

## Scholar Time

A Multidisciplinary Journal of Research and  
Development

Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, & Indexed Journal

ISSN: 2581-6489



Research Article

Open Access

# ROLE OF YAMA AND NIYAMAS IN MENTAL, EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH

Kumari Seema<sup>1</sup>, Kavita Vats<sup>2</sup>,

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Physical Education, Shyama Prasad Mukherji College for  
Women, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Physical Education, Shyama Prasad Mukherji College  
for Women, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

**Corresponding Author:** Kumari Seema

seemakumari@spm.du.ac.in

## Article Information

**Received:** 07 July 2026

**Revised:** 20 August 2026

**Accepted:** 25 August 2026

**Published:** 10 September 2026

**Vol. Issue. Year** Vol. 9|Issue 9| 2026| Pages: 1-13

## How to Cite

Kumari, S., & Vats, K. (2026). Role of Yamas and Niyamas in Mental, Emotional and Spiritual Health. *Scholar Time: A Multidisciplinary Journal of Research and Development*, Volume(9), Issue (9) pages.1-13

## Copyright

©2026 The Authors. Published by Scholar Time. This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0).<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.en>

# ROLE OF YAMA AND NIYAMAS IN MENTAL, EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH

Kumari Seema<sup>1</sup>, Kavita Vats<sup>2</sup>,

## Abstract

Yama and Niyama are the first two limbs of the eightfold path of Yoga described in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. They provide an ethical and behavioural foundation for the development of a balanced and disciplined personality. While Yama primarily concerns one's relationship with others and the external world, Niyama emphasizes personal discipline, self-purification, and inner development. The five Yamas—Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya, and Aparigraha—and the five Niyamas—Shaucha, Santosha, Tapas, Svadhyaya, and Ishvara Pranidhan—can be understood as practical principles for promoting psychological stability, emotional regulation, self-awareness, and spiritual growth. In contemporary life, individuals frequently experience stress, anxiety, emotional instability, interpersonal conflicts, materialistic pressures, and a lack of inner purpose. The systematic practice of Yama and Niyama can provide a framework for responding to these challenges through non-violence, truthfulness, contentment, self-discipline, self-study, and surrender to a higher principle. This article examines the role of Yama and Niyama in mental, emotional, and spiritual health and explains their relevance to modern health and well-being.

**Keywords:** Yama, Niyama, Yoga, mental health, emotional health, spiritual health, Patanjali, well-being, self-discipline.

## 1 Introduction

Health is a multidimensional concept that extends beyond the absence of physical disease. A truly healthy individual requires harmony among physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions of life. Modern lifestyles are characterized by academic and occupational pressures, competition, social comparison, digital dependency, uncertainty, and changing family and social relationships. These conditions can affect psychological well-being and may contribute to stress, anxiety, anger, dissatisfaction, loneliness, and emotional exhaustion. Consequently, there is increasing interest in holistic approaches that can promote not only physical fitness but also mental balance, emotional stability, and a meaningful life.

Yoga provides a comprehensive philosophy and practical system for achieving harmony between body, mind, behaviour, and consciousness. In the classical Yoga tradition, Maharishi Patanjali described an eight-limbed path consisting of Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi. Yama and Niyama occupy the first two positions because ethical conduct and personal discipline are considered fundamental for higher yogic development. They are not merely religious rules or moral restrictions; rather, they can be interpreted as practical principles for regulating behaviour, thoughts, desires, relationships, and attitudes.

Yama refers primarily to restraints or ethical principles governing an individual's interaction with other people and the surrounding world. Niyama refers to observances or personal disciplines that guide an individual's relationship with oneself. Together, they establish a foundation for psychological discipline and inner harmony. Their importance is particularly

relevant to mental, emotional, and spiritual health because they encourage individuals to examine their thoughts, regulate their reactions, develop healthy relationships, reduce unnecessary desires, and cultivate inner awareness.

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Study Design

The present study was conducted as a structured literature review to examine the role of Yama and Niyamas in promoting mental, emotional, and spiritual health. The review focused on scholarly literature addressing the philosophical foundations of Yama and Niyama, their psychological and emotional implications, and their potential contribution to holistic health and well-being. The review process was structured and reported in accordance with the principles of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) to enhance transparency in the identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion of relevant literature.

