

Diet
Shatkarmas
and
Amaroli

Yogic Nutrition & Cleansing
for
Health and Spirit

Yogani

From The AYP Enlightenment Series

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Amaroli
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All things in moderation...

Introduction

While the methods of Yoga are many, its underlying principle is very simple. The human body is a doorway between our outer world and a boundless inner realm of peace, love and creative energy. When the doorway has been opened through effective spiritual practices, health, productivity and happiness in daily life are the natural result.

Diet, Shatkarmas and Amaroli provides practical instruction on a range of approaches and techniques that can supplement a daily routine of core yoga practices including deep meditation and spinal breathing pranayama. Once we have begun to cultivate our inner silence, we will naturally be moved to undertake additional means that can enhance our inner purification and opening. The foods we eat and methods we can use for cleansing and rejuvenating the body will naturally receive more attention. Hence, this small volume.

Here we will take a close look at nearly everything we put into our body, as well as what comes out of it, with an eye toward promoting good health, while focusing on time-tested methods for cultivating human spiritual transformation. Happily, the cultivation of both health and spirit are served by the same means.

This is not a *diet book*, not in the way such books are normally thought of – providing specific guidelines on what to eat and not eat according to a fixed ideology designed to fit everyone. Life is not that simple. We all have different needs at different times in our life. This is especially true for those involved in yoga practices, where the inner neurobiology is in constant change toward greater openings. The diet will change accordingly, as will the need for cleansing techniques and other practices. This book is designed to provide useful information

on diet and cleansing methods to aid spiritual practitioners in making wise choices on their chosen path.

The AYP Enlightenment Series is an endeavor to present the most effective methods of spiritual practice in a series of easy-to-read books that anyone can use to gain practical results immediately and over the long term. Since its beginnings in 2003, *Advanced Yoga Practices (AYP)* has been an experiment to see just how much can be conveyed in writing, with much more detail provided on practices than in the spiritual writings of the past.

Can books provide us the specific means necessary to tread the path to enlightenment, or do we have to surrender at the feet of a *guru* to find our salvation? Well, clearly we must surrender to something, even if it is to our own innate potential to live a freer and happier life. If we are able to do that, and maintain regular practice, then books like this one can come alive and instruct us in the ways of human spiritual transformation. If the reader is ready and the book is worthy, amazing things can happen.

While one person's name is given as the author of this book, it is actually a distillation of the efforts of thousands of practitioners over thousands of years. This is one person's attempt to simplify and make practical the spiritual methods that many have demonstrated throughout history. All who have gone before have my deepest gratitude, as do the many I am privileged to be in touch with in the present who continue to practice with dedication and good results.

I hope you will find this book to be a useful resource as you travel along your chosen path.

Practice wisely, and enjoy!

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 – You are the City of God	1
A Branch of Yoga called “Purity”	3
Nine Gates of the Body	6
The Call from Within	7
Chapter 2 – Yogic Diet	11
Are We What We Eat?	11
Diet and Health.....	13
Diet, Spiritual Development and Kundalini	24
Food Preparation and Consumption	31
Eating Habits, Addictions and Flights of Fancy	33
Fasting	40
The Body-Mind-Spirit Connection.....	45
Chapter 3 – Shatkarmas for Cleansing	47
Bodily Purification and Enlightenment	48
Cleansing of Mouth, Nasal Passages and Sinuses	51
Colon Cleansing	56
Intestinal Wash.....	59
More Shatkarmas.....	60
Chapter 4 – Amaroli – Inner Rejuvenation	69
How to do Amaroli – Urine Therapy.....	70
Enhancing the Subtle Biology for Inner Silence	73
Additional Aspects of Amaroli.....	75
Chapter 5 – Putting It All Together	81
The Ecstatic Body	83
Self-Pacing in Practices.....	84
Stillness in Action	87
Appendix – Ayurveda Diet Guidelines	91
Further Reading and Support	103

Chapter 1 – You are the City of God

Human beings have remarkable capabilities for achieving what has been called *spiritual experience*. No one is excluded from this possibility. For those who wish to open the inner door, a wondrous world awaits. We don't have to go further than the functioning of our own heart, mind and body. Through these seemingly common aspects of our everyday existence, the infinite can be unfolded from within us. We only need apply some effective methods, or practices.

