*vitarka himsadayah kritakaritanumodita lobhakrodhamoha purvaka mridu madhyadhimatra duhkhajnaanathanaphala iti pratipakshabhavanam*" thus warning us about the negativities that may be done directly by us (*krita*), or committed by others through our causation (*karita*), or be condoned by us (*anumodita*). He digs deeper and explains that these negative actions rise due to greed (*lobha*), anger (*krodha*) or delusion (*moha*).

Though Maharishi Patañjali gives the example of *himsa*, this concept is equally applicable to each and every one of the *yama-niyama*. These deviants try to pull us away from our conscious evolution and suck us back into the quick-sand of our *samskara* and *vasana*. Patañjali warns that we must be conscious of them and also realize that dangers of both commission and omission exist.

What causes these disturbances, devolutionary thoughts and emotions? This *sutra* implies that the sub-human animalistic tendencies towards greed (*lobha*), rage (*krodha*) and deluded infatuation (*moha*) precede these deviants. These are part of the six enemies of the spirit (*shat ripu*) commonly discussed in Indian philosophies. The *shat ripu* are *kama* (excessive desire), *krodha* (rage), *lobha* (greed), *moha* (deluded infatuation), *mada* (pride) and *matsarya* (jealousy). These deviants arise from the deep sub-consciousness and un-consciousness. They are expressed through the medium of the *shat ripu* and then manifest fully. All six must taste defeat if we are to win this

battle between the conscious and unconscious aspects of our nature. This is a constant dynamic change that is going on in everybody's life. When we want to cross a river using the logs floating on it, we jump from one log of wood to the other and reach the other bank while maintaining our balance with alertness. In the same way, to get across life, we need to maintain the same kind of dynamic, conscious balance when faced with all the challenges.

One's *swadharma* is to make the effort to become an *adhikarin*, a person fit for cosmic experience. "First works first" as the prophet has advised. If we don't work, we won't achieve the goal. Many are too lazy to make any effort for their aspirations; laziness is an enemy of all spiritual growth. These same people then turn away from their aspirations, deluding themselves by saying "Oh, after all I never did really want this or that, I do not really deserve this or that". Be careful and be-aware of this attitude. Without making an effort to be fit, one cannot have the *atmadarshana*, that reverential and divine opportunity to witness the Self in totality. It is said, "If you take even one step towards God, God comes running to you!" Why is it so many cannot take even that first step? When given two choices, people always choose the easy one as it requires no effort. However, once we have made the decision to grow, once we have embarked on the 'path of the spirit', we need to use all our conscious effort and live the *yama-niyama*, whether it is tough or not.

This requires strength, but it is one of the most wonderful psychological tools that Maharishi Patañjali has bequeathed to those who contemplate his work. Use it with consciousness and live life with awareness. At the end of it all, one may be satisfied to have LIVED like an angel, and not become a DEVIL by living life backwards.

Yoga definitely works, but it must be lived twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, indeed, for the whole life span! The "3 R's" of Regularity, Rhythm and Repetition are the cardinal prerequisite of success (*siddhi*) in *yoga sadhana*. As Pujya Swamiji said, "Health and happiness are your birthright, reclaim them. *Moksha* is your goal, strive to attain it." May the universe bless us all with liberation known by so many names as *mukti*, *moksha*, *kaivalya* or *nirvana*, when we are ready and worthy of it. May we grow and glow through the life of *Yoga*. *Hari Om Tat Sat Om*.

