



YAMAS

Self-Restraints
The Don'ts

The First Limb of Yoga

BRAHMACHARYA

AHIMSA

APARIGRAHA

ASTEYA

YAMAS

Self-Restraints

The word 'yama' is often translated as 'restraint', 'moral discipline' or 'moral vow', and Patanjali states that these vows are completely universal, no matter who you are or where you come from, your current situation or where you're heading.

To be 'moral' can be difficult at times, which is why this is considered a very important practice of yoga. Remember that the word 'yoga' means 'unity', 'wholeness' or 'connectedness'; of course it's important to be mindful, gentle and present in class, but if this doesn't translate off the mat and connect into what we do in our day-to-day lives, we will never feel the real benefits of yoga.

“ *The idea of a yoga practice is really not just to focus and be aware and mindful and calm for the time that we're on the mat, but to carry this state of being with us when we leave class* ”

The 5 YAMAS

Self-Restraints

The DON'Ts: 5 Self-Restraints

1. **AHIMSA** = Non-harm, non-violence
2. **SATYA** = Non-Lying, Truthfulness
3. **ASTEYA** = Non-Stealing
4. **BRAHMACHARYA** = Moderation, Right use of energy
5. **APARIGRAHA** = Non-attachment

AHIMSA – Non-Harm, Non-Violence

The very first – and often thought of as the most important – Yama, is ‘Ahimsa’, which means ‘Non-violence’ or ‘non-harming’. (‘Himsa’ = ‘hurt’ and ‘a’ = ‘not’) In this sense, we’re talking about non-violence in all aspects of life.

When we act with ‘Ahimsa’ in mind, this means not physically harming others, ourselves, or nature; not thinking negative thoughts about others or ourselves; and making sure that what we do and how we do it is done in harmony, rather than harm.

AHIMSA – On The Mat

How can we practice Ahimsa on the mat and in our asana practice?

- Accept where we are in our practice, some days our bodies feel different than others
- Accept ourselves and our bodies completely
- Not pushing ourselves to the edge and causing harm
- Respecting our boundaries and listening to our bodies
- Letting go of the expectation what the body 'should' look like in a pose

AHIMSA – Off The Mat - DIET

DIET:

While a Vegan/Vegetarian diet may not be accessible for everyone, maybe try by implementing small changes. Below you'll find some suggestions.

- Consider organic products from environmentally friendly companies.
- Buy locally & fairtrade
- Eat vegan/vegetarian a couple of times a week, maybe trying new recipes
- Avoid meat/fish from discounters
- Maybe try plant milks such as oat, almond, coconut, rice, soy (plant makes make really yummy smoothies)
- Less plastic, try always carrying your water bottle with you
- Some stores offer plastic free packaging. You can basically bring your own Tupperware or bags 😊

AHIMSA – Off The Mat - THOUGHTS

THOUGHTS:

Our thoughts play such a big role in our overall wellbeing. Ahimsa means being mindful of our thoughts. When we think negatively, we send messages through our body that cause the fight or flight response, secreting cortisol (the 'stress hormone') in to the body. This lowers the immune system, making us more susceptible to illness and physical pain. It's not just thoughts about ourselves we should be mindful of; Jealousy, judgement, anger and resentment – while directed at someone else – just come back to bite us by making us feel bad too.

Loving thoughts such as gratefulness, love, joy, peace naturally raise our vibration and create dopamine in the body and therefor also strengthens our immune system.

Watch your thoughts; they become words. Watch your words; they become actions. Watch your actions; they become habit. Watch your habits; they become character. Watch your character; it becomes your destiny."

- Lao Tzu

AHIMSA

MANTRA

Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu

May all beings everywhere be happy and free, and may the thoughts, words, and actions of my own life contribute in some way to that happiness and to that freedom for all.

MEDITATION

Metta-Meditation (Loving-Kindness Meditation)

COURSEWORK



Do you honour ahimsa in your asana practice? If so, can you give examples? If not, how can you try and apply ahimsa to your asana practice?

Reflect on how you speak to yourself? Are you being harmful towards yourself?

SATYA - TRUTHFULNESS

Satya means truthfulness.

The word 'sat' literally translates as 'true essence' or 'true nature'. Sanskrit is a vibrational language and so each word is so much more than a label – it literally holds the very essence of the word. Because of this, 'sat' also holds the meanings; 'unchangeable', 'that which has no distortion', 'that which is beyond distinctions of time, space and person', and 'reality'. Many Sanskrit words use the prefix 'sat' such as 'satsang' meaning 'true company' and 'sattva' meaning 'pure', which leads us to understand that 'sat' really means more than 'truth', it's something that is unchanged and pure.

SATYA - TRUTHFULNESS

Satya is all about telling the truth, not only to others but also being truthful with yourself.

And if we can't be honest with ourselves first, we cannot really be honest in any other part of life.

Satya is honesty, not deceiving, avoiding gossiping and using the right speech.

AHIMSA

ASTEYA

SATYA - TRUTHFULNESS

- We often identify completely with our irrational thoughts and emotions
- The emotional part of our brain evolved long before the ‘thinking’ part. But when we let our mind run away with us, we define ourselves by how we feel at that very moment instead of seeing things for how they really are
- By creating space for ourselves, stillness or slowing-down of the mind, we can train to be less reactive in situations and therefor learn to see the real truth instead of acting from a place of fear and conditioning

SATYA - TRUTHFULNESS

- Expert meditators like the Dalai Lama have actually been able to slow down the response to stimuli within our primitive brain and create a fraction more time to process situations.
- This allows the more evolved part of the brain (cerebral cortex) to actually consider before the emotional brain takes over.
- By realizing that we are not our thoughts, the gap between who we think we are sometimes (the Ego) and who we really are (the atman) becomes bigger.

