

# Niyamas

**The Niyamas are observances. Where the yamas are abstinence or restraints.** If a person is harming, lying, stealing, or full of greed, their life force will be scattered. Through practicing the restraints, one can bring their life force inward to provide the tapas or self discipline to live life in a spiritual or moral manner. I liken the energy to be similar to integrity. The more one lives by a high moral code, they become trusted and grounded in this moral code. Their mind will know no other. Niyamas (purity, contentedness, austerity, self-study) when observed can pull in pranic energy from the cosmic source. This pranic energy can then be used to balance the chakras and lift energy into the higher chakras. So the niyamas move us even farther on the path to spirituality or Santosha by balancing the chakras and moving up the chakras to the intellect and then even higher to a greater or higher consciousness.

The yamas along with many other moral codes, such as the 10 commandments for example are where most people are at. As we talked about ahimsa in thought word or deed, or the study of greed on the intellectual level, many in the world have a hard time restraining themselves from violence, stealing and wanting more than they need. If you want to develop true happiness and contentedness the next step after understanding and practicing the yamas is to study and practice the niyamas. So here we go.

## The Niyamas

- Purity (*shaucha*)
- Contentment (*santosha*)
- Austerity (*tapas*, self discipline)
- Study of holy texts (*svadhyaya*)
- Attunement to God (*Ishvar-Pranidhana*)

**Purity or shaucha is lifting your thoughts and emotions to a higher state of consciousness.** On an intellectual level, it is thinking noble thoughts. If negative thoughts come into your mind, replace them with positive thoughts. Your thoughts are not who you are. Neti, neti, neti. Your thoughts are energy that linger around you because of past experiences, the people you hang around with and a big source-television and social media. But you can feed your mind noble thoughts. It will follow your lead! Intellectual purity can be achieved by not only giving your mind noble thoughts to think, but chanting Om or another mantra that brings you peace and happiness. Intellectual impurity can also be practiced and achieved by the practice of *metta* or loving kindness. Or *karuna* which is compassion. *Metta* and *Karuna* are the two of the four immeasurable virtues of Buddhism which will be discussed in another SR teaching.

**Verbal purity** is speaking what is uplifting, compassionate, helpful and kind. Where intellectual purity is moving from the third chakra or mars chakra up to the fourth chakra (heart center) or venus chakra; verbal purity is moving what is at heart, up to the throat chakra or the mercury chakra. Verbal purity also can be practiced by *pujan* or clear audible chanting of mantra out-loud.

**Purity on the physical level** is both external and internal. External purity is keeping the body clean and healthy with bathing, exercise and eating good food. And on the internal level there are what is referred to as *shat kriyas*. They include fasting, alternating nostril breathing, colon cleanse, *kapalabhati* or other *pranayamas* that open and cleanse the astral channels. When a yogi has achieved external and internal physical purity, they have the capacities to perceive the light which is within them.

**Shaucha also means in a larger realm that your thoughts, words and deeds are all consistent** with each other. It is important that we purify our lives by being truthful and compassionate in thoughts words and deeds. With ourselves and with others. Our job as yogis is to see those thoughts that do not jive with our personalities that are part of the subconscious, and heal them. The ultimate goal of yoga is to join our states of consciousness (subconscious, conscious and super consciousness) as one so we can be one with karma and one with Life.

**Contentment is the second niyama and considered to be the most vital.** *Santosha* is being content with what you have. And not desiring that which is beyond your means or desiring that which does that provide for spiritual advancement. If good wealth and good fortune come to you, enjoy and share, but to desire or expect that which we think we deserve brings us back to *aparigraha* or the scattering of life-energies. And when the life-force is scattered, awareness of the upper chakras becomes unattainable and if the awareness of upper chakras becomes unattainable, the lower chakras cannot be balanced. We will talk about this more in the Prana/Chakra teaching. Only if a person is content can they be happy and peaceful and it is only in this peaceful state that a person can see life's beauty and meaning and reach a state of bliss. A person that does not have or is not seeking contentment will spend most their time reaching and grasping for outside enjoyment and temporary happiness.

