

Lesson 4: Online Education in Yoga by Sri Prashant Iyengar

Namaskar, all of you

So, we are in the fourth session on education in yoga, education about yoga, education through yoga.

In the last session, I made a concluding remark that we'll be dealing with another major misconception prevalent in the world of yoga. That is the *yamas* and *niyamas* are moral ethical principles, they are moral ethical practises suggested by Patanjali. At the outset, let me make a statement that these are not moral ethical principles. Patanjali is not suggesting moral ethical norms to be practised. As a matter of fact, anyone, you and me, can also stipulate moral ethical principles to be practised, ethics, morality to be practised, in whatever realm of life. Why do we need Patanjali? So, therefore, we should know that Patanjali is not trying to suggest that moral ethical principles are the first step in yoga. Because of the fact of the matter is that if you want to get good human beings, morality and ethicality should be practised, by each and everyone, if we do not practise those, we are nothing but bi-footed animals.

One of the factors which keeps human beings as human beings is that the mankind practices morality, ethicality. And should be practised, whenever you do yoga or you do not yoga. Morality, ethicality must be practiced. Then, why Patanjali mentions *yamas* and *niyamas*? What is called as restraints and observances, then we know the 5 *yamas*, the 5 *niyamas*, and these are morality principles that anyone can instruct, anyone can suggest. But why I am taking the statement that these are not moral ethical principles is for simple reason that in the *dharsanic* convention, in the convention of the Indian philosophical system, there are set columns on which the expounder must to delineate. Now, when Patanjali comes to *ashtanga* yoga actually, the whole *ashtanga* yoga, you know, it is called as *dharma niti achara*, *dharma niti* aspects. *Achara dharma niti pranali*. So Patanjali has to offer something as basic principles of practices and *sadhanas*, and they are called *achara niti dharma pranali*. In English, that is rendered as ethical religious practices. Ethical religious practices are not only *yamas* and *niyamas*. All the eight aspects are included, and they are composing the entire *dharma achara niti pranali*. In English, again I repeat, although is a faulty rendition, ethical religious principles of yoga. Not only *yamas* and *niyamas*, but even *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana*, *samadhi*, they all compose the *achara dharma niti pranali* of Patanjali's system. So it's not just *yamas* and *niyamas*, but all the *ashtangas* are part of *achara dharma niti pranali*. Because these are all practices.

Therefore, *yamas* and *niyamas* are not moral ethical principles and practices. Because all the normative philosophers have suggested this. Many of them have on the top of the voice have told us, besieged us or sometimes by feat, that morality, ethicality must be practiced. But you go away, we can be told that we must be practiced morality, ethicality, but in the practicality of life, do we really practice it? Can we really practice it? Does it become major consideration for us? And therefore, all the heads of religions in the world have said about morality, ethicality that everyone should practice. But then, we know what does happen? So, we don't have to bring in Patanjali to tell us the same thing, that you must practice morality, ethicality. So even if you are not doing yoga, if you are in business of life activity, if you are in practicality of life, yet you must be practicing morality, ethicality. That would be, that should be actually a signature condition of a human being, a good human being. Otherwise you are bi-footed creatures. The point is, the ethical religious principles of Patanjali circumscribes all the *ashtangas* and not just the two, *yama* and *niyama*.

