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AHIMSA



YOGA & NONVIOLENCE

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ahimsa-pratishyam-tat-samnidhan-vaira-tyagah Yoga-Sutra II, 35

With the establishment of harmlessness, in his presence enmity is abandoned



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AHIMSA, nonviolence, plays a major role in Indian thought, especially in yoga. The *Yoga-Sutra* mentions it as the first principle to be applied in our *sadhana*, and the first step on the path to inner peace. It is a fundamental principle that we are invited to bear in mind at every step on the way...

► Etymology

The word "violence" comes from the Latin word "*violenca*" (of fierce, indomitable character) derived from the verb "*vis, volere*" meaning to want. The primary meaning of "*vis*" is "force in action", followed by "power" in the sense of willingness to do. "*Vis*" derives from the Greek "*bia*" meaning life force, coercion, the power in a bow under tension, an overwhelming power that surpasses every limit – it comes from "*bios*", life. "*Bia*" is related to the Sanskrit "*jiya*" meaning predominance; violence as powerful as the force in a drawn bow.

Thus for us the word means vital energy in its ultimate form, the point at which it becomes uncontrollable. It is also the willpower that drives this energy, which is carried away by its own intensity and surpasses all limits - human, social, legal. Abuse is manifest in many forms: abuse of power, the use of physical force, rape, murder...

Le word "*ahimsa*" consists of a privative prefix "*a*" and "*himsa*", derived from the Sanskrit root "*hims*" meaning striking; *himsa* is the act of injuring or killing. Thus *ahimsa* means abstaining from harming, hurting or killing. But it means much more, as Mohandas Gandhi said: "*Ahimsa is not only to refrain from killing. Himsa is causing pain or destroying a life in anger, in a selfish act or with the desire to harm. To refrain from doing so is ahimsa.*"

But suppressing the violence of a gesture is not enough; one must radically rid oneself of any intention to harm: "*The essential element in violence is the violent intent behind the thought, word or act, i.e., the intent to do harm to the so-called opponent.*"

Patanjali refers to *ahimsa* in one *sutra* only, *sutra* II, 35:

"When nonviolence in speech, thought and action occurs, one's aggressive nature is relinquished and others abandon hostility in one's presence."

Thus *ahimsa* is a powerful force that can transform the world, both within and around us.

► Ahimsa in Indian thought

L'ahimsa is mentioned as early as the *Rig Veda* (1500 BCE) ; the *Atharva Veda* and *Yajur Veda* recommend that all living creatures be seen with a friendly eye and all those we encounter be treated with benevolence. In the *Chandogya Upanishad* (8th century BCE), *ahimsa* is the first of the five virtues to be realized to achieve *atman* (8,15.121). The word "virtue" in this context is a translation of the word "*dharma*". *Dharma* is the first of the *purusha-artha*, the four objectives for human beings in life. In this world, everyone is placed by birth (*jati*) in a particular situation: born a boy or a girl, in a family belonging to a particular cast (*varna*) or corporation – these conditions define his/her *dharma*, not only the social rules he/she will have to respect amongst human beings, but also the profound laws that govern both his or her own nature and the cosmos as a whole (*sanatana dharma*, the eternal laws), which lead him/her to fully realize their inner potential (*moksa*). An individual's *dharma* is based on the cosmic *dharma*.

Hinduism has an *ahimsa* goddess, Ahimsa-Devi, who is the wife of the god Dharma.

In Jainism, at the time of the Upanishads (8thC CE), *ahimsa* was already considered the highest virtue; the precept "*ahimsa paramo dharma*" meaning "*ahimsa is the highest virtue*" could be seen on many Jain temples. Gandhi, born into a Jain family, naturally adhered to this principle. Strict practical rules are laid down for the religious for whom *ahimsa* is one of their "major vows", while for those who live in the world it is only a "minor vow". Below a contemporary Jain nun discusses *ahimsa*:

'Not hurting any sentient being and protecting the dharma is really the heart and soul of the dharma. We believe there is a little of paramatma – the spirit of God – in all living creatures, even those which are too small to see. So

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much of our discipline is about this: only drinking filtered water, only eating in daylight so we can really see what we are eating. At the end of each walk we do a special ritual to apologise for any creatures we have inadvertently hurt.