**Contentment is understanding karma and dharma.** If you buy a big pleasure boat and the boat sinks, and then you buy another big pleasure boat to replace it and it gets stolen there may be a message there. Will you keep fighting your big pleasure boat karma and have endless suffering or could you maybe enjoy the water in a canoe or paddle boat? An example of understanding dharma; if you know that your dharma right now is to be a mother, then everything you do in life will be focused to do the best at caring for your child. There is no question on where your priorities lie and you can feel strong and content in doing so. If the time in your life is to heal from an alcohol addiction, then the focus becomes clear that your decisions made right now in your life will flow harmonious with you're quitting drinking. When I quit drinking each day that I won over the forces of my addiction or my karma, was a good day! The decisions we make in life vary according to when in our life we are making those decisions and according to our dharma and karma at that time. By having self-awareness and self-knowledge I can come to know and live harmoniously according with my karma and dharma and this brings contentedness into our lives. It is not saying life is always going to be easy but when we find acceptance and willingness to keep learning and growing lie responds back to us in unimaginable ways. *Aham Brahmasmi!!*

**Contentment is understanding the nature of life.** If you are going to have a celebration in Minnesota in the middle of spring, you better have it indoors or plan for outdoor rainy and windy weather. But how many people do you know who constantly complain about the weather and how it ruined their special event. They act like they had no idea it could be rainy in the spring months and life just dumped a truck load of bad weather to ruin their party. Don't set yourself up for disappointment! Be in the flow of nature. Be in the flow of karma. Have a tent set up up or have a back up plan!! See life's events as karma. See addiction as karma. It just is. Accept it and then do something about it. And the more awareness we have and the more knowledge we have, and the more practices we have, the more we can have the tapas or self discipline to do what we need to do to soften the karma. Life will change for you. Well actually, life will not change, but your **attitude** towards life will change! And the lesson on karma states that karma is attitude! Attitude is all!

**I chose *Santosha* as the name for this program because without a positive and content attitude, people will always be seeking outward for happiness and cussing the world or cussing themselves for their unhappiness.** But to be truthful about it, everyone is the architect of their own destiny. *Aham Brahmasmi* is the sanskrit term for "I am the creator of my own life". We will talk more about this in the karma teaching. *Santosha* is knowing that where you are in your life is where you ought to be and where you need to be to evolve and mature. I could beat myself up about wasting the entire 1<sup>st</sup> half of my life in a drug induced state. As a matter of fact I had some close fiends ask where I thought I would be if I hadn't spent so much of my time in a chemically high state. But I feel that every experience that I have experienced brought me to this place where I am now. And I am truly happy. I am conscious, I have found *santosha*, I have spiritually evolved and I am building good karma to soften my karma of the past. But most of all, I am sharing the teachings which is my dharma for my station in life right now and that in itself brings on true happiness that can never be taken from me. I am flowing in the river of goodness. And that is what *Santosha Recovery* is about; for you to flow in your own river of goodness that leads into the greater river of blissful consciousness.

**Contentment described in *The Spiritual Science of Kriya Yoga* says ‘Contentment can be obtained by understanding the kriya yoga philosophy and realizing the wisdom of life’s ways. That which is taken from you is not taken from you but rather converted or transmuted into that which you need more dearly. Understanding this wisdom of Life’s way will bring contentment.**

**Verbal contentment** means listening rather than giving in to superficial talkativeness. When you have contentedness you have to prove yourself verbally less and eventually not at all. It is when we are not content with ourselves and our lives that we try to hurt others by words or try to prove your attitudes are right and holy.

**Physical contentment** means that the body is content and does not reach out for inharmonious and false objects to pacify the mind. When the mind craves the body seeks more. When the body possess’ one thing, then it seeks for ten things and when the body possess’ ten things the body wants one hundred things. This is the nature of greed. But if the mind can find Santosha, craving is extinct and true and lasting happiness can be found.

