

yama and niyama

yama (Restraints) This is not the repression of natural urges or mental impulses but the spiritual, detached awareness that allows the consciousness of the soul to transcend the bonds of attachment and to function unhindered by these things.

1 AhiMsaa (non-violence) Not hurting others (or self) through thought, word, or deed. This includes avoiding eating meat, fowl, fish, eggs, gelatin, and other animal products which are produced by killing the animal. This means avoiding products which are made or supplied by killing, or injuring animals or people like leather, factory dairy products, or foreign products produced by slave-labor.

2 Satya (truth) Not lying, betraying promises, concealing information, or misrepresenting oneself or others. To truly practice satya, people must have the courage to examine themselves and the humility to present information openly and honestly.

3 Asteya (nonstealing) Not wrongfully claiming or seizing the property of others (this includes cheating for gain of money, or property as well as credit, award, praise, or recognition). Non-stealing should be practiced mentally as well by not coveting the others property. People should not seek name, credit, fame, or recognition which belongs rightfully to another. It is also important not to enter into debt, without practical short term plans to repay. Unpaid debt creates the same karmic due that stealing does.

4 Brahmacharya (Divine Conduct) Controlling passions and instinctive reactions to events. Traditional interpretation of Brahmacharya has been limited to "celebacy." From the meaning of the root words brahma meaning "God" and charya meaning "action or conduct," it is clear that the concept of brahmacharya goes far beyond restraining the sexual urges. More or less it is the practice of conducting oneself as the Lord does by always considering and acting for the good of all others. It is not an act of repression but of transmutation of the mental intentions and physical anatomy. The mind of the brahmachary is occupied with love, Divine sight, and the physical form is occupied by the work of selfless service. Celebacy is the ideal practice for the unwed to help avoid needless and draining psychic connection which could diminish the depth of intimacy between husband and wife. Certain mature souls (who represent a rare few within society), with the blessing of a Guru, may take lifetime vows of celebacy and dedicate their lives to their spiritual practice. For most, the practice of brahmacharya is the practice of the house-holder, which is practiced ideally through the sacred institution of marriage. Married people are encouraged to practice brahmacharya by remaining

monogamous in marriage and confining their sexual attention to their partner alone. Divorce is prohibited and even widows and widowers are encouraged to not remarry to help give strength to the sacred ideal of one life partner.

5 kShamā (Patience) This means overcoming the irritability and intolerance that causes impatience with people and situations.

6 DhRti (Steadiness) Overcoming changeability, and lack of dedication and constancy. It is important to face fears and overcome indecisiveness, hesitation, and avoidance. It is also important to honor all commitments and to commit only to obligations which can be realistically fulfilled.

7 Dayā (Compassion) Conquering insensitivity and all violent or neglectful patterns that follow. This practice is extremely important. Compassion arises toward all things when the seeker learns to truly love himself. Without the quality of compassion it is not possible to practice any of the other yamas and niyamas. When compassion toward all things is strong within the devotee, the other yamas and niyamas occur easily as a result. Compassion is practiced by learning to see the divine within all creatures and patiently and lovingly serving all.

8 Arjava (Honesty, Straightforwardness) Representing oneself and all situations openly and honestly by avoiding deception in all forms. To practice straightforwardness, a person must learn to love and respect himself enough to present his actions, feelings, thoughts, and personality to all without fear of judgement or criticism. It is a necessary part of the practice of arjava to avoid entering into any debt which cannot be quickly repayed. This is done by paying all fees and dues (like taxes) honestly and promptly to the best of one's financial capacity. It is important for a person to understand his financial capacity and not enter into deals or contracts that commit him beyond his financial means. Many people routinely enter into financial agreements which they do not know how they will repay. Debt is considered a normal part of many modern societies, but when understood in this way it is equal to theft.

9 Mitāhāra (Moderate Appetite) Not eating too much or too little. Avoiding overeating and excessive fasting or dieting. This practice includes avoiding unwholesome foods in general and those which aggravate a person's Ayurvedic vikriti (constitutional imbalance). The advice of an Ayurvedic physician may be helpful for people to learn to recognise the signs of proper digestion and to learn to recognise which foods are healthful for their individual condition. People must know when they are experiencing a true appetite and eat when they are hungry. Food drugs like alcohol, caffeine, and narcotic drugs should be avoided. "Junk food" with chemical additives and preservatives should be avoided as should highly-refined sugars and grains as well as frozen and preserved foods. A sattvik diet of pure, natural, fresh, local and organic foods should be favored. This includes also avoiding overindulging in sensory indulgences of all sorts.

