



Niyama Principle 1 SAUCHA (Purity and Cleanliness)

Niyama : Second limb of yoga consists five observances called Niyama.

Saucha (pronounced sow-cha) is the first of the five principles of *niyamas*. It means purity and cleanliness of body, mind, and spirit.

Practicing internal saucha is a way to purify our mind and spirit. Internal saucha is purity in seeing, purity in listening, and cleansing the mind of bad habits and emotions like desire, anger, and jealousy.

When our senses are pulled in certain directions, the mind follows, and so does our attention and energy. During the course of the day, most of us experience a constant, random flow of thoughts. The result is a lack of focus that leads us to lose control over our mental activity, ultimately leading to a loss of control of our actions and intentions. Devotion, self-study, and concentration are some of the methods to bring this random mental activity under control.

For example, if you are jealous of your friend, your mind will keep thinking of ways for you to display feelings of resentment towards your friend, either by means of rude behavior or inappropriate actions. Once you have behaved inappropriately or spoken bad words, you cannot take these acts back. How many times have you found yourself regretting your actions after the fact? Uncontrolled emotions destroy your ability to think rationally. When your thoughts and intentions are pure, your actions will be pure and you will do the right thing. A pure mind and heart can get closer to God much easier.

One important aspect of Saucha is the importance of the food we eat, the way we eat, and the effect that it has on our bodies. Food is meant to nourish and sustain the body so that our spiritual development may continue. Over-eating or avoidance of food can cause physical problems that may negatively affect spiritual development. A weak body cannot lead to or support a healthy mind. Maintaining a diet of fruits, vegetables, grains and dairy products from cows will lead to a healthy body, and thus a healthy mind.

Besides keeping our mind and spirit clean and pure, we also have to clean our body. When our physical bodies are clean, we feel more relaxed and readily able to focus on the path of Yoga. Distractions, disease and discomfort are less likely to present themselves when you follow hygienic practices. It also helps if the environment where you live and practices Yoga is clean and fresh so that your senses and your mind are not distracted.

How can we achieve Cleanliness of Body and Environment?

Achieving **cleanliness** can mean different thing to different people. For instance, when a little boy is told by his mother to wash his hands and face, he may think that holding his hand under a running faucet and wetting his lips is enough. But the mother knows better. She will take him back into the bathroom and scrubs his hands and face with plenty of soap and water – not withstanding his loud protests!



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Cleanliness can be thought of as being free from dirt, pollution, bad influence, clutter and bad thoughts. Cleanliness, however, is much more than outward appearance. It is an embrace of the ethic of sound living. It is also a state of mind and heart that involves our morals and worship.

Sri Satya Sai Baba once said, "A person might be an expert in any field of knowledge or a master of many material skills and accomplishments. But without inner cleanliness his brain is a desert waste."

Why should we maintain cleanliness and be clean?

1) Cleanliness makes you feel good.

Regardless of whether the feeling is your own or is inspired by your parents and elders, keeping your body, clothes, and home clean feels undeniably great. A hot shower, your favorite clean shirt, and a well organized house makes you feel ready to take on the world.

2) Cleanliness keeps your mind clear and your life organized.

If your house is a total disaster, your thinking is going to feel similarly disorganized. According to the concepts of Vaastu Shastra (an ancient Indian philosophy similar to Feng Shui), there is a natural connection between the order of your environment and the state of your mind. Clutter will weigh you down and stress you out. A clean, well-organized environment will lift your spirits.

3) Cleanliness gives you a good image.

How you present yourself in life is very important. If you, your clothes, or your house looks like a disheveled mess, people are inevitably going to judge your character and personality on such evidence. Perhaps that is unfair, but that is how the world works. How would you judge your friend who hasn't showered for 2 days and is all messy and smelly? Would you want to be near that person? If that can disgust you, the same thing can happen when you don't present yourself well. When you present a neat and clean appearance to others, they will respect you and think highly of you.

4) Cleanliness leads to beauty.

That which is neat, well-proportioned and symmetrical creates beauty and appeals to the eye. What attracts you better – a well kept and clean house or a house with clutter all around? When you clean your room, do you wish it was always that clean and appealing? Cleanliness appeals to everyone, whether it is personal cleanliness or a clean environment. As we transform our lives to be orderly and clean, we increase the amount of beauty in our lives.

Cleanliness in Practice

1) Establish a daily cleaning regimen.

The problem people have with keeping their home clean is that they let the clutter and dirt build up until cleaning seems like a huge task. Instead of waiting for this to happen, establish a 20 minute cleaning routine and resolve to perform it daily. Here's what you can do:

- When you come back home from school put your school bag, shoes and coats in their right places
- Put your dirty clothes in the hamper for wash and not on your bed or room floor



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- After your meals, put your dishes in the sink or dish washer
- After finishing your homework, put your books, pencil and other stationary that you use in its right place
- After playing with your games and toys put them where they belong. Do not leave them like a clutter on the floor or around the house
- Always keep your wardrobe and study table neat and clean by putting things back in order
- Help your parents with their chores
- Spend 5 minutes before you go to bed picking up any clutter that you see around the house

2) Don't dress like a slob

Take some pride in your appearance. People judge you by your appearance. Don't present yourself to people the way you wouldn't like to see other people. If your clothes need ironing, iron them. If your shoes need polishing, polish them. Always remember that dressing casual does not mean you can dress like a slob!

3) Basic grooming

To present a neat and clean appearance, here are some hygiene basics every one should adhere to:



- Shower regularly
- Trim your toe nails and finger nails regularly. For young ladies who love to have long nails, remember to clean and shape them regularly
- Clean your ears and nose regularly. Sometimes we don't realize it but we end up cleaning our nose in the public which can gross out people and ruin your image



- Brush your teeth and scrape your tongue twice a day to keep bad breath away. Remember, bad breath grosses out everyone including your loved ones



Majority of bad breath is not caused by the food that you eat, but rather originates from the back of your tongue. There, bacteria, decaying food particles, and even discharge from your nasal cavities, breed and emit a foul odor. Brushing your teeth alone won't get rid of it. The best way to clean your tongue is by using a tongue scraper.