Now, what is ethical religious system? See in our convention we have philosophy and then we have what is called *tattvajñana*, and we have dharma, which is rendered as religion. So, in systems such as Patanjali, even the systems of *Kapila Samkhya*, *Kanada Vaisesika*, *Nyaya of Gautama*, or *Jaimini Mimamsa* or *Bhadra Mimamsa*, or any other philosophy, there are so many philosophies in Indian philosophical system, each one of those have mentioned something as dharma, *achara dharma niti pranali*, which again I repeat in English it is religion, which is not a proper rendition. So bear in mind *yamas ahimsa*, *yama* to *Samadhi* it is all ethical religious principles of yoga, it is not just *yamas*. And these are all *anga*, these are all limbs, they are all integral aspects. Don't need to say that *yamas* and *niyamas* are to practice out in society, not while one is practicing *asana*, *pranayama*, *dharana* and *dhyana*. So it is not only a social face, it doesn't have only a social face, that why you are in social situation that you must practice morality, ethicality. When you are isolated, and when you are going to do yoga, so there are *yamas* and *niyamas* in all the other aspects as well. Usually we bother about what is correct *asana* and what is correct *pranayama*, what is right *asana*, what is right *pranayama*. We don't try to understand what is *yama niyama of asana*, what is *yama*, *niyama of pranayama*? What is *yama*, *niyama*? How does it manifests in *asana*, *pranayama*, *dhyana*, *japa*? Guruji made it a point to explain all these things. He would explain you *yamas and niyamas* in your *Trikonasana*, he would explain you *ahimsa*, *sattya*, *asteya*, *brahmacharya*, *aparigraha* in *Trikonasana*, he would explain *sauca*, *santosa*, *tapas*, *svadhyaya*, *isvara pranidhana* in your *Trikonasa*, *tadasana*. We did not take clue that *yama niyamas* also come in *asanas*, *pranayama*, and in the

cheery of yoga, in philosophy of yoga they come after *Samadhi*, they will manifest differently. See what is your morality when you are out in your work place? And what is your morality when you are back home with your family? You have something called business ethics. Now, the business ethics comes only in business, but when we are out from business framework, you are back home; do you still have the same ethics that you practice in your business place? So, the ethics will be changing, with reference to your work place, your occupation, where you are, what are you doing? So there is one kind of ethics when you are in office place, another kind of ethics when you are in your business place, another kind of ethics when you are in your family, another kind of ethics when you are with your wife and children. So therefore again it is an open architecture. Similarly, that you have to see that *yamas* and *niyamas*, morality, ethicality comes differently in our *asanas*, *pranayama*, *dharana*, *dhyana*, *samadhi*, or whatever practices we are putting in, they will manifest differently, they will come differently. Are we studying it?

Now, as I just now said, that Indian philosophical system has something called as philosophy. What is this philosophy? Philosophy is that which diverges reality. A human being should be seeking realities and the philosophy is that which diverges reality. Then what is *dharma*? *Dharma* is that which helps one realise. Philosophy diverges, *tattvajñana* will diverge, and *dharma* will make you realise the realities. So all the practices of yoga, on any plane, body, mind, breath, senses, organs, psyche, consciousness, intellect, emotion, it is for truth seeking, and it is for realisation of the truth. So *dharma* is that which helps one realise the realities while philosophy will only diverges the realities. That is why *dharma* and *tattvajñanam* are important aspects in structuring Indian philosophical system. These are two major considerations in Indian philosophical system. As to, what is *tattvajñana*. What are realities? What are absolute realities? What are relative realities, absolute realities, ultimate realities? And then, *dharma* comes for one to realise, they are realised within oneself, inside, they are realised within, all the realities are realised within, and *dharma* comes for that purpose. That's why in English they call it ethical religious system. And notice that it includes from *ahimsa* to *asamprajnat samadhi*. We should break up all the *asthangas*, you have five of *yamas*, five of *niyamas*, then you have *asana*, then you have *pranayama* of three types, *BAHYA pranayama*, *ANTARA pranayama*, *STAMBANA pranayama*, then there is *pratyahara*, then there are *dharanas*, several kinds of *dharanas*, several kinds of *dhyanas*, which will come across in the text of yoga, and then there are *asamprajnata*, *samprajnata samadhis*. All put together are included in *achara dharma niti pranali*. *Achara dharma niti*. *Achara* is conduct, *niti dharma*, *niti* is ethics, ethicality.

And what is *dharma*? *Dharma*, if you have heard Guruji often said, what is *dharma*? *Dharma* is not religion, because religion is body of faith. You have to have faith in what religion postulate. So it is locus, any religion in the world is locus for faith. Where people will place their faith, they believe in it, they will believe in it. So in other words, religion is sustained by a mankind. If nobody believes in that religion, if nobody absolutely believes in that religion, would it stay on? It won't stay on. So religion is sustained by its followers. Religion is sustained by those who places faith, those who invests faith in it. They sustain the religion. So religions need to be sustained.