**Austerity or *tapas* is defined as the power to withstand thirst, heat, cold and other un-pleasantries.** I define it as the self discipline it takes to do the practice everyday. It is the heat generated by great self discipline. It is this heat that will burn off impurities of the mind/body complex and burns off the seeds of karma. *Tapas* feels like the power you get when you are totally on in your game and you have total mental awareness and balance. You feel strong and in control. *Tapas* can be acquired by doing your practice daily. It can be acquired by going beyond your comfort zone and entering into a realm of *when I let go of who I am, I become what I might be*. Once you find or experience austerity, you can use it to reject the inharmonious mind stuff that is constantly knocking at your door and begin to see life as it is so that you can move away from ego into higher states of consciousness. *Tapas* or self discipline is what is needed to move beyond the limitations of your karma. This is important; what it takes to soften the karma of your lifetime is *tapas*. Without *tapas* your mind will be constantly fluctuating and seeking gratification from outside sources.

**What you can do to gain austerity or *tapas*:**

- Do your practice everyday. Even if it short or not exactly centered, your mind will respond.
- Go outside your comfort zone. Do something that is fearful or that you normally would not do. After you do that which you fear, you feel a sense of ‘wow, I did it’. This is *tapas*.
- **Do a kind deed for another and don’t tell anyone about it. Quote from unknown: To act morally while no one is looking builds Integrity.**
- Chant or repeat mantra

**Self-study or *svadhyaya* is the study of scriptures** (The Bhagavad Gita, the Yoga Sutras, the Upanishads), the study of Om and other sacred Mantras while meditating upon them. It is said that as you meditate on a mantra you could see a symbol for the mantra at the third eye and each time you meditate on this symbol it enlivens your connection with the mantra. Om is not just a word; when chanted it encompasses all sound and all creation. You are part of this creation. Can you find yourself in the mantra of Self as the one creator and the one created?

**Self-study is also self study of the individual self.** Maybe we can say ego-self. We are here on Earth to learn, to love and evolve as humans to eventually release ourselves from the limitations of karma and become one with Self, or God or Karma, whatever your name is for higher power or Source. But to have oneness with Self you have to find the little self or the individual self and see your role in cosmic consciousness. Your individual self is not necessarily your physical form. It is your entire being that we are searching for and wanting to gain knowledge of. And it is from this knowledge and self awareness that we can then see what parts of self merge with Self.

**How to study your role in cosmic consciousness:**

- Study your natal astrology chart and pay attention to your transits. Watch your life flow with cosmic consciousness. Be in the flow, not against it.
- *Tarka* or reflection. Did you react to anyone today? From what past experiences do you see and react to life with? What thought patterns contribute to your constrictive karma and which thought patterns soften and remove unhappy attitudes.
- Vipassana meditation. In a meditative state watch your thoughts. Sit quietly in meditation and see what thoughts come into your mind space. If you are truly in meditation, you won't react to those thoughts but instead see them as thought forms that enter your mind space. You can then learn much about yourself and how those thoughts contribute to your life.

**Ishwara-Pranidhana is the fifth niyama and it means centering your life around God.** There is not one perception of God but God is good, loving and compassionate. And whatever your name of God is, your life should be devoted to that goodness and compassion. Here is a clear example of centering your life around God: Two friends are going to medical school to become a doctor. The one friend wants to become a doctor to make good money and because they think that everyone will think them a miracle worker. The other friend wants to go to medical school to become a doctor so that they can unselfishly help others when they are sick. It is this simple, devote your life to doing good. To sharing your gifts with others for the purpose of serving Life, not necessarily to gain anything! All the yamas and niyamas have led up to this last niyama. To devote your life to God-consciousness. Goswami Kriyananda says "Remember this thought: Whatsoever you do, do it gently and with love....and only after forethought. Whatsoever you do, seek out your own illumination with greater diligence! Om shanti, shanti, shantih".