- On the wandering life dedicated to *moksa*, the liberation:

"This wandering life, with no material possessions, unlocks our souls. There is a wonderful sense of lightness, living each day as it comes, with no sense of ownership, no weight, no burden. Journey and destination became one, thought and action became one, until it is as if we are moving like a river into complete detachment."

Nine Lives – In Search of the Sacred in Modern India, William Dalrymple



परस्परौपग्रहो जीवनाम

On the poster of our Convention, we see a hand with a wheel of *dharma* drawn on the palm; in the center is the word "*ahimsa*"; for the Jains it symbolizes the vow of *ahimsa*, and its central position shows that it is a gravitational force so powerful that it can free us from the wheel of rebirth if we apply it without interruption by abstaining from doing harm, not only in our actions but by our words and thoughts, considered just as alienating and destructive as violent acts. Judgments, criticism, contempt, insults, harassment, intolerance can hurt just as deeply and trigger violence directly or indirectly, against each other or against oneself.

Buddhism also places *ahimsa* at the top of its five precepts.

In Hinduism, *Mahabharata* (4th BCE / 4th CE) presents *ahimsa* as the highest virtue – *ahimsa paramo dharma* – in numerous passage too, essentially for *Brahmins* and for ascetics.

More recently Mahatma Gandhi established *ahimsa* as a unifying principle for the various Indian communities by linking it to *satyagraha* (from *satya*, truth, and *agraha*, force) and under the influence of Adin Ballou (American pioneer of pacifism and non-resistance who campaigned for the abolition of slavery before the Civil War) and Leon Tolstoi (with whom he corresponded from 1908) transformed it into a paradoxical political weapon.

► Ahimsa in the Yoga Sutra

Ahimsa is the first principle mentioned by Patanjali in the Sadhana Pada where he presents all the disciplines in yoga. *Ahimsa* is the first *yama*, usually translated by "restraints". The *sutra* II,30 lists them and the II,31 explains their nature. It is an absolutely essential *sutra*: *yama* are not simple rules to which we should pay lip service; they are principles that we must fully integrate into our consciousness so they become active within us and express themselves in our lives without reserve or resistance.

jati desa kala samaya anavacchinnah sarvabhaumah maharatam II, 31

Yama are the great, mighty, universal vows, not limited by place, time or class.

These are the absolute values underpinning the ethics of Yoga Darshana: the great vows (*maha vrtata*) by which we must anchor our lives in order to place our inner posture and direct our actions, from the beginning to the end of our *sadhana*, whoever we are, wherever we are. We have seen that for Jains, the great vows concerned essentially religious people, but Patanjali insists that all of us should ensure all our lives are guided by these vows.

What is a "great vow"? For Vimala Thakar, "*Vratam* does not mean a vow intentionally, purposefully taken and

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followed or practiced. The word *vrata* is derived from the root *vrī, vrīyate*. *Vrīyate*—in Sanskrit means “a choiceless acceptance out of understanding.” *Glimpses of Raja Yoga*.

Vimala Thakar evokes the original *rishis* who, having contemplated the truth (*satya*), acquired an unshakeable inner conviction; they themselves acknowledged the *vrata* because they were founded on a direct intuition of the cosmic laws (*dharma*).

For us, if *yama* are taken as simple rules that we follow by obeying someone in authority, they have no value as “*vrata*”. We need to assimilate them completely, deep into our innermost being, to ensure that we can manifest them in our behavior without reserve or resistance. If we acknowledge they are universal principles – true at all times, in all places, reflecting the hidden order of *dharma* – we know intuitively that we can rely on them to guide and direct our lives.

Only two *sutra* mention *ahimsa*, nonviolence, and another one *himsa*, violence.

Sutra II,32 puts *ahimsa* at the top of the list of the five *yama*, but gives no other details.

