

Week 5: Contemplation & Study Guide

Please listen to this week's class audio one more time.

What's Up for This Week

This week, we're completing the Sutras on the Yamas and Niyamas.

As always, the handout with all these sutras is available on the Student Page under Resources, which includes Pandit Rajmani's translation and transliteration, with full definitions of the Sanskrit, in case you didn't or couldn't purchase the book *The Practice of the Yoga Sutra*. We have also included his full commentary on Sutras 40-45, on the course page under this week. (My own commentaries are in the Class recording itself and are also included below as part of the Study Guide.)

My suggestion is that you read through this whole document, then work with one Niyama each day, and focus your contemplation on it. I also invite you to create your own commentaries, based on your contemplation and discussion (if you're working with a partner).

Practicing the Niyamas

This week, we'll be working with some of the Niyamas. We discussed Shaucha (Cleanliness) and Santosha (Contentment) on Wednesday night in some detail, and Tapas, Swadyaya and Ishwara Pranidhan in our first class on Kriya Yoga. I will include some questions to contemplate that you received in the homework for that week, since they bear revisiting (and because I know that there were more suggestions than most of you have fully explored in the time you had!) Please refer to that Study Guide for more contemplations on tapas, svadyaya, and Ishwara Pranidhan. Their extreme power and importance are indicated by the fact that Patanjali pulls them out of sequence, and begins Book II by pointing them out and describing them as the components of Kriya Yoga, the Yoga of Action.

The Assignment

Take one Niyama each day and spend half-an-hour—either during your normal meditation time or at a separate time—contemplating your own understanding and experience of this practice.

Make an intention that you will practice this Niyama consciously for the entire day.

Then spend the day consciously practicing with it—noticing how it operates in challenging situations, noticing your own reactions, and doing something to counteract the tendency.

The specific definitions, questions, and practices are on page 3.

The Sutras

Sutra 2:32

शौचसन्तोषतपःस्वाध्यायेश्वरप्रणिधानानि नियमाः ॥३२॥

śaucasantoṣatapaḥsvādhyāyeśvarapraṇidhānāni niyamāḥ | | 32 | |

Purity, contentment, austerity, self-study, and trustful surrender to Ishvara are the observances.

Sutra 2:33

वितर्कबाधने प्रतिपक्षभावनम् ॥३३॥

vitarkabādhane pratipakṣabhāvanam | | 33 | |

To arrest afflicting thoughts, cultivate thoughts opposed to them.

Sutra 2:34

वितर्का हिंसादयः कृतकारितानुमोदिता लोभक्रोधमोहपूर्वका मृदुमध्याधिमात्रा दुःखाज्ञानानन्तफला इति
प्रतिपक्षभावनम् ॥३४॥

vitarkā himsādayaḥ kṛtakāritānumoditā lobhakrodhamohapūrvakā mṛdumadhyādhimātrā
duḥkhājñānānantaphalā iti pratipakṣabhāvanam | | 34 | |

Violence and the others are afflicting thoughts. We put these thoughts into action by ourselves, through others, or by tacit consent. These thoughts are propelled by greed, anger, or confusion. They are mild, intermediate, or intense. We nullify these afflicting thoughts by realizing they bear unending fruit of pain and ignorance.

Questions, Contemplations, and Practices

During your meditation period, set aside half an hour to work with the Niyama of the Day.

- 1) Start by doing the preliminary practices, then spend 5 minutes doing the vertical meditation with Ham Sa.
- 2) Next, offer your practice with the Niyama to grace—or to the aspect of the divine with which you most connect!
- 3) Next, repeat the affirmation connected with the niyama out loud three times.
- 4) Then, practice with one of the contemplations below.
- 5) At the end, offer the practice to grace, to Goddess, or simply for the benefit of all beings.

To help your contemplation, I've suggested some questions and practices. Feel free to be as intuitive and creative as you want to be in exploring all this.

Journal about it, and discuss it with your partner. You and your partner might decide you want to work with one of the Yamas together.

Shaucha: Purity

Commentary: Cleanliness in yoga includes external cleanliness, internal physical cleanliness, internal cleanliness, and cleanliness of the mind. Just as cleaning your kitchen or bathroom is something you have to do regularly, so is cleaning your mind. So, part of the practice today is doing mental hygiene. One of the simplest ways of cleaning the mind is through mantra.

Today, besides showering, etcetera, I will consciously add a ritual element to the cleansing of my body, house or environment, considering that as I wash dishes, clean vegetables, dust or sweep, wash out my socks, etc., I will feel that I am cleaning samskaras from my mind.