### 2.2 Review Question

The review was guided by the following central research question: *What is the role of Yama and Niyamas in promoting mental, emotional, and spiritual health?*

The review also examined how the individual principles of Yama and Niyama, namely Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya, Aparigraha, Shaucha, Santosha, Tapas, Svadhyaya, and Ishvara Pranidhana, have been discussed in relation to psychological well-being, emotional regulation, self-awareness, resilience, inner peace, meaning, and spiritual development.

### 2.3 Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted using major electronic databases and scholarly search platforms relevant to health sciences, psychology, yoga, complementary medicine, and interdisciplinary research. The databases and scholarly sources considered for the review included PubMed/MEDLINE, Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and JSTOR. Additional relevant publications were identified through manual screening of the reference lists of eligible articles and relevant review papers.

The search strategy was developed using combinations of keywords and Boolean operators. The principal search terms included “Yama,” “Niyama,” “Yamas and Niyamas,” “Patanjali Yoga,” “Yoga philosophy,” “Ahimsa,” “Satya,” “Asteya,” “Brahmacharya,” “Aparigraha,” “Shaucha,” “Santosha,” “Tapas,” “Svadhyaya,” “Ishvara Pranidhana,” “mental health,” “psychological well-being,” “emotional health,” “emotional regulation,” “stress,” “anxiety,” “resilience,” “spiritual health,” “spiritual well-being,” “inner peace,” and “quality of life.”

The search terms were combined using Boolean operators such as AND and OR to broaden or narrow the retrieval of relevant literature. A representative search string was formulated as follows:

```
(Yama OR Yamas OR Niyama OR Niyamas OR "Yama and Niyama") AND  
(Yoga OR "Patanjali Yoga" OR "Yoga philosophy") AND  
("mental health" OR "mental well-being" OR "psychological well-being"  
OR  
"emotional health" OR "emotional regulation" OR stress OR anxiety OR  
"spiritual health" OR "spiritual well-being")
```

Database-specific modifications were made where necessary to accommodate differences in indexing systems and search syntax. The search covered literature published from the earliest

available records to August 2026. Both empirical studies and theoretically relevant scholarly publications were considered when they directly contributed to understanding the relationship between Yama and Niyama and mental, emotional, or spiritual health.

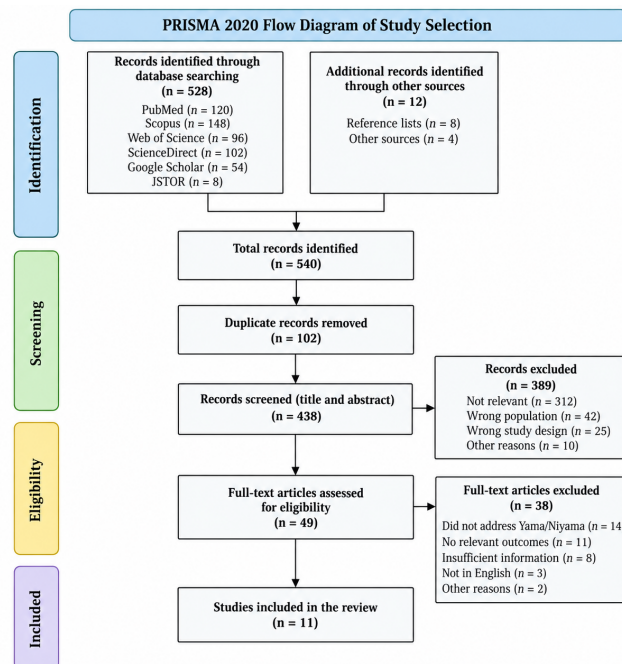


Figure 1: PRISMA 2020 flow diagram illustrating the study selection process.

## 2.4 Eligibility Criteria

Studies were considered eligible when they met predefined inclusion criteria. Articles were included if they discussed Yama, Niyama, or one or more of their individual principles in relation to mental health, psychological well-being, emotional health, emotional regulation, stress, anxiety, resilience, spiritual well-being, consciousness, meaning, or holistic health. Empirical research, qualitative studies, observational studies, intervention studies, systematic reviews, theoretical papers, and relevant scholarly literature were considered when they provided meaningful evidence or conceptual understanding related to the research question. Studies were excluded when they did not address Yama or Niyama, were unrelated to mental, emotional, or spiritual health, consisted solely of unrelated physical-health interventions, were duplicate publications, lacked sufficient information for interpretation, or were not available in English. Editorials, advertisements, opinion pieces without a scholarly basis, and publications unrelated to the objectives of the review were also excluded.

