

A Branch of Yoga called “Purity”

Yoga is one of the most comprehensive systems of spiritual practice that has been handed down to us over the centuries. Yoga means “union,” or “to join.” The methods of yoga facilitate the union, or joining, of our inner and outer nature, the joining of the divine and worldly aspects of us. This is why we often refer to the human nervous system as the doorway between this world and the divine. All we have to do is open the door, and we can live a divine life here on earth. There is no need to go away to the mountain top. No need to quit our job, give away our possessions, or leave our family. As we apply the methods of yoga for a few minutes each day, we can go on just as before, only being much happier and effective in our daily life. This is the real benefit of yoga.

The traditional system of yoga is described in the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, and consists of eight limbs:

- **Yama** (restraints)
- **Niyama** (observances)
- **Asana** (postures)
- **Pranayama** (breathing techniques)
- **Pratyahara** (introversion of the senses)
- **Dharana** (attention on an object)
- **Dhyana** (meditation – dissolving the object)
- **Samadhi** (absorption in pure consciousness)

The combined use of the last three limbs of yoga with a particular technique called *samyama* yields what we call *stillness in action* in daily living.

The first two limbs of yoga, *yama (restraints)* and *niyama (observances)*, constitute what we call the *codes of conduct*. It is similar to what we find in all of the spiritual traditions of the world – “don’t do this,” “do this,” etc.

The restraints and observances include:

- **Yama** (restraints) – ahimsa (non-violence), satya (truthfulness), asteya (non-stealing), brahmacharya (preservation and cultivation of sexual energy) and aparigraha (non-covetousness).
- **Niyama** (observances) – saucha (purity), samtosa (contentment), tapas (heat/focus/austerity), svadhyaya (study of spiritual writings and self) and isvara pranidhana (surrender to the divine).

Note that *saucha* (purity) is the first observance. This is where we find the principles of diet and shatkarmas (bodily cleansing techniques). Saucha is the branch of yoga that deals with the aspects of conduct that receive a lot of attention in our modern world. Many of us live in a culture that is obsessed with diet and the physical body. In yoga, saucha is important. Yet it is but one branch in the broad spectrum of our practices.

While many traditional approaches to teaching yoga regard yama (restraints) and niyama (observances) as prerequisites for beginning practices further down the list of the eight limbs, some other teachings (including AYP) do not take this view. Yama and niyama can also be regarded as effects in an integrated approach to engaging in practices, beginning with deep meditation, pranayama, postures and other methods, irrespective of our adherence (or not) to the conduct guidelines of yama and niyama.

When an integrated approach to practices is taken, yama and niyama are found to be arising naturally as effects.

This occurs through a quality within everyone that we call the *connectedness of yoga*. In other words, one practice used as *cause* will beget other practices as *effect*. The deeper the practice we use as

cause, the more profoundly will additional limbs of yoga be stimulated. And so it goes.

If we begin with deep meditation and spinal breathing pranayama as core practices, then we will find aspects of practice contained within yama and niyama rising naturally as effects. These effects will then add further causes to our practice routine, much more so than if we had taken on the methods of yama and niyama alone at the beginning.

This has great significance when considering diet and inner cleansing methods. If we utilize the yogic principles of diet and cleansing methods as a result of rising inner silence and ecstatic conductivity cultivated within us via deep meditation and spinal breathing pranayama, we stand to gain much more. On the other hand, if we force the issue of conduct by blindly adhering to external rules, we can create more obstacles to our spiritual progress than we will remove, in the form of forced behaviors and increasing self-judgment. If our conduct in matters of diet and inner cleansing methods is coming naturally from within, rather than enforced from outside, then we stand to gain much more from the measures presented in this book.

A wise approach to engaging in the practices here is to become grounded in the core practices of deep meditation and spinal breathing pranayama first. Then the principles of saucha (purity and cleanliness) will be rising from within us naturally.

In the AYP approach to practices, we devote selective attention to yama and niyama, as necessary, to support a quick start in deep meditation, spinal breathing pranayama and other practices. Then the yamas and niyamas will be greatly boosted by these powerful practices and will blossom naturally.

Does this mean we do not concern ourselves with diet at all in our life? Of course not. What it means is that we cannot find health or happiness through forced conduct. The best approach is to avoid

extremes and take all things in moderation, *favoring* the measures we know will bring us greater health and happiness. Over time, our path will become more clear, and we can let our conduct in these matters shift gradually according to our intuition, which will be steadily rising with our inner silence and ecstatic conductivity, as we continue with our yoga practices.

Along the way, our inner perception will become very refined, and we will learn to listen to our body and follow its lead in many things, including diet and inner cleansing. At some point, we may also find ourselves naturally considering the controversial practice of *amaroli* (urine therapy), a powerful rejuvenation technique, which relates to both diet and inner cleansing.