- 1) Sitting with your journal, contemplate how you understand purity as it applies to your life right now. Are there ways you need to detox physically? How about mentally?
- 2) Without punishing yourself or removing taste from your life, and without getting obsessive about it, consider which foods you are eating that might be toxic for you, and eliminate them. Same with cleaning products and cosmetics.
- 3) Looking at your mental diet, consider what you are currently reading, watching, following on Twitter, and how this input affects your mind. Consider that just for today, if possible, do a news and social media fast, and watch how your mind reacts. If you can't do a full day, set aside a period in the day when you won't go online.

- 4) Ask yourself, how can I practice purity of speech today? As we were doing last week with Ahimsa, look into and see if you can reframe negative speech. Notice the ways in which you bond with people through gossip. Be aware of the input and output of your mind and speech.
- 5) Today, do a lot of mantra practice. Mantra is the most effective way there is of cleaning the mind. See if you can take a walk keeping mantra in the forefront of your mind. If possible, turn this day into a day of near constant mantra repetition, and see how it affects your mental state. If that isn't possible, spend time noticing when your mind is confused, upset, or simply busy, and use this as a signal to begin intense mantra repetition.
- 6) Practice the contemplation we did in class, allowing showers of light to flow through your body and into the earth, feeling that light is washing your body from within.
- 7) As negativities or disturbing thoughts or feelings arise, notice and accept that they are there. (Maybe even having the thought, "It's ok for me to have these feelings.") Then, without animosity, softly breathe them out with the thought "Let go". As you do this, have the feeling of kindness towards yourself and also to the negativity.

The fruits of practicing Shaucha: *"From purity arises the purity of our essential being, a positive mind, one pointedness, victory over the senses, and the qualification for having direct experience of the Self."* (Sutra 2:41)

Santosha: Contentment

A simple definition: Contentment is being happy with what we have, what we are doing, and what we are.

Affirmation: **Today, I practice keeping my mind contented, using every tool at my disposal.** (Repeat out loud three times)

Here's a Pro Tip for practicing contentment: Whatever you are about to do, offer the fruits of it. You might offer them to Goddess, to the universe, for the sake of the evolution of consciousness, or asking that it be of benefit to all beings. Allow this spirit of offering to gradually bring you the peace that letting go

Question: Notice the ways in which you allow discontentment to take over your mind, particularly in this time of Covid and its social or economic fallout. For instance, notice the characteristic "sutras of dissatisfaction" that you practice. For instance, "It's so boring not being able to eat out" "I miss my social life" and deeper ones like "I'll never be as smart as x" "That person doesn't like me" "I messed up again" "Why does she always do that?" "I can't believe I was so stupid". Also be aware of how hunger, lack of exercise, or other

physical sources of unease can affect your inner contentment and recognize when you can make yourself happier by taking care of a physical need.

Question: Do you associate contentment with complacency? Or with laziness? Consider the ways in which you might be denying yourself contentment.

Question: What are your favorite practices or thoughts for bringing yourself into a state of contentment? Try working with some of the classics, like “This too shall pass”, “When something is taken away, something new comes,” “I am protected,” or “Everything I need is given to me.” Or simply attending to the felt sense of the breath flowing in and out of your body. Which ones are really effective? Notice how every situation of may require a different intervention to bring you to contentment

Practices

Spend a few minutes during the day—several times—to practice these affirmations:

- Inhale with: I have enough.
- Exhale with: I do enough.
- Inhale with: I am enough.
- Exhale with: Nothing is lacking.

Make a point of noticing the moments when contentment is present. Stop and savor them. Build in moments of looking at the sky, breathing in presence, sitting quietly and savoring the breath for a moment or two between tasks.

From time to time, stop and practice this dharana: “My body is filled with bliss. I breathe in bliss. I breathe out bliss.”

Practice the Serenity Prayer: Please give me the serenity to accept what I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

For Partner Practice: Discuss with your partner the difference between contentment and complacency. How do you tell the difference?

Discuss your strategies for working with contentment during the pandemic and its allied challenges.

The fruit of practicing contentment: Unsurpassed happiness. (Sutra 2:42)

Tapas: Purposeful Effort

Simple definition: Literally, radiant heat. Tapas is targeted effort that creates inner power and radiance and overcomes impurities, done for the sake of attaining union with the Self or dissolving negativities.

Affirmation: Today, I practice at my edge. I intensify my practices by doing them with full attention, while making sure to do no harm to my body or over stress my mind.

I notice and work to recognize and overcome the resistance that arises.

Tapas is involved in all forms of yogic effort, so the practices above and from last week all fall under the heading of tapas.