Sutra II,35 describes the effects produced by practicing *ahimsa* :

ahimsa pratisthayam tatsannidhau vairatyagah Yoga-Sutra II, 35

“When we have completely adopted nonviolence, our aggressive nature ceases to exist and others abandon hostility in our presence.”

Ahimsa has a powerful inhibiting effect on the aggressive impulse of other beings, both animals and human beings. By restraining his own aggressive tendencies, the yogi exerts such a powerful force on other beings that they abandon hostility both towards him and even between themselves. Shankara, in his comment on this *sutra*, says that “*in the presence of that one who follows harmlessness, even natural enemies like snake and mongoose give up their antagonism.*” *Shankara on the Yoga-Sutras*, Trevor Leggett

How can we acquire and manifest this irresistible force that calms even the aggressive instincts of wild animals? When we are on our yoga mat, totally absorbed in a meditative state, we are generally quite peaceful [mosquitoes vanish into thin air and tigers come and lie at our feet - sometimes they are very small tigers!], but what happens when we leave our yoga mat? If someone grabs our backpack, or hits or insults us, anger rises within us like a vast black cloud.

As Geetaji said in her conference in Tours (2002): “*We are nonviolent, but at what stage we become violent is unknown. The moment you are intimidated, you become violent. Why people begin to fight with each other? Reflect on it. The root cause is in behaviour which is opposite to the principles of yama. Your stability in nonviolence has to be such that if you are really stable in that nonviolence you are reaching that state where others also will give up feeling of unfriendliness, violence, fighting.*” *Yoga-sadhana, Mobility in Stability, 2007.*

As soon as we feel threatened, both our consciousness and our behavior change. Unless it has become our second nature, aggressiveness is initially only a way of reacting to a threat in our surroundings (whether a person or a situation); as shows in this Stephen W. Porges's article:

“What determines how two human beings will act toward each other when they meet? Is this initial response a product of learning from culture, family experiences, and other socialization processes? Or is the response the expression of a neurobiological process that is programmed into the very DNA of our species? If the response has a neurobiological basis, are there specific features of the other person’s behavior that trigger either feelings of safety, love, and comfort or feelings of danger? [...]

*By processing information from the environment through the senses, the nervous system continually evaluates risk. I have coined the term **neuroception** to describe how neural circuits distinguish whether situations or people are safe, dangerous, or life threatening. Because of our heritage as a species, neuroception takes place in primitive parts of the brain, without our conscious awareness. The detection of a person as safe or dangerous triggers*

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neurobiologically determined prosocial or defensive behaviors. Even though we may not be aware of danger on a cognitive level, on a neurophysiological level, our body has already started a sequence of neural processes that would facilitate adaptive defense behaviors such as fight, flight, or freeze.

A child's (or an adult's) nervous system may detect danger or a threat to life when the child enters a new environment or meets a strange person. Cognitively, there is no reason for them to be frightened. But often, even if they understand this, their body betrays them. Sometimes this betrayal is private; only they are aware that their hearts are beating fast and contracting with such force that they start to sway. For others, the responses are more overt. They may tremble. Their faces may flush, or perspiration may pour from their hands and forehead. Still others may become pale and dizzy, and feel precipitously faint. [...]

We can see the process at work when two toddlers encounter each other in a playground sandbox. They may decide that the situation and each other are safe if the sandbox is familiar territory, if their pails and shovels have roughly similar appeal, and if they (the toddlers) are about the same size. The toddlers may then express positive social engagement behaviors—in other words, they may start to play."

NEUROCEPTION: A Subconscious System for Detecting Threats and Safety Stephen W. Porges, University of Illinois at Chicago - Author of the Polyvagal Theory - The Polyvagal Theory describes three developmental stages of a mammal's autonomic nervous system: Immobilization, mobilization, and social communication or social engagement.

But if a threat is detected, play is no longer appropriate; their neural systems will launch a defensive reaction and trigger physiological states that will cause them to fight, flee or freeze - as in all mammals. To return from this defence mechanism and resume social engagement strategies we need to 1/ measure risk, and 2/ if the environment appears safe, inhibit the primitive defensive reaction in order to start a positive relationship, perhaps create a lasting link with the other.