SATYA – ON THE MAT

- Observing truth in our practice is by paying attention to our breath. The breath is one of the most important factors in our asana practice, it tells us when to back off.
- When the breath is shallow or strained, the body isn't happy. This may 'hurt' our ego but truth requires listening to the breath.
- Pay attention to your ego-mind in your asana practice (*'you should be able to do headstand/crow/pincha'*)
- By getting out of our ego-mind we see past our conditioned ways of thinking and uncover a more pure and beneficial way of practicing.

SATYA – IN RELATIONSHIPS

- Honesty is the foundation of any strong relationship but letting our ego get in the way of our heart can often stop us from building meaningful relationships with others.
- You would want others to be truthful with you right?
- But what about compassion? The Yoga Sutras advise that if being honest causes harm, to refrain from saying anything at all?

SATYA – MANTRA

The Asato Maa mantra from the Upanishads is used by many practitioners as a daily acknowledgment of moving towards truth:

Asato Maa

Om Asato Maa Sad-Gamaya

Tamaso Maa Jyotir-Gamaya

Mrtyor-Maa Amrtam Gamaya

“Lead me from the unreal to the real
From darkness (ignorance) to light (knowledge)
From death to immortality”

COURSEWORK



How can you be more truthful with yourself?

Have you ever encountered situations where you wanted to speak the truth but didn't want to cause any harm?

How can you apply satya when you're teaching yoga?

ASTEYA – NON-STEALING

Asteya means ‘not stealing’.

But why do we desire and want to steal?

It’s a lot more important to look at why we might consider stealing in the first place, rather than refraining from stealing in itself.

- Don’t steal in the literal sense but also don’t steal time and energy
- Why do people steal? Out of jealousy or lack? Or maybe to fill a void?

ASTEYA – The Root Cause

'I'M NOT GOOD ENOUGH'

- Lack of faith in ourselves → desire, want and greed arise
- We begin to look for something to fill the void because we think everyone else has more than we do → victimhood

ASTEYA – ON THE MAT

- Pushing boundaries because you're competing with other yogis in the room and fear that 'you're not enough'
- Stealing someone's peace in class by arriving late and making noise → respect the sacred space
- Leaving a class early

ASTEYA – OFF THE MAT

- Consumerism: Buying more than we need in order to compensate and fill a void or out of lack mindset
- Being late for appointments, dates, work → stealing time from others
- Literal stealing

AHIMSA

ASTEYA

ASTEYA – Practice Abundance

Practicing abundance is a great way for being grateful for what you already have.

The more grateful you are for what you have, the more abundance you will attract because you're acting and feeling like you already are abundant.

Affirmations and a gratitude practice is a great way to call in more abundance.

COURSEWORK

Pushing boundaries because you're competing with other yogis in the room and fear that 'you're not enough?'

Have you ever experienced Asteya in a yoga class? If so, how did that make you feel? Or have you stole from someone's time before?

Do you buy more than you need?

Write down 10 things you're grateful for in your life. State it in the present tense and describe why you're grateful for them. End each sentence with writing thank you three times.

'I am grateful for xxxx because xxx. Thank you, thank you, thank you.'

BRAHMACHARYA – RIGHT USE OF ENERGY “

Traditionally, *brahmacharya* meant ‘celibacy’ or ‘chastity’, encouraging yogis to conserve their sexual energy to further progress along the Yogic path.

In today’s modern world, we can look at it as ‘the right use of energy’.

The word *brahmacharya* translates to ‘behaviour which leads to Brahman’, Brahman being the creator, so therefore leading us towards the divine.

BRAHMACHARYA – RIGHT USE OF ENERGY “

- Brahmacharya is about directing our energy away from external desires and instead towards finding contentment within ourselves.
- Brahmacharya is about moderation, avoiding addiction, conserving your energy, not binging

BRAHMACHARYA – ON THE MAT

- Give options for students to rest in balasana
- Give options for knees, chest, chin instead of Chaturanga

AHIMSA

BRAHMACHARYA

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APARIGRAHA

ASTEYA

BRAHMACHARYA – OFF THE MAT

- Who are you giving your energy to?
- Are you constantly busy? Prioritize your spare time.
- Do you feel drained after spending time with certain people?
- Do you feel pressured to say yes and don't want to cancel plans? (p.s. it's okay to cancel and focus on yourself → self-care time <3)

COURSEWORK



Are you giving too much of your time to other people and often feel depleted?

Why do you find it hard to say no to people?

APARIGRAHA – Non-Attachment

Aparigraha often means

- Non-attachment
- Non-greed

Graha = to take, to seize, to grab

Pari= on all sides

The prefix 'a' negates the word itself, meaning 'non'

APARIGRAHA – Non-Attachment

Aparigraha teaches us to not be attached to anything. Everything will come in divine timing and what is meant for us, will come to us. We often become attached to the outcome, to people, to things.

As Krishna points out to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita:

‘Let your concern be with action alone, and never with the fruits of action. Do not let the results of action be your motive, and do not be attached to inaction’.

This is telling us that we shouldn't be concerned about the outcome of a situation but instead only concern ourselves with what we're actually doing.

APARIGRAHA – Non-Attachment

It's all about letting go of...

- Outcomes
- Worrying about the future, things that haven't happened yet
- Attachments to relationships
 - Materialistic attachment

BRAHMA

CHARYA

APARIGRAHA

AHIMSA

ASTEYA

APARIGRAHA – ON THE MAT

- Practice for the love of practising and not to be better or more advanced than the yogi next to you
- As a teacher, remind students that the journey is the goal, not the destination 😊

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COURSEWORK



Where in your life can you let go?

What attachments do you have?

Do you stand in your own way by being attached to outcomes?