Physical: Practices you do with the body, such as yoga, food discipline, and practicing purity, truthfulness, non-violence

Verbal: Speaking with clarity and truthfulness, guarding the gates of speech, abstaining from unnecessary criticism and harsh speech. Chanting

Mental: respecting your meditation time and sitting for the entire time you've set aside

Practicing japa, letting go of negative and obstructive thoughts, using the imagination to create positive mental content, noticing and working with resistance as it arises. (Working with resistance is the essence of tapas, so it's actually a good sign if we're experiencing some resistance—it's often a sign that we're practicing at our edge. Just don't hurt yourself—and this is where you need to practice discernment.

Working with Resistance

Set aside some time to notice the inner feeling of resistance and procrastination.

Imagine your resistance sitting in front of you.

Ask it, "What is behind the feelings of resistance?" "What can I do to ease these feelings of resistance?"

If what comes up is something like "I don't like this practice, do I have to do it?" experiment with different options. See if there is a practice you can substitute. Or consider simply doing it anyway, and monitoring the results. Many practices we resist actually turn out to benefit us, and once we realize that we can remind ourselves of the benefits in order to get ourselves to the mat.

Make a decision that you will move through resistance this week. What practice are you currently resisting that you can enter more deeply?

For other contemplations on Tapas, see the homework for Week 1.

Also, please read Pandit Rajmani's commentary on Sutra 2:43, which speaks about the esoteric practices of purifying the physical and subtle body for the attainment of particular siddhis that rejuvenate the body and mind.

The fruits of practicing Tapas: Tapas destroys impurities in the body and mind, including the Kleshas. From that comes yogic accomplishments (siddhis). (Sutra 2:43)

Svadyaya: Self-Study

Svadyaya is the study of sacred texts and practice of empowered mantras through chanting and recitation of such texts. This practice is called Self-Study because it puts you in touch with the qualities of the Great Self. I also include in Svadyaya the different types of self-inquiry practice (i.e., "Who am I?") as well as contemplations of your inner obstacles and other practices that increase self-awareness.

As your main study practice for this week, please read Pandit Rajmani's commentaries on Sutras 40-45, which are up in the Student Section of Course Webpage. Pay particular attention to the commentary on 2:45, which speaks about the fruits of Svadyaya.

And you can do two-in-one with Niyama practices by practicing a lot of mantra japa! I also recommend a couple of sessions of the Six Stanzas on Nirvana, that we practiced the first week.

Contemplation: Journal and discuss with your partner how mantra and study shift the currents of energy in your mind.

Contemplation: How has study of texts changed my life? Journal about this and/or discuss it with your partner

Contemplation: Choose a sutra from the Yoga Sutras to contemplate, using the process we gave you in Class 1 of this series.

The fruits of svadyaya: From Self-study comes the opportunity to be in the company of devas (beings of light). (Sutra 2:44)

In the commentary, Vyasa says: "Devas are the rishis (seers) and the Siddhas (perfected masters)."

Pandit Rajmani's commentary on 2:44 offers really good points on this sutra.

Sally's commentary: For me, as for many of you, mantra practice and serious study of non-dual text can literally give darshan. Those of you who've done Goddess practice with me over the years have experienced this in your own way, as practicing with, invoking, visualizing and repeating the mantras associated with particular Goddesses creates a distinct shift in awareness and also produces seemingly miraculous changes. Vyasa in his

commentary says baldly that when you deeply engage in these practices, the chosen deity or Guru will appear and grant your wishes. This has been my experience, especially when you realize that the “appearance of a sage, guru or deity may not be a visual experience, but may arise as a feeling, as an energetic experience, or as a palpable shift in your state.

This is particularly powerful when the mantra you are using is one you have been initiated into, and which is imbued by the shakti of a lineage. One reason why it is considered optimum to repeat one mantra for a long time is because this will deepen and cement your relationship with the subtle Presence at the heart of it.

Contemplation and Journaling: Consider and write about (or discuss with your partner) the experiences you’ve had of subtle energetic connections with particular deities or sages or gurus (including Christ, who for those of you who grew up Christian is the major example of such a being).

Ishwara Pranidhan

Definition: Trustful surrender to the Higher Power.

Please revisit the homework for Week 1, which includes some contemplations on Ishwara Pranidhan.

Contemplation and Question: What does it mean to you to surrender to Ishwara? (the Higher Power, the Tao, God, Shiva, Shakti, Reality, What Is, grace?) How do you conceive or feel into the meaning of this Presence that guides, protects etc?

Discuss this with your partner, or journal about it.

Walking-Around, Open-Eyed Practices to Play With:

- From time to time, ask “How can I align with grace in this moment?” Consider this a reset, and do it as many times a day as you remember.
- At the beginning and end of the day, and before starting any task (especially challenging ones), offer the results to Ishwara in whatever form you conceive It.
- Whenever you think of it, stop, breathe, and ask yourself “Is there any love present?” Notice any shifts that take place when you ask this question.
- Today, make a point of offering what you eat, watch, read, do, enjoy to Ishwara. Also make a point of offering your negativities and concerns. Does this practice give you a feeling of freedom?
- Hold the thought: “I offer my mind into the peaceful mind of God.”
- Hold the thought: “I offer myself, just as I am, with all my virtues and faults, into the hands of the divine. I ask that whatever needs to be transformed be alchemized by grace.”