Indeed, when we feel insecure our own reactions can easily escape us; our thoughts, and words too, as well as our neocortex - and with it our ability to think, to produce meaning, to rationally decide before taking a conscious and lucid action - are literally bypassed by archaic reflexes. If we make a decision or launch into action in this state of confusion, we must expect further disruption sooner or later.

Remember, Patañjali is a healer of the soul: consider the homage we pay to him as the Vedic grammarian and as a physician, author of the Charaka-Samhita. We could even consider yoga as cognitive-behavioral therapy before its time?

Vimala Thakar, in her comments on *Yoga Sutra - Yoga beyond Meditation*, argues:

"... As long as there will be a tension of suffering in our consciences, there will be neither freedom, nor peace, nor balance in the human behavior or relationships.[...]

The challenge of the *Yoga Sutra* is to put an end to human suffering in its three manifestations: that which we inflict on ourselves (*adhyatmika*), that arising from relations with others (*adhibautika*), and that resulting from tensions with our natural environment (*adhidaivika*).

To realize our humanity we have to modify our initial nature and begin by controlling our animal impulses, the conditioned reflexes of our species. We have impulsive tendencies and can react without being aware of what we are doing: our impulse to dominate or oppress, to lie or manipulate, to steal or exploit others in many different ways: to harass or rape, to amass wealth without sharing, to keep the best for ourselves. These tendencies, which lead to extreme behavior, "are opposed to *yama*". Conversely, *yama* oppose these tendencies and can be used as tools to counter them. Spirituality is not separate from biological life. Yoga is a process of integration; we cannot cut ourselves from our impulsive tendencies or ignore them: we have to manage them in order to be able to overcome them. By practicing *ahimsa*, we take our big first step!

Sutra II, 34 explains how *himsa*, violence occurs when our conditioning, whose intensity varies, escapes our control. If we are carried away by our emotional reactions, in the next stage, we will be overwhelmed by our motor

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impulses and the force released will be expressed fully in our acts. Whether we accomplish these acts directly, provoke them or allow them to happen, we are still responsible for them.

"Those ideas (vitarka) which give rise to violence (himsa), whether done directly or indirectly, or condoned, are caused by greed (lobha), anger (krodha), or delusion (moha), to a mild, moderate or intense degree. They result in endless pain (dukha) and ignorance (ajñāna). [Let us] meditate on their opposites (pratipaksa bhavana)."

To counter violent tendencies which oppose our objective (inner peace and freedom), yoga offers accent on their opposite. As Geetaji pointed out in Tours, to repolarize on soothing and harmonizing qualities, we need to *"modify the modification" (vrtti).*[p30-31]

In neuroception terms, we could say in order to inhibit our defensive mechanism, which is outside our control, and react positively to our environment and to others in a conscious and open way, we have to take another neural pathway as quickly as possible.

To achieve this change of mind, we must avoid getting deeper into negative behavior (*samskara*), and reorient our mind to reengage and reconnect with the opposite qualities. *"Pratipaksha bhavana"* means changing the intimate nature of consciousness, its energetic "taint". Meditation is a positive strategy that does not leave us in cloudy water, so to speak. Shankara, in his comment on this *sutra*, uses the negative example of a the dog returning to its vomit. Meditation is not a mental operation: it is precisely a break with all mental operations, enabling us to achieve symbiosis with our own profound Self. Yoga consists in reorienting our attention to our true essence, to the nature of our Soul (*adyatma*), surpassing all disruption.

As Geetaji commented in Tours, using the metaphor of the river, beyond pollution, water is still pure. [P14-15] Reaching pure water again negates our instincts of greed, possessiveness and domination (which are in another pole of our consciousness – the ego); this enables us to be aware of them. The practice of meditation, taking the position of the observer whose fundamental nature is to see, helps us slow down and deconstruct the mental processes through which the automatic, blind process of *guna* is triggered and persists. [Our mind is not the observer but is part of the observable objects.]

