



SAUCHA - PURITY



"When your body is cleansed, your mind purified and your senses are controlled, the joyful awareness that is needed to realise the inner self also comes." - Raja Yoga Sutras 2-41

Saucha: physical and mental purification Hatha yoga is often misunderstood to be a cult of the body. However, whilst yoga does not view your body as evil, neither is it intended to glorify your physical body. In his classical "Yoga Sutras", Patanjali takes every opportunity to remind you that your body is the essential vehicle of your soul on its journey towards perfection. He suggests that all yoga practitioners practice "saucha", i.e. purification of your body, mind and environment. As the first of Patanjali's ethical guidelines that recommend the most advantageous ways of relating to your own self (niyama), saucha is purification on all levels. It includes the physical cleanliness of bathing your body, maintaining an orderly home, eating healthy food and drinking clean water. It also involves mental clarity and speech that refrains from emotionally-charged obsessions and addictions. Saucha is a pre-condition for experiencing the fullness of yoga and attaining enlightenment. The practice of saucha enables you to select wisely from the many choices of food, emotions, and thoughts waiting to enter into your body and mind. As your body becomes purified, you will probably notice that your health is improving. As your mind becomes purified, you will most likely find yourself feeling increasingly clear, friendly and cheerful. Saucha is not only the foundation for health of your body and mind, it is also an essential doorway to deeper states of meditation. Saucha assists your physical and energetic bodies, enabling them to better release accumulated tensions, toxins and waste materials that hinder the healthy flow of blood, oxygen and prana. A prerequisite of good health is good circulation. Similarly, the regular practice of purification of your mind and emotions lessens psychological and sensory distractions. You become better at letting go of the mental clutter that has come about through your attachments to past experiences, demands of your body and anticipation of future events. Asanas, performed with a conscious relaxed breath, have a cleansing affect on your mind and calm your emotions. Pranayama is especially effective in helping you to cleanse your mental/emotional sheath, which is why a daily programme of kapalabhati and anuloma viloma is strongly suggested. Purify your intellect through regular meditation and ongoing study. Purify your karma by establishing a regular practice of yoga and meditation. This enables you to "burn" your karma more quickly and efficiently. Cleanliness and order lift your self-esteem, reinforce your knowledge that you are worthy of good experiences, and improve your self-awareness. Your intentions are clearer, unencumbered by gross and subtle imbalances. The reverence you bring to your daily life and the cleanliness you practice reinforces your sense of sacredness. It is no coincidence that Gandhi worked so hard at sanitation efforts in both South Africa and India. Without purity of body and mind, spiritual clarity will tend to elude you. The immensity and luminosity of your true self and your connection to spirit and to others becomes clouded.





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The transparency you cultivate by the practice of saucha enables you to reflect the divine more completely in all your relationships. It is worth the effort to find time each day to practice the observance of saucha and to express gratitude for your ability to do so. However, it is important to remember that saucha is only a technique, not the goal of yoga and meditation. It is best to not allow yourself to become so obsessed with cleansing that you destroy your body's natural ability to cleanse itself, ex: washing hair daily, excessive fasting.

Some suggestions for integrating the practice of Saucha into your daily life Learn yoga kriyas, such as neti, from a qualified teacher. Practice them on a regular basis. Make a resolve to straighten your desk/kitchen/work area each day before you leave it. If your living space is overly cluttered, prepare a bag for the charity shop. Every day, put one item into it. When the bag is full, drop it off at the charity shop and prepare another bag. Resolve to clean out at least one drawer or cupboard each week. Each week, eliminate **ONLY** one potentially negative item from your diet. Daily note the effect (if any) on your body and mind. Then try adding the item back into your diet and see if it has any effect. If not, don't worry about that item. o Resolve to say what you mean. Watch yourself, your thoughts as well as your actions, as though you are an objective observer. Notice how transparent you are. Learn and practice yoga kriyas, such as neti and kapalabhati on a daily basis. Start a Journal. Choose one or more of the following questions to work with. Write each question at the top of a separate page in your journal. Each morning, sit for at least 10 minutes and write down whatever comes to mind - don't be your own editor - just write! If you have a meditation practice, it is best to sit just after you have finished your meditation. What do my home and work area say about the state of my mind"? How do I relate to my body? Do I actually experience my body as the temple of my soul? What eating habits could I change to make my mind more clear and light? How could I better cleanse my thoughts and emotions so that my true self could shine through?. In what ways could I simplify my life? How else might I enhance the practice of saucha in my life? Not all of these questions necessarily apply to you. The opportunity to practice saucha arises every day. Regular practice clears and cultivates your physical, mental and emotional palate.

Be at peace and see a clear pattern and plan running through our lives...nothing is by chance.