## 2.5 Study Selection Process

All records identified through electronic database searches were compiled and screened for duplication. Duplicate records were removed before the screening process. The remaining records were initially screened based on their titles and abstracts. Articles that appeared potentially relevant were retrieved for full-text assessment. The full texts were subsequently evaluated against the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The study-selection process consisted of sequential stages including identification, duplicate removal, title and abstract screening, full-text eligibility assessment, and final inclusion. Where uncertainty existed regarding eligibility, the article was examined in greater detail against the

review question and predefined eligibility criteria. Reasons for exclusion at the full-text stage were documented to maintain transparency and reproducibility.

The complete study-selection process was presented using a PRISMA 2020 flow diagram.

## **2.6 Data Extraction**

Data were extracted systematically from the studies that met the inclusion criteria. The extracted information included author and publication year, country or geographical setting, study design, sample or population characteristics where applicable, type or dimension of Yama/Niyama examined, principal outcome or health dimension investigated, major findings, and conclusions relevant to mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

Particular attention was given to identifying evidence concerning the psychological and health-related implications of non-violence, truthfulness, non-possessiveness, moderation, contentment, self-discipline, self-study, and surrender or acceptance. The findings were organized according to three principal domains: mental health, emotional health, and spiritual health.

## **2.7 Quality Assessment of Included Studies**

The methodological quality of the included studies was assessed using appropriate Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) critical appraisal tools according to the design of each individual study. Design-specific appraisal tools were selected for empirical studies, including randomized controlled trials, quasi-experimental studies, cohort studies, cross-sectional studies, qualitative studies, and other relevant study designs.

Each applicable criterion was assessed as “Yes,” “No,” “Unclear,” or “Not Applicable,” as appropriate. The assessment considered important methodological characteristics, including clarity of the research question, appropriateness of the study design, participant selection, measurement of variables, identification and management of confounding factors, completeness of outcome reporting, and appropriateness of statistical or qualitative analysis.

Conceptual, philosophical, or textual studies that did not employ an empirical research design were assessed qualitatively with respect to their relevance, scholarly contribution, conceptual clarity, and applicability to the review question. Such studies were not subjected to empirical risk-of-bias assessment tools that were inappropriate for their design.

## **2.8 Quality Assessment Classification**

For descriptive interpretation, the methodological quality of empirical studies was classified according to the proportion of applicable appraisal criteria satisfied. Studies satisfying 75% or more of the applicable criteria were categorized as having high methodological quality, studies satisfying 50–74% were considered to have moderate methodological quality, and studies satisfying less than 50% were considered to have low methodological quality.

This classification was used to facilitate interpretation and comparison of the available evidence and was not considered a substitute for the individual criterion-level appraisal.

## **2.9 Synthesis of Evidence**

Because the included literature contained heterogeneous study designs, populations, outcomes, and conceptual approaches, the findings were synthesized narratively rather than subjected to statistical meta-analysis. The evidence was organized into three major thematic domains: mental health, emotional health, and spiritual health.

Within the mental-health domain, the synthesis focused on psychological well-being, stress management, anxiety, concentration, self-regulation, and mental clarity. The emotional-health domain considered emotional regulation, compassion, anger management, interpersonal

relationships, resilience, acceptance, and contentment. The spiritual-health domain examined meaning and purpose, self-awareness, inner peace, detachment, connectedness, and the development of a deeper understanding of self and existence.

The individual Yamas and Niyamas were subsequently examined within these domains to identify common patterns, potential mechanisms, and areas where evidence remains limited. Where findings were consistent across studies, the evidence was summarized thematically. Where findings differed, possible explanations related to study design, population, intervention characteristics, and conceptual interpretation were considered.

## **2.10 Reporting of the Review**

The review was reported in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 framework. The number of records identified, screened, excluded, assessed for eligibility, and included was documented through the PRISMA flow diagram. Reasons for exclusion at the full-text stage were also recorded.