What about *dharma*? Etymological meaning of *dharma*, which comes from single letter root, or DRU. DRU, means to sustain. So *dharma* is that which sustains us and religion is that which we sustain. Mankind sustains the religion and *dharma* is that which sustains us. How does it do this? You have often heard from Guruji, which is a very popular, famous, definition of *dharma*. One who is falling, one who has fallen, one who is about to fall, one who may fall; the one, which sustains that person, is a *dharma*. So *dharma* sustains the falling person, the fallen person. So that is what the *dharma* is. Therefore it is not proper to translate *dharma* as religion and religion as *dharma*. *Dharma* is a cult, any *dharma* is a cult, and religion is not a cult. *Dharma* is not a cult. *Dharma* is there for nonliving things. Do we have a religion for nonliving things? The religion only comes from mankind, even it doesn't come to some humans, religion does not come to animals, cattle, bees, insects, worms, wolves; there is no religion to them. However they have a *dharma*. Why? Because *dharma* is a wider concept. Let us not mix up with religion and *dharma*, let us not call religion as *dharma* and *dharma* as religion. Let us look at that *dharma* as to what *dharma* is. When it comes to *dharma*, there is something called as *swabhava dharma*, *guna-dharma*. So the vernacular people would be familiar with this *guna-dharma*. *Guna-dharma* comes to even inner matters. There is *dharma* to element of earth, element of water, element of air, element of fire, element of space. They all have *dharma*. What is that? They are inherent characteristic, intrinsic characteristic, inherent characteristic in their *dharma*, is that *guna-dharma*. So all matters have *guna-dharma*. The word *dharma* has come there. They will never give it up. The earthness of earth will never be separated, the wateriness of the water from water will never be separated, so water has wateriness, earth has earthness, air has airness, fire has fireness, space has spaceness. That is their *dharma*, that is their *guna-dharma*. So even they have *dharma* in the form of *guna-dharma*. They are all inert yet they have *dharma*, which is called *guna-dharma*. And so far when living creatures are concerned they have *swabhava dharma*. So this word is also one who is familiar with it, vernaculars, *swabhava dharma*. The *swabhava*

dharma is there even for bacteria, insect, worm, bird, animals, cattles, beasts. They all have *swabhava dharma*. If they give up their *swabhava dharma* they will not be sustained, they will perish. If the snake or cobra gives up snakesness or cobraness, it will perish. If the tiger or lion give up tigerness or lioness, they will perish. So if they divorce with their *dharma* they will cease to exist. So they will have their *swabhava dharma*. The tiger must be having tigerness, lion must be having lioness, the snake must be having snakesness, cobra must be having cobraness, and insect must be having insectness. Sparrow, if a sparrow gives up sparrowness, you know sparrow is a very timid bird, it is a small tiny bird, and a timid bird, if it gives up timidity, and it will perish. So if a sparrow gives up timidity, it will perish. If it maintains timidity, it will flourish. So the timidity of sparrow sustains the sparrow. That is *swabhava dharma* of the sparrow. So *dharma* is there for even creatures. There is no religion to creatures, there is *dharma* to creatures. There is no religion to inert matters, but there is *dharma* to inert matters. So let us not confuse between religion and *dharma*.

Comment on mankind. For mankind, what is *dharma*? *Dharma* is duty mindedness. If you want to get better human being, you must be duty aware, you must be having duty consciousness; you must be duty conscious, you must be having duty conscious. If you don't have it, you are not human being, at part, let us not see the exaltation. So we will fall from being human beings if we don't have duty mindedness. So duty mindedness is *dharma*. So for mankind it is mentioned something called as *swabhava dharma*. Each one of us has a *swabhava*, personalized life characteristics. And we live by that, we trial by that. So *swabhava dharma* comes to man notion, human being. Then *Nyaya dharma*, there are several bounden duties. Without reference to type, space, situation we must to head to it. A good human being will not compromise there, one who is not a good human being will compromise in time, space, situation. The duty mindedness about one's bounden duties what is called *Nyaya dharma*. That cannot be left aside, in any situation, in any scenario. Then there is something called *vihita dharma*, *hita* means good. Attending to what is good for me. Sometimes what is right to me is also relative. Because I am here, this is right for me to do, had I not been here, doing this would have not been right. So there are relative aspects, we have the intelligence to identify that I must do this here, this is my duty here. This is my duty now and here. This is my duty because it is in this time space I am now. Therefore, it is a bounden duty for me. Had I not been in this time and space dimension, then it would not been there as duty. So mankind is given the intelligence to ascertain what is my right duty now. That is called *Vihita dharma*, which will be good for me. So *Vihita dharma* tells us about what is good for you where and when, either does that.