The fruits of Ishwara Pranidhan: From trustful surrender to Ishwara comes samadhi (Sutra 2:45)

Definition: Whenever you practice offering yourself into the divine, you merge your own psyche with the higher Consciousness, with the higher love. As you do this again and again, you experience the feeling of being absorbed in the divine.

Question for Contemplation: Have you had this experience? What was it like?

In Sutras 2:33 and 2:34, Patanjali addresses the importance of directly opposing your Klesha-driven thoughts, which are the subtle ground for the negative actions that create karmic residue and suffering of various kinds. As you have probably noticed, throughout Book II he brings up the Kleshas again and again, pointing out (as Buddha does) that it is these afflictions that cause suffering, and that we can dissolve them through the Yamas and Niyamas, especially Tapas, Svadhyaya and Ishwara Pranidhan, and through meditation.

Sutra 2:33: To arrest afflicting thoughts, cultivate thoughts opposed to them (pratipaksha bhavana)

This is an ongoing practice, which we can get into the habit of turning back to whenever we feel out of sorts.

There are two approaches to this practice:

- 1) Vyasa and other classical commentators suggest that this is done by **reminding yourself of the negative effects of actions such as violence, greed, untruthfulness**. In other words, you teach yourself the dharma of understanding the fruits of negative actions. Hopefully, this practice won't bum you out too much, or get you caught up in free-floating guilt. It is really intended to make you conscious of the reason why it is important to be vigilant about your actions. Remind yourself that hurtful thoughts towards others hurt you first. Remind yourself that lying creates distrust both from others and towards yourself. Remind yourself that negative thinking creates suffering.
- 2) **The more modern method is to literally substitute positive thoughts for negative ones**. Depending on the situation and the thought that is disturbing your peace, you should feel free to get very creative with this, because as you probably know, it's extremely powerful as an open-eyed practice and will purify your mind over time.

If you want to do this with a current negativity or bad feeling, begin by:

- a. Acknowledging that it is present.

- b. Offering a counter thought that addresses the situation in the moment. For instance, if the thought is “I’m not a good mother” a counter thought might be, “I am a loving mother” or “I’m a good enough mother”. If the thought is “So and So doesn’t like me,” the counter thought might be, “Even if she doesn’t like me, there are many people who do.” Or even, “Actually, she does like me,” or “I’m ok with her not liking me; not everyone is going to love me.” You need to come up with the thoughts that actually help change your state in the moment.
- c. Then you could offer a divine thought, which can change the platform from which you are observing the situation. Such a thought might be, ‘All this is arising within consciousness.’ “There is nothing anywhere that is not divine,” or “There is nothing that is not made of Shakti” or “All beings are part of myself” or “I am seen and loved by the divine.” or “I offer all this into the peaceful mind of God.”

Contemplation: How can you use these two approaches to mind-transformation in tandem with each other? When is the first approach appropriate? When is working to substitute positive thoughts for negative ones appropriate?

Exercise: Come up with a repertoire of thoughts you can use to counter the issues that you come across regularly. Be creative in applying them. Decide that you won’t harbor painful thoughts, that instead you’ll acknowledge such thoughts when they arise, accept their presence, find out what is behind them, and then work to dissolve or change them with this or another method. This does not do away with the need for practical solutions to your life problems or issues. But it will over time transform the way you experience yourself. In other words, you will no longer be at the mercy of your own mind. This is the highest form of sanity, and one of the major steps towards enlightenment!

For more of the hard-core (and somewhat scary!) approach to Pratipaksha Bhavana, read Pandit Rajmani’s commentary on Sutra 2:36. That will be up on the website as well.

As you read it, remember that a) you are not expected to become perfect overnight, so be content with practicing one step at a time; b) Take the hard core and rather punitive ideas being expressed in Vyasa’s commentary here with a grain of salt. In other words, remember that the contemplative and meditative practices you are doing, along with your practice of the yamas and niyamas, are helping insure a good future for you and your loved ones. This is one of the promises of the Bhagavad Gita, among other enlightened texts of both the Hindu and Buddhist traditions. As Krishna says, “Even a little of (these) practices dissolves great obstructions.” In short, these are the practices for dissolving the Kleshas. And take it from me, this is not your first rodeo! You’ve been practicing for more than one lifetime, which is why you have so much wisdom and radiance—even when you think you don’t!