The methodological approach was designed to provide a transparent and reproducible synthesis of the available literature while recognizing the interdisciplinary nature of Yama and Niyama research, which encompasses yoga philosophy, psychology, health sciences, education, spirituality, and complementary and integrative health.

## **3 Concept of Yama and Niyama**

The concept of Yama and Niyama is presented in the second chapter of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. Yama consists of five ethical principles: Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya, and Aparigraha. These principles regulate an individual's conduct toward others and the environment. They encourage non-violence, honesty, respect for others' possessions and rights, responsible management of energy and desires, and freedom from excessive attachment or possessiveness.

Niyama consists of five personal observances: Shaucha, Santosha, Tapas, Svadhyaya, and Ishvara Pranidhana. These principles focus on cleanliness, contentment, discipline, self-study, and surrender to a higher reality. Whereas Yama helps regulate external behaviour, Niyama helps cultivate internal discipline. The distinction should not be considered absolute because ethical behaviour and personal development influence each other continuously.

From the perspective of health education, Yama and Niyama may therefore be understood as a behavioural and psychological framework. Their practice can encourage individuals to develop constructive habits, regulate negative emotions, strengthen self-control, improve interpersonal relationships, and develop a sense of purpose. These effects are closely associated with mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

### **3.1 Role of Ahimsa in Mental and Emotional Health**

Ahimsa means non-violence or non-harming. It extends beyond refraining from physical violence and includes avoiding unnecessary harm through speech, thoughts, attitudes, and actions. A person practicing Ahimsa attempts to cultivate compassion, kindness, tolerance, and respect toward other living beings.

Ahimsa can contribute to mental health by reducing hostility, aggression, resentment, and persistent negative thinking. Anger and hatred can consume considerable mental energy and may disturb concentration and psychological equilibrium. Developing a non-violent attitude encourages individuals to respond to difficult situations with greater patience rather than immediately reacting with aggression. This may help reduce interpersonal conflicts and promote a more peaceful mental state.

Ahimsa is equally important for emotional health because it encourages compassion toward oneself and others. Self-directed criticism, guilt, and negative self-talk can become sources of emotional distress. When Ahimsa is applied to oneself, individuals learn to recognize personal limitations without excessive self-condemnation. In relationships, it promotes empathy and respectful communication. Thus, Ahimsa can contribute to emotional maturity by transforming aggressive reactions into understanding and constructive responses.

From a spiritual perspective, Ahimsa encourages recognition of the interconnectedness of life. When an individual develops respect and compassion for other beings, the narrow focus on personal interests may gradually expand. This can promote a sense of connectedness, harmony, and inner peace.

### **3.2 Role of Satya in Mental and Emotional Health**

Satya means truthfulness. It involves honesty in thought, speech, and action while simultaneously recognizing that truth should be expressed responsibly and without causing unnecessary harm. Truthfulness requires an individual to face reality rather than continuously creating false explanations or hiding behind deception.

Dishonesty can produce psychological tension because an individual may need to maintain different versions of reality for different people or situations. Continuous concealment, fear of being exposed, and internal contradiction may increase mental stress. Practicing Satya encourages psychological congruence, in which thoughts, words, and actions become more consistent. This can promote clarity and reduce unnecessary mental conflict.

Satya also supports emotional health by encouraging individuals to acknowledge their genuine feelings. Emotional suppression or denial may prevent people from understanding the causes of their distress. Honest self-reflection allows individuals to recognize emotions such as anger, fear, jealousy, disappointment, and sadness and deal with them constructively. However, Satya does not imply expressing every thought without consideration. Truthfulness combined with compassion encourages responsible communication.

Spiritually, Satya encourages the individual to move toward a deeper understanding of reality. It promotes authenticity and reduces dependence on false identities created for social approval. The movement from external appearance toward inner truth can become an important component of spiritual development.

### **3.3 Role of Asteya in Mental and Emotional Health**

Asteya means non-stealing. At the obvious level, it refers to not taking what belongs to another person. However, its broader meaning includes respecting the time, energy, opportunities, ideas, and rights of others. It also encourages individuals to overcome unnecessary comparison and dissatisfaction with what others possess.