To escape this blindness (*avidya*, non-view, ignorance ; Trevor Legget translates it by "failure-to-see") we simply have to regain our ability to see. The practice of yoga is primarily to freeze the apparent movement of moments and see again, repositioning ourselves in our true nature (the Soul) i.e. in the Self. When consciousness repositions itself in its own source, in its own form (*svarupa*), it recovers its original ability to see (*drashtar*, who-sees, the observer). As Patañjali says, at the start of the *Yoga Sutra* (I, 1 - I, 5):

- I, 1 *Atha-yoga-anushasanam* Now, the discipline of yoga.
- I, 2 *Yoga-citta-vrtti-nirodhah* Yoga is the cessation of modifications in the consciousness.
- I, 3 *Tada-drashtu-svarupe-avasthanam* Then, the Seer abides in his own form.
- I, 4 *Vrtti-sarupyam-itaratra* Otherwise, he identifies with the form of the modification.
- I, 5 *Vrttayah-pançatayah-klisha-aklishtah* There are 5 modifications, painful or non-painful.

► Yoganushasanam – Discipline

"Avidya, ignorance, has no discipline. When you realize that you are ignorant, discipline begins."

B.K.S. Iyengar Sparks of Divinity 18.327

Our practice becomes a laboratory for our intelligence. *Anushasanam* is not a simple discipline; it is an inner discipline which is not founded on any external authority but on direct experience. From the beginning, we must take responsibility for embodying it freely, constantly renewing our commitment to it. Our conditioning is the major obstacle as we are completely impregnated by it. Even if its effects are obvious, it remains unnoticed as such; inasmuch as we stick to our innate behavior, we are unable to see it. Our attention must shift to the position of the observer for us to become aware of it and eventually change it.

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It is at the root of our way of seeing things at the heart of our cognitive process through which we make contact with the outside world, that we have to make a choice, at every moment of our practice and of our lives – which are not independent of each other but demonstrate the choices we make. The first disciplines inspire us to take a view from above, not to adhere indiscriminately to situations and contents of consciousness, what Patañjali calls "modifications" (*vrtti*) or modes of consciousness (*citta-vrtti*):

- *Nirodha* is the method we need to apply at the cognitive level, in order to be able to apply *ahimsa* on a practical and moral level. *Nirodha* is the "modification of the modification" that enables us to return to a pristine state of consciousness by refocusing on the Self, acquiring a profound insight into ourselves and the real situation;

- *Ahimsa* (like all *yama*) is the force we need to apply to counter the opposition and resistance of our tendencies that hinder yoga – as a process of liberation (*moksa*).

If we let these tendencies (*klesha*) inhibit our quest (*sadhana*), we regress and digress from realisation. Yoga is a practical, pragmatic way, that achieves concrete results. *Yama* are basic moral precepts, common to all religions and spiritual approaches, but Patañjali does not justify them on the moral plane. He does not say: practice *ahimsa* because killing and hurting are bad. He says: practice *ahimsa*, and little by little, you will suffer less, then you will cease to suffer! Your behavior will change the way the world responds to you. If you do not, the popular maxim "*who sows the wind, reaps the whirlwind*" will pervade your life, your surroundings and your relations; as history and current events unfortunately show we know that disruption and suffering follow inevitably, both within us and around us.

To leave no opening for violence to occur we must oppose it in advance and deliberately create a powerful force that will help us go in the opposite disposition: heading towards stability, peace and kindness. Our external and inner postures must express our anchor in this internal framework and the re-harmonizing process that is yoga. "Posture" does not only concern the body but also our frame of mind. *Asana* and *pranayama* form our experimental field and are capable of creating both an intense concentration (*ekagrah-citta*) and a serene state (*citta-prasadanam*). This disposition corresponds to the point at which our attention shifts making the transition to another mode of vision which, alone, establishes us in mindfulness and full possession of ourselves.