Nine Gates of the Body

In the ancient lore of yoga, the *City of God* analogy is taken a step further. The City is said to have *nine gates*. These are the natural orifices of the human body, which include two eyes, two nostrils, two ears, the mouth, the urethra and the anus. To take both genders fully into account, which they did not do very well in the old days, we should mention that a woman has ten gates (adding the vagina). It will not make much of a difference in the methods described in this book, though it does in other areas of yoga, particularly *tantra*.

Here, we are concerned with the nourishment of the body and with cultivating the inner energies. On the physical level, it is about what goes in and what comes out. On a more subtle level it is about supporting purification and opening in the subtlest strata of our neurobiology. We will look at eating that way – *diet*. We will look at the cleansing techniques that way – *shatkarmas*. And we will also look at the recycling of urine in the body that way – *amaroli*. All of it is aimed at supporting what we call the rise of *ecstatic conductivity* in the nervous system. As such,

the practices will be to support specific neurobiological connections, including:

- **Mouth, Urethra and Anus** – in relation to the neurobiology of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract.
- **Nasal Passages, Eyes and Ears** – in relation to the neurobiology of the brain and spinal nerve.

By influencing the flow of energy and/or nourishment through these gates, we can greatly assist the rise of ecstatic conductivity throughout the entire nervous system.

These measures, along with the rest of the practices covered in the *AYP Enlightenment Series*, will aid the continuing expansion of inner silence and ecstatic conductivity, leading to refinement of all of our sensory perceptions and experiences. It will happen as we engage in the practices of diet, shatkarmas and amaroli in a natural way, when we are called to them from within.

The Call from Within

What is it that moves us to make a change in our diet, or to undertake a yoga practice that we might have considered to be a bit strange before? Why change anything in our living habits at all?

The most common reasons why we make such changes is because of how we feel. In other words, it is for our health and wellbeing that we are most often moved to make changes in our diet and other aspects of our routine. It is cause and effect.

If we are overweight and feel poorly, one the first things we will do is try and find the will to lose some weight. A multi-billion dollar industry has grown up around this simple urge to feel better. In addition, we might not feel so good because our body lacks physical exercise. When the body sags, so do the mind and the emotions. So, another multi-billion

dollar industry has grown up around physical exercise.

All we would like is to feel better, to feel whole!

And what does it mean to feel whole? Obviously, if we take it on the physical level only, it means to be healthy and in good physical condition – diet and exercise.

Yet, someday we will get old. No matter how well we eat or how much we exercise, we will eventually be fading away physically. That is life on this earth. We are born, we live for however long our time allows, and we die. Is that all there is? If so, there is no need to read further, because a healthy lifestyle alone will be enough to achieve our fifty or one hundred years, and there are plenty of places we can find advice in those multi-billion dollar diet and exercise industries. How much more are we willing to do to gain a few more years on this earth?

Or maybe just feeling better today is enough. If that is our goal, then this opens up a new avenue, because it is possible to *always* feel good today, even as the body is fading away in old age or other maladies that will claim our body sooner or later. It is possible for us to always feel okay, no matter what the external circumstances may be. This is a spiritual attainment. It is *something more* that reaches far beyond what the diet and exercise industries can deliver. Enter the yoga industry – not nearly as large, but growing, while overlapping diet and exercise and adding a whole new dimension, a spiritual dimension.

In yoga, we recognize the basics of healthy living, and there is much more we can do as well. The methods of yoga can not only add to our longevity, but also look far beyond the limitations of our physical body to our spiritual dimensions.

We each have natural abilities within us that can be stimulated through various methods to unfold a greater potential. This potential is outside time and the ups and downs of our body and everyday living.

Yet these qualities can be cultivated while we are living a normal life, and can sustain us through all of our life experiences – “in sickness and in health.”

If we are able to consciously become that which is permanent happiness within us, then what happens to the body will not bowl us over. Inner silence and ecstatic radiance are the qualities we are speaking of here. With those qualities becoming our full time experience in life, we have solved the *feeling good* question for all of this life, and beyond.

We can call it *enlightenment*.

Deep inside each of us is a recognition of our possibilities, and at times we will feel the pull. Actually, we feel it all the time. It is our longing for more happiness in all of its forms. So our desire to feel better is a call coming from within.

If we are engaged in yoga practices like deep meditation, spinal breathing pranayama, and others, the call coming from within us refines. Our sensitivities refine along with our urges, and we are called to do those things we did not even imagine before. We might question our own inner urges. Yet, with yoga practices in the picture, we will gradually learn to trust the call coming from within. We will learn to trust our refining intuition.

If we keep up yoga practices over the long term, the decision-making for healthful living gets easier – obvious even. Not that we know the outcome of all things, or that it will always seem to be what we want. We come to know that inner silence is the best launching pad for all outcomes in our life. Our inner silence emanates a knowing beyond understanding. Experience bears this out over time. This is how abiding inner silence gained in deep meditation fulfills the conditions of yama and niyama.

But more than that, we become our own compass

at the deepest level of spiritual unfoldment, which is beyond the rules of yama and niyama. It is freedom to choose in a way that is life supporting for ourselves and for all who are around us.