Mental dissatisfaction often develops when individuals constantly compare themselves with others. Social comparison can generate feelings of inferiority, jealousy, inadequacy, and frustration. The principle of Asteya encourages respect for what belongs to others while developing appreciation for one's own resources and abilities. This can reduce unnecessary comparison and contribute to psychological stability.

Asteya also has an important emotional dimension. Jealousy and envy can disturb relationships and create emotional dissatisfaction. By developing respect for others' achievements rather than feeling threatened by them, individuals can develop healthier social relationships. The practice may also encourage gratitude and cooperation.

From a spiritual perspective, Asteya challenges the belief that personal fulfilment depends entirely on acquiring what others possess. It redirects attention from external accumulation toward inner development. This shift can support a deeper understanding of sufficiency and

personal growth.

### **3.4 Role of Brahmacharya in Mental and Emotional Health**

Brahmacharya is traditionally associated with moderation, responsible use of energy, and appropriate regulation of sensual and sexual impulses. Its broader interpretation involves directing one's physical, emotional, and mental energy toward constructive purposes rather than allowing impulses to dominate behaviour.

In modern life, individuals are continuously exposed to stimulating information, entertainment, advertising, and digital content. Excessive stimulation can interfere with concentration and self-regulation. Brahmacharya, understood as moderation, encourages individuals to develop conscious control over their attention, desires, and habits. This may support concentration and mental discipline.

Emotionally, responsible management of desires can help individuals avoid impulsive decisions and unhealthy dependencies. The principle does not necessarily require suppression of natural desires; rather, it emphasizes awareness, balance, and responsible expression. A balanced approach to relationships and sexuality can contribute to emotional stability, mutual respect, and healthier interpersonal relationships.

Spiritually, Brahmacharya represents the transformation and appropriate direction of personal energy. Instead of allowing energy to be consumed entirely by sensory gratification, the individual learns to direct attention toward knowledge, creativity, service, meditation, and self-development.

### **3.5 Role of Aparigraha in Mental and Emotional Health**

Aparigraha means non-possessiveness or freedom from excessive accumulation and attachment. It encourages individuals to use material resources responsibly without allowing possessions to become the primary source of identity or happiness.

Materialistic competition can create continuous dissatisfaction because individuals may always desire something more. Aparigraha encourages people to distinguish between genuine needs and unnecessary wants. Reducing excessive attachment to possessions can lessen anxiety associated with acquiring, protecting, and comparing material goods.

The emotional significance of Aparigraha is particularly important. Excessive attachment can generate fear of loss, jealousy, insecurity, and emotional dependence. Learning to accept change and impermanence can promote psychological flexibility. A person who is less dependent on external possessions or social status may experience greater emotional freedom.

Spiritually, Aparigraha encourages detachment and simplicity. It allows individuals to recognize that material possessions are temporary and that lasting well-being cannot depend exclusively on external acquisition. This attitude can create greater space for reflection, gratitude, service, and spiritual inquiry.

### **3.6 Role of Shaucha in Mental and Emotional Health**

Shaucha means cleanliness or purity. It traditionally includes physical cleanliness as well as purity of thoughts, speech, habits, and surroundings. Cleanliness can have psychological significance because the physical environment can influence attention, organization, and perceived control.

A disciplined and clean environment may reduce unnecessary distractions and support mental clarity. Similarly, cultivating healthier patterns of thinking can help individuals become aware of destructive mental habits. Shaucha therefore represents a broader process of purification involving both external and internal aspects of life.

Emotionally, Shaucha can be understood as developing healthier emotional habits. Individuals

can learn to recognize resentment, hostility, excessive jealousy, and destructive thought patterns and gradually replace them with constructive attitudes. Spiritually, purification prepares the mind for deeper concentration and contemplation by reducing unnecessary disturbances.

### **3.7 Role of Santosha in Mental and Emotional Health**

Santosha means contentment. It does not mean abandoning ambition or refusing to improve one's circumstances. Instead, it refers to developing the ability to appreciate the present while continuing to make constructive efforts toward personal development.

Santosha has direct relevance to mental health because chronic dissatisfaction can create continuous psychological pressure. Individuals may constantly compare their achievements, appearance, income, relationships, or social status with those of others. Such comparison can produce a feeling that one's present life is never sufficient. Contentment helps interrupt this cycle by encouraging appreciation of what is already available.