Gurujī describes this process very clearly in this passage: "*It is through the acute awareness and speed of action that we cultivate in asana and pranayama that we can reform ourselves. In addition, by breathing before acting, we are able to slow down our responses, inhale divinity, and surrender ego in our exhalation. This momentary pause allows us the time for cognitive reflection, corrective reaction, and reappraisal. It is the momentary pause in the process of cause and effect that allows us to begin the process of freedom.*

The endless process is breath, cognitive reflection, corrective reaction, reappraisal, and action. Eventually this process blends together in such a manner that we discover we have pulled ourselves into the present moment, no past, no future, but action and right perception soldered together in a peerless moment, and then another moment and another. Eventually, we are no longer caught in the movement of time as a sequence or current sweeping us along, but we experience it as a series of discrete and present moments. No rising thought wave can escape the sharpness of such vision. It is what we call presence of mind." BKS Iyengar, *Light on Life*, p140.

► MAITRI – From benevolence to "impulses of the heart"

The closer we remain linked to our luminous pole, the more we avoid creating alienation and suffering, both for ourselves and others. Yoga is the art of adjustment. It is about constant re-adjustment in the flow of our life so we can always more freely express the inner spaces with which we come in contact, as our meditation and our understanding become more profound. By surpassing our narrow self-centered attitudes and giving others a

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privileged place, we attain ourselves our own nobility. By considering everyone as "another self" ["*Tout autre est un autre moi-même*"] as the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty said, I attain my humanity in full.

Very similar to of *ahimsa* the African concept of *ubuntu* symbolises the compassion, reciprocity, dignity, generosity and harmony, that create and maintain the social links within a community. *Ubuntu* means that what happens to others happens to me also: I suffer his or her pain; his or her joy is my joy; to humiliate him or her humiliates me, to honour him or her, honours me. It is precisely as Gandhi put it:

"Nonviolence does not just occur automatically. It is the highest quality of the heart and is only acquired by practice."

"Nonviolence, in its active sense, is goodwill towards every living thing. It is perfect love."

Patañjali refers to *maitri*, goodwill, brotherhood, friendliness, and love, in two *sutra* : I, 33 et III, 24.

Sutra I,33 presents "positive" mental states that enable us to create and maintain a pacified disposition, favourable to and welcoming whatever we encounter.

-I.33. *maitri karuna mudita upeksanam sukha dukkha punya apunya visayanam bhavanatah cittaprasadanam*
"By cultivating friendliness (maitri), compassion (karuna), joy (mudita), and indifference (upeksha) to pleasure (sukha) and pain (dukkha), virtue (punya) and vice (apunya), our consciousness becomes favourably disposed, serene and benevolent (citta prasadanam)."

-III.24. *maitryadisu balani*

"By perfecting friendliness (maitri) and other virtues (adishu) in relations with one and all, [the yogi] acquires strength (balani)."

Maitri helps us acquire moral strength, emotional force, and enables us to face the trials and tribulations of life and meet otherwise insurmountable challenges – see *sutra* I,33 and II,34 above. Whatever attitude others have towards us, we can only offer our own vulnerability as it is our only strength. When facing aggression, we must inhibit the reactive force which urges us to answer by another aggression in return, because this path leads nowhere – as seen in *sutra* II, 34.

It is an immense challenge that we need to weigh carefully: *ahimsa* requires that we take responsibility for all our emotions, thoughts, words and actions – and not judge, attempt to reform or force others in any way whatsoever. Everyone else is evolving, just as we are, towards their own perfection, and even if we think he or she is mistaken, we should do no more than let them acquire a greater and wiser degree of self-awareness in his or her own way.

The way to inner peace is a voyage on which the first step should not only be based on *ahimsa* but also bear in mind the following steps. In our approach to others, we should not only show interest but also respect, tolerate their difference, and beware of our prejudices and false beliefs. *Ahimsa* will become the way we regulate our relations with others, and condition our understanding of our own way of operating. No-one can claim to be free at the price of alienating others by indifference or withdrawal.

Yama and *niyama* are powerful forces that we should actively nurture and keep "vibrant" within ourselves – and remember they are rooted in *dharma* as universal and eternal laws establishing our humanity and dignity, for ever.

"These ethical precepts are always with us from the beginning to the end of the yoga journey, for the demonstration of one's spiritual realization lies in none other than how one walks among and interacts with one's fellow human beings."

"Progression in yoga is a moral one for a very practical reason rather than a judgmental one."