Thanks to the work of innumerable seekers and sages over thousands of years, there is a wide range of spiritual practices available to us today. Experience has shown that some of these practices are of greater importance than others, mainly because they stimulate fundamental changes within us, which serve as the foundation for subsequent practices and experiences. So there is a logical order of practices that we find can lead us on a logical course of development through the maze of our unfoldment. It is not nearly as difficult as it sounds, assuming we are willing to put the most important practices in place first. From these, everything else will flow more or less automatically.

In the *Advanced Yoga Practices* (AYP) system, we begin with a short, twice-daily routine of *deep meditation*. Within a few weeks or months after learning deep meditation, we can add *spinal breathing pranayama*, which is performed right before our meditation sittings. These two practices constitute the core of the AYP approach. They cultivate two qualities in us that form the foundation for all subsequent practices, and the rise of profound and unending spiritual experience interwoven with our everyday life. Deep meditation cultivates the quality of inner silence, or stillness. Spinal breathing pranayama cultivates the quality of ecstatic

conductivity, the flow of divine energy within our body and beyond. With these two aspects of our inner nature rising, a range of other practices can be applied with an effectiveness that will greatly expand our experience. These practices include *samyama*, *asanas*, *mudras*, *bandhas*, *self inquiry*, and *tantric sexual methods*, all of which are covered in the AYP writings.

In addition to these practices, some which are quite exotic and formerly esoteric, we also consider the seemingly more mundane aspects of our daily living – what we eat and how we keep our body clean and functioning to best support our health and spiritual development. In the matters of diet and inner cleansing, particular methods can be applied which have been demonstrated to be effective, especially during certain stages of our inner development.

While diet and inner cleansing techniques have most often been thought of in terms of achieving and maintaining good health and longevity, we will take a different angle here. We will view health and longevity as side effects, or the fringe benefits, of sound spiritual practices and progress. Indeed, physical health is a natural outcome from spiritual health.

It has been said that the human body is the *City of God*. For all to be well in the city, it is necessary to begin at the central source with core practices, and then stimulate and regulate the flow of energy throughout the city in a way that will assure growth to the highest level of functioning. Much of this process is automatic, a product of our natural inner evolution. With spiritual methods, we stimulate this natural process. This is how we will consider diet and inner cleansing methods.

A Branch of Yoga called “Purity”

Yoga is one of the most comprehensive systems of spiritual practice that has been handed down to us over the centuries. Yoga means “union,” or “to join.” The methods of yoga facilitate the union, or joining, of our inner and outer nature, the joining of the divine and worldly aspects of us. This is why we often refer to the human nervous system as the doorway between this world and the divine. All we have to do is open the door, and we can live a divine life here on earth. There is no need to go away to the mountain top. No need to quit our job, give away our possessions, or leave our family. As we apply the methods of yoga for a few minutes each day, we can go on just as before, only being much happier and effective in our daily life. This is the real benefit of yoga.

The traditional system of yoga is described in the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, and consists of eight limbs:

- **Yama** (restraints)
- **Niyama** (observances)
- **Asana** (postures)
- **Pranayama** (breathing techniques)
- **Pratyahara** (introversion of the senses)
- **Dharana** (attention on an object)
- **Dhyana** (meditation – dissolving the object)
- **Samadhi** (absorption in pure consciousness)

The combined use of the last three limbs of yoga with a particular technique called *samyama* yields what we call *stillness in action* in daily living.

The first two limbs of yoga, *yama (restraints)* and *niyama (observances)*, constitute what we call the *codes of conduct*. It is similar to what we find in all of the spiritual traditions of the world – “don’t do this,” “do this,” etc.

The restraints and observances include:

- **Yama** (restraints) – ahimsa (non-violence), satya (truthfulness), asteya (non-stealing), brahmacharya (preservation and cultivation of sexual energy) and aparigraha (non-covetousness).
- **Niyama** (observances) – saucha (purity), samtosa (contentment), tapas (heat/focus/austerity), svadhyaya (study of spiritual writings and self) and isvara pranidhana (surrender to the divine).

Note that *saucha* (purity) is the first observance. This is where we find the principles of diet and shatkarmas (bodily cleansing techniques). Saucha is the branch of yoga that deals with the aspects of conduct that receive a lot of attention in our modern world. Many of us live in a culture that is obsessed with diet and the physical body. In yoga, saucha is important. Yet it is but one branch in the broad spectrum of our practices.