10 Shauca (Purity) Avoiding impurity in body, mind, and speech. The mind and speech should be kept on spiritual and uplifting thoughts. This can be done by avoiding asangha (bad associations) and violent and explicit TV, movies, music, books, and other entertainment. The body should be kept engaged in spiritual deeds and associated with satsangha (positive associations). Physical cleanliness maintained by regular bath and grooming is important. Mental purity is maintained by avoiding low vibrational thoughts, speech, and action. The remnants of negative thought patterns should never be repressed, lest they multiply in the subconscious mind and wreak havoc as they invariably boil-over in time. Instead, the Yogi develops purity and deals with the remnant impressions of darkness upon the mind by occupying the mind with positive, uplifting impressions and by bathing the consciousness with the purifying practice of mantra recitation.

Niyama (observances)

1 HrI (Remorse) This means being modest, grateful, and to show remorse for wrong doing. People must be humble to admit their faults and courageous to apologize and make amends whenever possible.

2 SantoSha (Contentment) This is the practice of maintaining an attitude of satisfaction. It is the maintenance of inner joy, serenity, and emotional steadiness throughout the painful and pleasurable experiences that life may offer.

3 Dāna (Giving) This means tithing money to God or Guru and giving generously wherever there is need without any thought of reward or acknowledgement.

4 Astikya (Faith) Strong, unwavering belief in God, the Shastras (scriptures), the Guru, and the path to liberation. This practice involves maintaining faith in difficult situations even when there is no understanding of the course of events and working to recognize and overcome doubts whenever they arise.

5 Ishvarapūjana (Worship of God) The regular practice of Puja (Worship of one's chosen form of God) and dhyaana (meditation on God) to develop bhakti (devotion), shraddhaa (faith) and Jnaana (Direct perception of God). This practice includes the other devotional practices of bhakti yoga like singing devotional hymns, visiting Sacred Temples, attending satsangs, cleaning the Temple, performing service for the Guru, cooking or preparing offerings for Temple pujas.

6 Siddhānta shravaNa (Hearing the Scriptures) Listening with open heart to the teachings of the scriptures and the teachings of the Guru. If one truly hears the teachings of the Guru, they will also recall and practice these in their day to day life. This could also include listening to the sacred hymns of the Scriptures while seeking to open to the shakti (energy) they bestow. This practice helps to fill the aura of a person with Divine grace which unfolds in time as knowledge and inspiration in life.

7 *Mati* (Cognition, Mindfulness) Developing spiritual will and awareness by seeking the grace of the Guru's guidance and through self-examination. A person must be humble to admit their shortcomings and brave to uncover the latent patterns of the subconscious mind through consistent efforts in meditation and spiritual practice. Once recognized, the negative mental impressions are counter-balanced through the practice of positive (opposing) actions and affirmations.

8 *Vrata* (Vows) Taking and fulfilling religious vows and observances. This could include: daily meditation, japa, or puja, visiting the Temple or Guru at least once a week, performing pilgrimage to a Holy site at least once a year, and observing the sacred festival days. Other self imposed vows may be undertaken with the Guru's guidance and blessing, for example fasting once a month on Pradosham day.

9 *Japa* (Recitation) Practicing mantras and chanting sacred hymns from the Vedas or Shastras daily. This practice restructures the mind and consciousness by bathing awareness in the shakti (energy) of the mantra. Each mantra is like a name of the Lord. The practice of Japa helps one to remain ever-mindful of the Lord. Mantras is a potent mystical affirmation and it is a prayer evoking Divine grace. The ultimate goal of japa goal, which must be come to gradually, is ajapa (effortless and constant mental connection to the higher energies embodied by the sacred sound of mantra).

10 *Tapas* (Spiritual Austerities) Performing saadhana (spiritual practice), sacrifice, and penance. A temporary vow of silence is a very powerful austerity that is safe and effective, as is the practice of prostrating 108 times before the deity in a Temple (health permitting). Intense austerities like fasting or mortification may be useful with the Gurus express guidance and blessing. Spiritual austerities ignite the fire of awareness and kundalini (the power of spiritual awareness); they burn away past karmas, and they help the yogi to develop an inner steadiness in the face of intense external conditions.