Emotionally, Santosha can promote gratitude and acceptance. Acceptance does not mean passivity; rather, it means recognizing the present situation clearly without excessive resistance before deciding what constructive action should be taken. This attitude can contribute to emotional resilience during periods of difficulty.

From a spiritual perspective, Santosha shifts the source of well-being from external circumstances toward inner balance. It encourages the realization that lasting satisfaction cannot be achieved solely through continuous acquisition. This can support inner peace and spiritual maturity.

### **3.8 Role of Tapas in Mental and Emotional Health**

Tapas refers to disciplined effort, austerity, perseverance, and the willingness to undergo temporary difficulty for a meaningful purpose. In contemporary terms, it can be interpreted as self-discipline and sustained commitment to constructive habits.

Mental health requires the ability to maintain beneficial behaviours even when motivation is low. Tapas encourages consistency and perseverance. Whether an individual is developing a meditation practice, maintaining physical activity, studying, controlling unhealthy habits, or pursuing a long-term goal, discipline is essential. The development of self-regulation can strengthen confidence and a sense of personal efficacy.

Emotionally, Tapas teaches individuals that temporary discomfort does not necessarily indicate failure. Difficult emotions and challenging circumstances can be approached with patience rather than immediate avoidance. This may contribute to resilience and emotional maturity. Spiritually, disciplined practice helps prepare the individual for deeper concentration and self-awareness.

### **3.9 Role of Svadhyaya in Mental and Emotional Health**

Svadhyaya means self-study or study of the self. Traditionally, it includes the study of sacred texts as well as examination of one's own thoughts, emotions, behaviours, and motivations. It encourages reflective awareness rather than automatic living.

Self-awareness is fundamental to mental health. An individual who understands personal thoughts, triggers, habits, strengths, and weaknesses is better positioned to regulate behaviour and make informed decisions. Svadhyaya encourages people to observe their internal experiences rather than being completely controlled by them.

The emotional importance of self-study is equally significant. Emotional reactions often have underlying causes that may not be immediately apparent. Through reflection, individuals can identify recurring patterns such as anger in response to criticism, anxiety about failure, or jealousy arising from comparison. Recognizing these patterns creates an opportunity for

constructive change.

Spiritually, Svadhyaya encourages inquiry into fundamental questions about identity, purpose, values, and the nature of consciousness. It moves the individual from merely accumulating external knowledge toward understanding the self.

### **3.10 Role of Ishvara Pranidhana in Mental and Emotional Health**

Ishvara Pranidhana means surrender or dedication to Ishvara, commonly understood as a higher reality, divine principle, or higher purpose. The concept does not necessarily require a particular religious interpretation. It can also be understood as developing humility and recognizing that individuals do not have complete control over every aspect of life.

Mental distress can sometimes arise from an excessive need to control uncertain outcomes. Ishvara Pranidhana encourages individuals to make sincere efforts while accepting that some results are beyond personal control. This attitude can reduce excessive attachment to outcomes and may promote psychological flexibility.

Emotionally, surrender can help individuals cope with disappointment, uncertainty, and loss. It encourages acceptance without eliminating responsibility. A person can continue making appropriate efforts while developing greater acceptance of outcomes. Spiritually, Ishvara Pranidhana represents a movement from ego-centred existence toward humility, devotion, trust, and a sense of connection with something greater than the individual self.

## **4 Yama and Niyama as a Framework for Mental Health**

When considered collectively, Yama and Niyama provide a comprehensive framework for psychological development. Yama regulates interpersonal behaviour, while Niyama develops personal discipline. Ahimsa reduces aggression, Satya encourages authenticity, Asteya reduces jealousy and excessive comparison, Brahmacharya promotes moderation, and Aparigraha encourages detachment. Similarly, Shaucha promotes purity and order, Santosha develops contentment, Tapas strengthens discipline, Svadhyaya promotes self-awareness, and Ishvara Pranidhana cultivates humility and acceptance.

