

The Yamas and Niyamas

“When you pick one petal from the garland of yamas and niyamas the entire garland will follow.”

The yamas and niyamas are yoga’s ethical guidelines laid out in the first two limbs of Patanjali’s eightfold path. They’re like a map written to guide you on your life’s journey. Simply put, the yamas are things not to do, or restraints, while the niyamas are things to do, or observances. Together, they form a moral code of conduct. They are not rules to obey for fear of some kind of punishment but instead guidelines which if followed bring about peace and harmony.

Yamas (Behaviour restraints):

Ethical guidelines for the yogi pertaining to her relationship with others in society, the outer environment, or Nature. All the yamas apply to actions, words, and thoughts. These are 5 in number

Ahimsa (Non-harming):

Loving kindness to others, not blocking or obstructing the flow of Nature, compassion, mercy, gentleness. non-violence to all beings

Satya (Truthfulness):

Being genuine and authentic to our inner nature, having integrity, honesty, being honourable, not lying, not concealing the truth, not downplaying or exaggerating. Truthfulness.

Asteya (Non-stealing):

Not taking what is not yours—money, goods, or credit. Not robbing people of their own experiences and freedom. Non-desire for another’s possessions, qualities, or status. Non-stealing.

Brahmacharya (Walking or having ethical conduct like God):

Relating to another with unconditional love and integrity, without selfishness or manipulation. Practicing sexual moderation, restraining from sexual misconduct, and avoiding lustful behaviour. Celibacy/chastity.

Aparigraha (Non-clinging):

Non-grasping, non-receiving, non-possessiveness, voluntary simplicity, not accumulating things beyond what is necessary, non-attachment to possessions, greedless ness. Non-covetousness. Niyamas (Internal-restraints)

Niyamas

Ethical guidelines for the yogi pertaining to her daily activities. Observances of one's own physical appearance, actions, words and thoughts.

These also are 5 in number,

Shauca (Purity):

Cleanliness, orderliness, precision, clarity, balance. Internal and external purification. Cleanliness.

Santosa (Contentment):

Equanimity, peace, tranquility, acceptance of the way things are. Contentment.

Tapas (Heat):

Burning desire for reunion with God expressed through self-discipline, purification, willpower, austerity, and patience. Self-mortification.

Svadyaya (Study of the Self):

Self-inquiry, mindfulness, self-study, study of the scriptures, chanting and recitation of the scriptures. Searching for the Unknown (divinity) in the Known (physical world). Scriptural Study.

Ishvara Pranidhana (Devotional offering to the Divine):

Surrender to God, open-heartedness, love, "not my will, but Thy will be done," willingness to serve the Lord. Surrender to God.