While many traditional approaches to teaching yoga regard yama (restraints) and niyama (observances) as prerequisites for beginning practices further down the list of the eight limbs, some other teachings (including AYP) do not take this view. Yama and niyama can also be regarded as effects in an integrated approach to engaging in practices, beginning with deep meditation, pranayama, postures and other methods, irrespective of our adherence (or not) to the conduct guidelines of yama and niyama.

When an integrated approach to practices is taken, yama and niyama are found to be arising naturally as effects.

This occurs through a quality within everyone that we call the *connectedness of yoga*. In other words, one practice used as *cause* will beget other practices as *effect*. The deeper the practice we use as

cause, the more profoundly will additional limbs of yoga be stimulated. And so it goes.

If we begin with deep meditation and spinal breathing pranayama as core practices, then we will find aspects of practice contained within yama and niyama rising naturally as effects. These effects will then add further causes to our practice routine, much more so than if we had taken on the methods of yama and niyama alone at the beginning.

This has great significance when considering diet and inner cleansing methods. If we utilize the yogic principles of diet and cleansing methods as a result of rising inner silence and ecstatic conductivity cultivated within us via deep meditation and spinal breathing pranayama, we stand to gain much more. On the other hand, if we force the issue of conduct by blindly adhering to external rules, we can create more obstacles to our spiritual progress than we will remove, in the form of forced behaviors and increasing self-judgment. If our conduct in matters of diet and inner cleansing methods is coming naturally from within, rather than enforced from outside, then we stand to gain much more from the measures presented in this book.

A wise approach to engaging in the practices here is to become grounded in the core practices of deep meditation and spinal breathing pranayama first. Then the principles of saucha (purity and cleanliness) will be rising from within us naturally.

In the AYP approach to practices, we devote selective attention to yama and niyama, as necessary, to support a quick start in deep meditation, spinal breathing pranayama and other practices. Then the yamas and niyamas will be greatly boosted by these powerful practices and will blossom naturally.

Does this mean we do not concern ourselves with diet at all in our life? Of course not. What it means is that we cannot find health or happiness through forced conduct. The best approach is to avoid

extremes and take all things in moderation, *favoring* the measures we know will bring us greater health and happiness. Over time, our path will become more clear, and we can let our conduct in these matters shift gradually according to our intuition, which will be steadily rising with our inner silence and ecstatic conductivity, as we continue with our yoga practices.

Along the way, our inner perception will become very refined, and we will learn to listen to our body and follow its lead in many things, including diet and inner cleansing. At some point, we may also find ourselves naturally considering the controversial practice of *amaroli* (urine therapy), a powerful rejuvenation technique, which relates to both diet and inner cleansing.

Nine Gates of the Body

In the ancient lore of yoga, the *City of God* analogy is taken a step further. The City is said to have *nine gates*. These are the natural orifices of the human body, which include two eyes, two nostrils, two ears, the mouth, the urethra and the anus. To take both genders fully into account, which they did not do very well in the old days, we should mention that a woman has ten gates (adding the vagina). It will not make much of a difference in the methods described in this book, though it does in other areas of yoga, particularly *tantra*.

Here, we are concerned with the nourishment of the body and with cultivating the inner energies. On the physical level, it is about what goes in and what comes out. On a more subtle level it is about supporting purification and opening in the subtlest strata of our neurobiology. We will look at eating that way – *diet*. We will look at the cleansing techniques that way – *shatkarmas*. And we will also look at the recycling of urine in the body that way – *amaroli*. All of it is aimed at supporting what we call the rise of *ecstatic conductivity* in the nervous system. As such,

the practices will be to support specific neurobiological connections, including:

- **Mouth, Urethra and Anus** – in relation to the neurobiology of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract.
- **Nasal Passages, Eyes and Ears** – in relation to the neurobiology of the brain and spinal nerve.

By influencing the flow of energy and/or nourishment through these gates, we can greatly assist the rise of ecstatic conductivity throughout the entire nervous system.

These measures, along with the rest of the practices covered in the *AYP Enlightenment Series*, will aid the continuing expansion of inner silence and ecstatic conductivity, leading to refinement of all of our sensory perceptions and experiences. It will happen as we engage in the practices of diet, shatkarmas and amaroli in a natural way, when we are called to them from within.