These principles can be viewed as preventive approaches to mental and emotional disturbance. Rather than addressing psychological problems only after they emerge, they encourage individuals to develop habits that may reduce common sources of distress. Interpersonal conflict, excessive desire, dishonesty, poor self-control, chronic dissatisfaction, and lack of self-awareness can all contribute to psychological difficulties. Yama and Niyama directly address many of these behavioural and cognitive patterns.

### **4.1 Role in Emotional Regulation**

Emotional regulation refers to the ability to understand, manage, and appropriately express emotional responses. Yama and Niyama can support emotional regulation by encouraging individuals to pause before reacting, examine their motivations, and select constructive responses.

For example, Ahimsa encourages a non-aggressive response to anger, Satya encourages honest recognition of feelings, Santosha reduces excessive dissatisfaction, Tapas develops tolerance for temporary discomfort, and Svadhyaya promotes awareness of emotional patterns. Together, these principles encourage individuals to become observers of their emotional experiences rather than being completely controlled by them.

This process is particularly important in stressful situations. Instead of immediately responding to criticism with anger or responding to failure with hopelessness, the individual can recognize the emotional reaction, understand its source, and choose a more appropriate response. Thus,

Yama and Niyama may contribute to emotional resilience and psychological maturity.

## **4.2 Role in Spiritual Health**

Spiritual health involves meaning, purpose, values, inner peace, connectedness, and a sense of relationship with something greater than oneself. It does not necessarily depend on a particular religious belief. From the yogic perspective, spiritual development involves moving beyond excessive identification with external circumstances and developing awareness of one's deeper nature.

Yama and Niyama provide the ethical and behavioural foundation for this development. Without behavioural discipline, higher practices such as concentration and meditation may become difficult. Ethical living reduces interpersonal conflict and internal guilt, while personal observances create discipline and self-awareness. Through Svadhyaya and Ishvara Pranidhana, the individual gradually develops deeper reflection concerning identity, purpose, and existence. The spiritual contribution of these principles can therefore be understood as a gradual movement from external control toward inner awareness. The individual learns that happiness and meaning cannot depend entirely on possessions, status, recognition, or sensory gratification. This can lead toward greater simplicity, humility, compassion, and inner peace.

## **4.3 Relevance in Contemporary Life**

The principles of Yama and Niyama remain relevant despite originating in an ancient philosophical tradition. Contemporary society has produced new forms of psychological pressure, including excessive digital consumption, social-media comparison, consumerism, information overload, and constant performance expectations. These challenges can be examined through the lens of the ten principles.

Aparigraha can encourage responsible consumption in a materialistic society. Santosha can provide an alternative to constant comparison and dissatisfaction. Brahmacharya can be interpreted as responsible management of attention and digital stimulation. Ahimsa can guide respectful online and offline communication. Satya can encourage responsible communication in an environment where misinformation is widespread. Svadhyaya can promote reflection on one's digital habits, emotional reactions, and personal values.

In this way, Yama and Niyama are not limited to traditional yogic settings. They can be adapted as principles of conscious living and health promotion in educational institutions, workplaces, families, and communities.

## **5 Yama and Niyama in Education**

Educational institutions can use the principles of Yama and Niyama to support holistic student development. Education is not limited to academic achievement; it also involves character development, emotional intelligence, social responsibility, and personal well-being.

Students can be encouraged to practice Ahimsa through respectful relationships, Satya through academic honesty, Asteya through respect for others' work, Brahmacharya through balanced use of time and energy, and Aparigraha through responsible consumption. Shaucha can promote cleanliness and healthy habits, Santosha can encourage gratitude, Tapas can develop perseverance, Svadhyaya can encourage self-reflection, and Ishvara Pranidhana can promote humility and a sense of purpose.

Such an approach can contribute to creating educational environments that emphasize not only intellectual development but also emotional and ethical maturity.

## 6 Conclusion

Yama and Niyama constitute an important foundation of the classical Yoga system and provide a comprehensive framework for personal and social well-being. Their significance extends beyond physical yoga practices because they address the attitudes, behaviours, desires, relationships, and values that influence an individual's psychological and spiritual life.

The five Yamas—Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya, and Aparigraha—encourage non-violence, truthfulness, respect, moderation, and non-possessiveness. The five Niyamas—Shaucha, Santosha, Tapas, Svadhyaya, and Ishvara Pranidhana—promote cleanliness, contentment, discipline, self-awareness, and surrender to a higher principle. Together, these practices can support mental clarity, emotional regulation, interpersonal harmony, resilience, self-awareness, and spiritual development.