"Ethics is philosophy in action from giving a customer the right change to not wasting food. No spiritual improvement is attainable without an ethical framework. "

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"True ethics are not absorbed from outside conditioning." "Morality and ethics come from inside ourselves and are a reflection of consciousness."

"Yoga trains us away from our selfish, brutal motives and shows us how to complete our responsibilities."

"Spirituality is not playacting at being holy but the inner passion and urge for Self-realization and the need to find the ultimate purpose of our existence. Yama is the culture of self-restraint. Through Patañjali's principles of yama, he showed us how to overcome our human psychological and emotional weaknesses. Yama also means God of Death. If the principles of yama are not followed, we deliberately act as murderers of the soul. As beginners we may try to control only our bad habits. But, as time progresses, the dictates of yama become impulses of the heart."

B.K.S. Iyengar, *Light on Life*



The practice of yoga, or meditation, is a training for life, and not the opposite. In nature, everything has been planned in abundance so that all can benefit. Natural forces serve either for our enjoyment (*bhoga*) or our liberation (*apavarga*) [*Yoga-Sutra II, 18*]. Yoga refocuses us on the bright energy on which the universe is based and our practice consists in stabilizing such a disposition in our consciousness, and quitting "the dark side of the Force". For the yogi whose consciousness remains rooted in the Self, benevolence and joy are integral parts of his being. The natural state of our consciousness in its abode is described as *sat-citt-ananda*: be (*sat*) consciousness (*citt*) and joy (*ananda*). In this inner journey, *ahimsa* fulfills itself in *maitri*, love, the generous fragrance that emanates from a peaceful heart.

Lokah samastah sukhino bhavantu
May all the beings in all the worlds be happy!

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti
Om Peace, peace and peace be everywhere!

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परस्पररोपग्रहो जीवितानाम्

Sanskrit Lexicon

abhinivesa: instinct of survival, fear of dying
abhyasa: evolutive practice
ahimsa: non violence
anushasanam: inner discipline
artha: means of livelihood; aim, purpose
asana: posture
asmita: "I" consciousness
asthanga yoga: eightfold disciplines of yoga
atman: individual spiritual principle, soul
avidya: ignorance
bhavana: feeling, understanding
bhoga: enjoyment
brahman: the universal spirit
darshana: view, vision; "system"
dharana: focusing, concentration, attention
dharma: cosmic order; virtue, duty
dhyana: méditation, contemplation
drashtar: who-sees, the knower, the seer
drishya: the seen (experienced)
dukha: sorrow, pain, distress
dvesa: aversion, hate
guna: qualities of nature (*triguna*: 3)
Isvara pranidhana: surrender to Isvara
jati: birth (cast)
kama: desire; pleasure
karman: act, impact of the act
klesha: pain, innate conditioning
krodha: anger
lobha: greed
maha vrata: great vows
mahatma: great soul
moha: delusion

moksa: emancipation, liberation
nidra: deep sleep
nirodha: cessation, restraint
niyama: observances
pada: chapter; foot/leg
prakrti: nature, cosmos
pranayama: breath regulation
pratipaksha: opposite
pratyahara: withdrawal of senses
purusa: man; individual spiritual principle
purusa artha: aims of man's life
raga: attraction, attachment
raja yoga: royal yoga / Patañjali's yoga system*
rajas: dynamic nature quality (*guna*)
sadhana: spiritual quest, strategy, practice
samadhi: absorption, profound meditation
sanatana dharma: eternal law/order
sattva: bright nature quality (*guna*)
shanti: peace
smrti: memory
sthira: firm
sukha: easy, pleasant, happy
svadyaya: study of the Self /spiritual scriptures
tamas: inert/dark nature quality (*guna*)
tapas: burning effort, fervour, discipline
vairagya: detachment, dispassion
varna: cast, class (colour)
vikalpa: verbal illusion, pure imagination
viparyaya: inaccurate cognition, wrong belief
vrtti: movement, modification, mode
yama: restraints
yoga-darshana: Patañjali's yoga system*

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Purusha Artha – The four Aims of Man's Life

- DHARMA: conform to cosmic laws; carry out our duty according to our own nature's "virtue"
- ARTHA: acquire and manage the possessions we need to sustain our life and our family
- KAMA: enjoy life, fulfil our desires
- MOKSA: dedicate ourselves to our inner quest, self-realisation, emancipation.