Nyaya dharma, what it is good for you, and not only good but also right for you anywhere, anytime, any situation. So that is what *dharma* is. So in *ashtanga* yoga you should know what is outer duty, what is my absolute duty by being in any practices of yoga, could be *asana*, *pranayama*, meditation, *dhyana*, whatever you might be calling it. And what is my duty because of the condition I am in. I have this condition; therefore, it is my duty to do this. Have the condition will be different; I would have had another duty identifying. So you must have this flexibility accord to *dharma*. What is right, and what is good. You must be able to make a proper blend of good and right. Nearly going for good, will not be ultimately good. Nearly going for right you also will not be ultimately good. So it is out of stage, like a cloth is a fabric, of horizontal vertical weaves. *Dharma* says you must have weave of *nyaya dharma* - *vihita dharma*. *Nyaya*, bounden duty. *Vihita*, which is based on relative facts, relative conditions. So absolute conditions and relative conditions, both have to be considered and then there is a weave. So it is not just moral ethical principle that you usually identify *yamas* and *niyamas*. It is circumscribing the entire *ashtanga* yoga. That is why *ashtanga* yoga is called ethical religious practices, ethical religious principles of yoga, and not just *yamas* and *niyamas*.

So let's try to reform our idea about *yamas* and *niyamas*. Finally I say in case of morality ethicality, whether you are in yoga or not in yoga, whether you do yoga or whether you don't do yoga, should you not be in morality ethicality framework? Is there any scope to break that framework? Is it good to be breaking the framework of morality ethicality? Therefore, that works without saying. Now when something works without saying, why should Patanjali say that? That's why Patanjali doesn't say that. But you have wrongly conceived *yamas* and *niyamas* as moral ethical principles, which all the religions heads, all the normative sciences have described advocated. But we know very well that all that is in vain. Patanjali doesn't want to do that, he doesn't do it. So try to have reconsideration of what are *yamas* and what are *niyamas*. If they have to be coming in, not only in social reference, but also in personal reference, and to myself, while in *asanas*, or higher practices, what are the parameters of morality, ethicality. It is one parameter in *asanas*, another parameter in *dhyana*, meditation. So that's how *yamas* and *niyamas* have come. It is not that morality ethicality number one, then *asanas*, then *pranayama*, then *pratyahara*, then *dharana*, then *dhyana*, then *Samadhi*. If you construct that way it's a lack of education. That's why I am telling you get educated, let us get educated about the precepts and the treatise of Patanjali. So the entire *ashtanga* yoga is ethical religious principle, roughly translated I don't approve of

it, that is in the modern language, whereas in the classical language *achara dharma niti pranali*. *Acara* is your conduct. How do you conduct, how do you have your conduct when you practice *asanas*, practicing pranayama, practicing *dharana*, *dhyana*, *samadhi*? So we should know the distinction here. Like how do you conduct yourself out on the streets, out in society, and back home, and when you are totally isolated in your own bedroom. Let me observe that morality and ethicality they don't come when you are isolated? It is a form of morality ethicality when you are into yourself. It is another different form of morality ethicality when you are out in society. So let's try to reconsider this. Let's try to do some brushing on our idea, notion, concept of *yamas* and *niyamas*. I think that should be enough for this lesson. *Namaskar*.

You spoke about religion and *dharma*, and you differentiated that. A lot of students have questions about... can you differentiate *karma* and *dharma*. It's a question that commonly comes to you. Is this the temple wisdom or is it a separate lesson?