In the contemporary context, Yama and Niyama can be understood as practical principles of conscious and balanced living. They do not replace professional mental-health care when such care is required, but they may serve as valuable components of a broader approach to health promotion and personal development. Their enduring value lies in their emphasis on transforming not only what an individual does, but also how an individual thinks, feels, relates to others, and understands the purpose of life.

## Acknowledgements

None.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest associated with this article.

## Use of Artificial Intelligence

The authors declare that artificial intelligence tools were used for language improvement and/or formatting assistance. The authors take full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, interpretation, and final content of the article.

## Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

## ORCID iDs

Kumari Seema: 0009-0005-9862-3840

Kavita Vats: 0009-0003-0175-1068

## References

- Adele, B. (2018). Yoga and psychological well-being: An integrative perspective. *Journal of Yoga and Holistic Health*, 6(2), 45–53.
- Anand, S., & Rao, P. (2020). Ethical foundations of yoga and their relevance to contemporary life. *International Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 12(1), 25–34.
- Arora, R. (2019). Yama and niyama: Ethical principles for mental well-being. *Journal of Indian Thought and Culture*, 8(3), 61–69.
- Baer, R. A. (2015). *Practicing mindfulness: 75 essential meditations*. New Harbinger Publications.
- Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(4), 822–848.
- Chopra, D., & Simon, D. (2004). *The seven spiritual laws of yoga*. Wiley.
- Deshpande, S. (2017). Yoga, self-discipline, and emotional regulation: A philosophical approach. *Indian Journal of Psychology*, 42(2), 115–123.
- Feuerstein, G. (2011). *The yoga tradition: Its history, literature, philosophy and practices*. Hohm Press.
- Goleman, D., & Davidson, R. J. (2017). *Altered traits: Science reveals how meditation changes your mind, brain, and body*. Avery.
- Iyengar, B. K. S. (2005). *Light on life: The yoga journey to wholeness, inner peace, and ultimate freedom*. Rodale.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (1994). *Wherever you go, there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life*. Hyperion.
- Kirkwood, G., Rampes, H., Tuffrey, V., Richardson, J., Pilkington, K., & Ramaratnam, S. (2005). Yoga for anxiety: A systematic review of the research.

- British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 39(12), 884–891.
- Kumar, K., & Singh, R. (2019). Yogic practices and emotional balance among university students. *International Journal of Yoga and Allied Sciences*, 8(1), 32–39.
- Lasater, J. H. (2000). The heart of yoga ethics: Living the yamas and niyamas. *Yoga Journal*, 162, 90–97.
- Madanmohan, M., & Mahadevan, S. K. (2012). Yoga and its influence on mental and emotional health. *Indian Journal of Physiology and Pharmacology*, 56(3), 223–230.
- McCall, T. (2007). *Yoga as medicine: The yogic prescription for health and healing*. Bantam Books.
- Nagarathna, R., Nagendra, H. R., & Monroe, R. (2019). *Yoga for common ailments*. Specialty Yoga Publications.
- Nair, A. K. (2018). Ethical living and spiritual development through the eight limbs of yoga. *Journal of Indian Philosophy and Religion*, 15(2), 77–86.
- Nisargadatta, M. (1973). *I am that: Talks with Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj*. Chetana.
- Patanjali. (2009). *The yoga sutras of Patanjali* (E. F. Bryant, Trans.). North Point Press.
- Radhakrishnan, S. (2008). *Indian philosophy*. Oxford University Press.
- Ross, A., & Thomas, S. (2010). The health benefits of yoga and exercise: A review of comparison studies. *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, 16(1), 3–12.
- Satchidananda, S. (2012). *The yoga sutras of Patanjali*. Integral Yoga Publications.
- Smith, C. A., Hancock, H., Blake-Mortimer, J., & Eckert, K. (2007). A randomised comparative trial of yoga and relaxation to reduce stress and anxiety. *Complementary Therapies in Medicine*, 15(2), 77–83.
- Woodyard, C. (2011). Exploring the therapeutic effects of yoga and its ability to increase quality of life. *International Journal of Yoga*, 4(2), 49–54.