Asthanga Yoga – Eight disciplines or aspects of yoga

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|--------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| - YAMA: | Restraints toward others | | |
| - NIYAMA: | Observances for one self | | |
| - ASANA | Posture | | |
| - PRANAYAMA: | Breathing | | |
| - DHARANA: | Concentration | S
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a | Meditative states |
| - DHYANA: | Meditation | | SAMYAMA : Integration |
| - SAMADHI: | Absorption | | |

Yama / Niyama – Code of conduct

- 5 YAMA: - Ahimsa: nonviolence, harmlessness
- Satya: truthfulness, sincerity; not to lie, hide or distort what is (sat)
- Asteya: not stealing or taking anything belonging to others
- Brahmacharya: continence, control and regulation of the sex drive
- Aparigraha: non-covetousness, being free from avarice; non-acceptance of gifts
- 5 NIYAMA: - Saucha: purity, cleanliness: external, internal, physical, organic, mental, spiritual
- Santosa: contentment, to be satisfied by what we are and what we have
- Tapas: continuous intense effort directed towards liberation with detachment
- Svadyaya: self-knowledge, study of the Self and of spiritual scriptures
- Isvara Pranidhana: surrender to Isvara, the divine presence pervading the whole cosmos

FIVE VRTTI Modifications – Modes of Consciousness CITTA-VRTTI

- Pramana: right knowledge : pratyaksa, perception, anumana, inference, agama, testimony (wise)
- Viparyaya: illusion, unreal cognition – "the snake in the rope"
- Vikalpa: imagination, inaccurate verbal knowledge – "the son of a sterile woman"
- Nidra: deep sleep – unconscious empty samadhi
- Smrti: (echo) memory, recollection

FIVE KLESHA – Sufferings / Conditioning

- Avidya: blindness, "failure-to-see", ignorance, lack of wisdom
- Asmita: relating any experience to oneself, self-centered consciousness
- Raga: attraction to what is pleasant / desire to repeat it / attachment that follows
- Dvesa: aversion to what is unpleasant / desire to avoid it / hatred that follows
- Abhinivesa: instinct of self preservation, fear of death

अहिस



Jiddu Krishnamurti

" Observing without evaluating is the highest form of human intelligence. "



Marshall B. Rosenberg

"Non violent communication is founded on language and communication skills that strengthen our ability to remain human, even under trying conditions. It contains nothing new; all that has been integrated into NVC has been known for centuries."

"NVC guides us in reframing how we express ourselves and hear others. Instead of habitual, automatic reactions, our words become conscious responses based firmly on awareness of what we are perceiving, feeling, and wanting. We are led to express ourselves with honesty and clarity, while simultaneously paying others a respectful and empathic attention." Non Violent Communication, A Language of Life



M.K. Gandhi

"I have found that life persists in the midst of destruction. Therefore there must be a higher law than that of destruction. Only under that law would well-ordered society be intelligible and life worth living. If that is the law of life we must work it out in daily existence. Wherever there are wars, wherever we are confronted with an opponent, conquer by love."



Nelson Mandela

"I have always known that deep down in every human heart, there is mercy and generosity. No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than the opposite.

Even at the grimmest times in prison, when my comrades and I were pushed to our limits, I would see a glimmer of humanity in one of the guards, perhaps just for a second, but it was enough to reassure me and keep me going. Man's goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never extinguished." (1994: 542)

"It was during those long and lonely years that my hunger for the freedom of my own people became a hunger for the freedom of all people, white and black. I knew as well as I knew anything that the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed. A man who takes away another man's freedom is a prisoner of hatred; he is locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. I am not truly free if I am taking away someone else's freedom, just as surely as I am not truly free when my freedom is taken from me. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity."

"For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others." (1994: 544)