The Call from Within

What is it that moves us to make a change in our diet, or to undertake a yoga practice that we might have considered to be a bit strange before? Why change anything in our living habits at all?

The most common reasons why we make such changes is because of how we feel. In other words, it is for our health and wellbeing that we are most often moved to make changes in our diet and other aspects of our routine. It is cause and effect.

If we are overweight and feel poorly, one the first things we will do is try and find the will to lose some weight. A multi-billion dollar industry has grown up around this simple urge to feel better. In addition, we might not feel so good because our body lacks physical exercise. When the body sags, so do the mind and the emotions. So, another multi-billion

dollar industry has grown up around physical exercise.

All we would like is to feel better, to feel whole!

And what does it mean to feel whole? Obviously, if we take it on the physical level only, it means to be healthy and in good physical condition – diet and exercise.

Yet, someday we will get old. No matter how well we eat or how much we exercise, we will eventually be fading away physically. That is life on this earth. We are born, we live for however long our time allows, and we die. Is that all there is? If so, there is no need to read further, because a healthy lifestyle alone will be enough to achieve our fifty or one hundred years, and there are plenty of places we can find advice in those multi-billion dollar diet and exercise industries. How much more are we willing to do to gain a few more years on this earth?

Or maybe just feeling better today is enough. If that is our goal, then this opens up a new avenue, because it is possible to *always* feel good today, even as the body is fading away in old age or other maladies that will claim our body sooner or later. It is possible for us to always feel okay, no matter what the external circumstances may be. This is a spiritual attainment. It is *something more* that reaches far beyond what the diet and exercise industries can deliver. Enter the yoga industry – not nearly as large, but growing, while overlapping diet and exercise and adding a whole new dimension, a spiritual dimension.

In yoga, we recognize the basics of healthy living, and there is much more we can do as well. The methods of yoga can not only add to our longevity, but also look far beyond the limitations of our physical body to our spiritual dimensions.

We each have natural abilities within us that can be stimulated through various methods to unfold a greater potential. This potential is outside time and the ups and downs of our body and everyday living.

Yet these qualities can be cultivated while we are living a normal life, and can sustain us through all of our life experiences – “in sickness and in health.”

If we are able to consciously become that which is permanent happiness within us, then what happens to the body will not bowl us over. Inner silence and ecstatic radiance are the qualities we are speaking of here. With those qualities becoming our full time experience in life, we have solved the *feeling good* question for all of this life, and beyond.

We can call it *enlightenment*.

Deep inside each of us is a recognition of our possibilities, and at times we will feel the pull. Actually, we feel it all the time. It is our longing for more happiness in all of its forms. So our desire to feel better is a call coming from within.

If we are engaged in yoga practices like deep meditation, spinal breathing pranayama, and others, the call coming from within us refines. Our sensitivities refine along with our urges, and we are called to do those things we did not even imagine before. We might question our own inner urges. Yet, with yoga practices in the picture, we will gradually learn to trust the call coming from within. We will learn to trust our refining intuition.

If we keep up yoga practices over the long term, the decision-making for healthful living gets easier – obvious even. Not that we know the outcome of all things, or that it will always seem to be what we want. We come to know that inner silence is the best launching pad for all outcomes in our life. Our inner silence emanates a knowing beyond understanding. Experience bears this out over time. This is how abiding inner silence gained in deep meditation fulfills the conditions of yama and niyama.

But more than that, we become our own compass

at the deepest level of spiritual unfoldment, which is beyond the rules of yama and niyama. It is freedom to choose in a way that is life supporting for ourselves and for all who are around us.

Chapter 2 – Yogic Diet

The subject of human diet is a vast and diverse field, filled with experts having impeccable credentials, with many taking opposing views about what we should be eating and not eating. The endless debates on diet can be very passionate, and often become tangled and confused. We will try not to take sides.

Actually, the minute details of diet will be dealt with fairly lightly here, in a way that encapsulates the essentials from the point of view of a fully integrated approach to yoga practices. If we can understand our relationship to diet well enough to allow a natural evolution of our eating habits in concert with the call of our rising inner silence, then the rest will take care of itself.