Yes, we do it

Here comes a question to distinguish between *karma* and *dharma*. See *dharma* as I said it is conduct, what is your conduct? Can you see that conduct is totally different from my act? *Karma* is your act. And the conduct gives a framework, a culture to your *karma*. So *karma* is what you do. *Dharma* will tell you what you should do. What you should do, what is right, what is correct, and what is good for you, ultimately. Which I so said about *vihita karma*; *vihita karma* tells you what is ultimately good. So when you are in *karma*, this perspective must be taken into consideration that what I do it should be ultimately good, if not immediately good. So ultimate good must be considered while you are in *karma*, in any act. That's why the joint word is *karma-dharma* is a joint word. *Karma* is also constituted by your intrinsic *gunas*, *sattva*, *raja*, *tama*, *gunakarma*. So *karma* has *sattva*, *raja*, *tama*; *dharma* too has *sattva*, *raja*, *tama*. So the combination of *karmadharma* will be coming here. Your *dharma* will depend upon your disposition, your calibre consciousness, calibre conscious calibre, on a lower calibration of your conscious you think something is right, something is perfect, but when you come out up from there, then you understand what I deemed right was not really right. So there will be uprisal when you go on higher level of consciousness, so *karmadharma* again these are deep. *Dharma* is all pervasive within us because it is sustaining us. And the *karma* is also incessant thing. You will all the time be in *karma*. If we look at the precept that comes in *Bhagavad Gita*, not even a moment would pass in *a-karma*, not even a moment would pass in non-doing, in non-act, some kind of act would be going on. Even if you are fast sleep, some act is going on. If it is not your act, something in you is

active. Your heart is functioning, your lungs are functioning; your autonomous system is functioning; so your things are functioning and are you not accountable for your things? Therefore you are in *karma*, even when you are fast sleep. Because autonomous system is functioning, digestion is functioning, metabolism is functioning, they are all yours, so you can't say I won't take responsibility for mine, I will be only responsible for me and not mine. Like the parents are responsible for their children, we are responsible for ours, our body, our mind, our autonomous system, our involuntary system. The *karma* doesn't leave you even on the point of death. Because when there is that point, on the point of death, I often said that busiest moment in one's life is the last breath. Because the trade balance of our karmas will be drawn, balance sheet will be drawn, and you will decide at that moment where you are going to head based on our karmas in that life and that will be immediately giving passage for transmigration. Our passages commence right away from our death, from the moment of death. You are busy, you know, what is called as astrological migrations, transmigrations. So like immigration like thing in the international journeys, here there is transmigration, so you will be busy in that, the vehicle to be going, where to be going, destination where to be going, so ticket should be shown at the point of death, visa will be given on the point of death, passport will be shown on the point of death, and we will be proceeding right from our moment of death, immediately we proceed for astrological movements. So even there doesn't stop for activity. Comatose, doesn't stop, we are unconscious but still we are living. If we are living, autonomous system is functioning; breathing is going on, some function is going on, *karma* doesn't leave us, even for a moment.

Karma will be going on constantly. How do we carry out *karma*? Unless we are sustained we won't be carrying out *karma*. We must be sustained, we must be living, if we don't live, how are you going to carry out your *karma*? So *dharma* gives you sustain. And beyond your sustain the *karma* is on, so *dharma karma* are again well related. Therefore, in *karma*, if we are *dharma* consciousness, what is right for me, what is ultimately good for me? If this consideration is there, our *karma* will be reformulated. The peggy thing like selfishness will not creep in, will not spoil the *karma*, otherwise they can all spoil our *karma* if there are material motives, selfish motives, self centric motives, then that's going to spoil our culture of *karma*, *dharma* will not allow that, therefore *karmadharmas* are mutually related. Again it is a weaved edge, like a textile, horizontal vertical threads, it's a weaved edge, weaver *dharma karma* again and again. If the weave is not proper, the clothe is not strong. So if the weave of the two is not proper, our life is not proper, not strong, so the weave must be proper, that's why *dharma* and *karma* are again, should be considered in a joint manner, composite

manner, because *achara* is *dharma*, *achara parmo dharma*, *achara* is your conduct, conduct means what you do. Therefore they are very much related to each other.

Hope that is sufficient. Thank you.