Here, we will take a closer look at how diet relates to spiritual growth, and in so doing, we will naturally ferret out the essentials of healthy eating. It is not so complicated if we are working from our center, rather than attempting to judge all the details. This is the key to considering diet on the spiritual path. After all, if our body is telling us what we should be eating for our health and spiritual well-being, and we have developed the ability to listen and favor those natural inner tendencies, then what more needs to be said?

Are We What We Eat?

There is the old saying, “You are what you eat.” We are going to take exception to that statement. It only applies if we believe we are our body, and that takes who we really are out of the equation. It is just food and the body. So, who is eating?

The primary reason why nearly all diet plans fail beyond the first few months is because these plans are body-based, and do not take into account who it is

that is behind the eating. They presume that we are what we eat.

The truth of the matter is that we are not what we eat. We are *unbounded pure bliss consciousness*, and nothing that happens on this earth plane can change that reality.

We only need realize what we are, even as we are living in this body here and now. As we do, our life will gradually evolve to reflect the *truth* that lives eternally within us, which is us. Our eating habits will evolve along with the refinement in our perceptions and actions in every part of our life. If this sounds simple, it is!

Ask anyone who has been practicing deep meditation for a few weeks or months, and you will be likely to hear that, along an increasing awareness about how to improve happiness through conduct in everyday living, there is also an increase in awareness about healthy eating. It just happens.

What is healthy eating?

This is a question often asked by those who are becoming more aware of what they are putting in their body.

“What can I do to improve my eating?”

The question may not even be associated with weight or health concerns. It is simply a question on how to express inner values better in daily living. Diet motivation coming in this way is not based mainly on material concerns. Because it is coming primarily from within, rather than being body-based, it will have a timelessness associated with it. This is the kind of diet motivation that will have staying power and yield lasting results. It is change that does not rely only on the force of will (which sooner or later will fail), but on the force of *truth* radiating from within us.

With the question coming from the right place deep within us, we automatically know what is right action. Then the specific information about what to

eat is practically an afterthought, because right conduct is inevitable once the call from within is being clearly heard. Then any information that is given will ultimately lead to the right place.

For those who are engaged in yoga practices, and feeling the call for more harmonious eating coming from within, we can offer some general guidelines.

In the AYP writings, we have previously boiled it down to one phrase – allow your eating to evolve naturally toward *light and nutritious*.

Light and nutritious is synonymous with the Sanskrit/English term *sattvic diet*, which means *yogic diet*.

Believe it or not, this is all the advice a dedicated yoga practitioner needs, and even that may not be necessary, with the inner guidance leading to purification and opening that is readily available to all who are engaged in deep meditation and other yoga practices on a daily basis. Nevertheless, we will go further and expand on that basic advice here, looking at the key aspects of diet from a yogic point of view.

Diet and Health

While it is true that healthy eating is an important factor in creating and supporting good health, we still regard diet to be an intermediary step between who we are (pure bliss consciousness) and how we are manifesting our inner essence physically on this earth. By going beyond diet with yoga practices, we will find our essential motivation for becoming all that we can be in this life.

Interestingly, we will often come to this spiritual realization when faced with the hard facts of our physical existence – our health and our mortality. It is these factors that drive us toward that mystical *something more* that we are all seeking in life. For many of us, the spiritual quest begins and continues with a quest for physical health. We have to start somewhere, and it is the obvious place to take a

Further Reading and Support

Yogani is an American spiritual scientist who, for forty years, has been integrating ancient techniques from around the world which cultivate human spiritual transformation. The approach is non-sectarian, and open to all. His books include:

Advanced Yoga Practices – Easy Lessons for Ecstatic Living (Two Volumes)

Two large user-friendly textbooks providing over 400 detailed lessons on the AYP integrated system of practices.

The Secrets of Wilder – A Novel

The story of young Americans discovering and utilizing actual secret practices leading to human spiritual transformation.

The AYP Enlightenment Series

Easy-to-read instruction books on yoga practices, including:

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- *Bhakti and Karma Yoga – The Science of Devotion and Liberation Through Action*
- *Eight Limbs of Yoga – The Structure and Pacing of Self-Directed Spiritual Practice*
- *Retreats – Fast Track to Freedom – A Guide for Leaders and Practitioners*
- *Liberation – The Fruition of Yoga*

For up-to-date information on the writings of Yogani, and for the free *AYP Support Forums*, please visit: