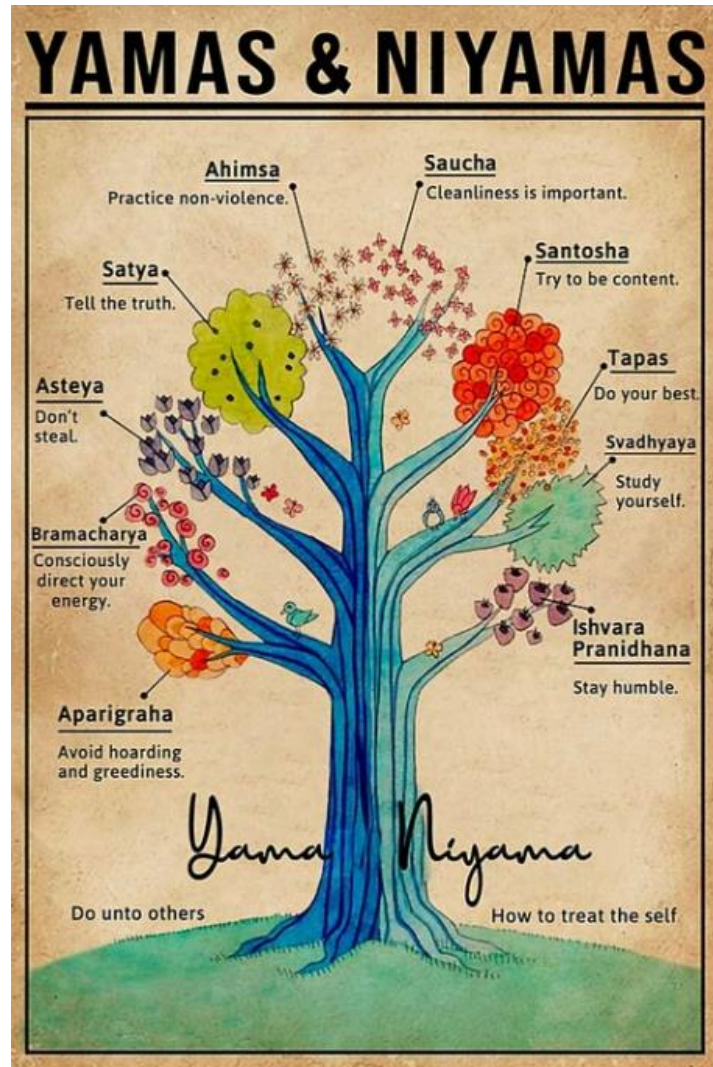




USC Yoga TT: The First Two Limbs Of Yoga The Yamas And Niyamas

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Introduction To the Yamas And Niyamas



- The **yamas** and **niyamas** constitute the ethical and social branches of Patanjali's classical Yoga system and outline relationship and moral precepts (1st Limb) and lifestyle guidelines and nourishing social qualities to develop (2nd Limb)
- The **yamas**, aka the 1st limb of Patanjali's Classical Yoga system (the No's/Don'ts), are ethical restraints, moral observances, relationship necessities, and/or qualities of "right living" that help us live with integrity and create choices true to our higher functioning selves; the yamas include **ahimsa** (non-violence), **asteya** (non-stealing), **satya** (non-lying or truthfulness), **brahmacharya** (divine awareness and energetic control), and **aparigraha** (non-greediness or generosity)
- The **niyamas**, aka the 2nd limb of Patanjali's Classical Yoga system (the Yes's/Do's), are proper social adherences and observances, self-discipline methods, and/or "qualities to nourish" in one's personal behavior that help develop wisdom; the niyamas include **saucha** (purity), **santosha** (contentment), **tapas** (austerity or overcoming something challenging), **svadyaya** (personal or self-study), and **isvara pranidhana** (devotion to something greater)

Ahimsa

"Non-violence is the greatest and most active force in the world. One cannot be passively non-violent... One person who can express ahimsa in life exercises a force superior to all the forces of brutality."

— Mahatma Gandhi, '*Gandhi on Non-Violence*'



- Ahimsa is non-violence and is the practice of not harming or injuring others in word, deed, thought, and/or action. It is exemplified in the first words of the Hippocratic Oath that doctors take: "First, do no harm." Some examples include not talking bad about others, not hurting yourself on your Yoga mat, becoming vegan or vegetarian, Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of resistance to British occupation, and Martin Luther King's approach to fighting for racial equality.

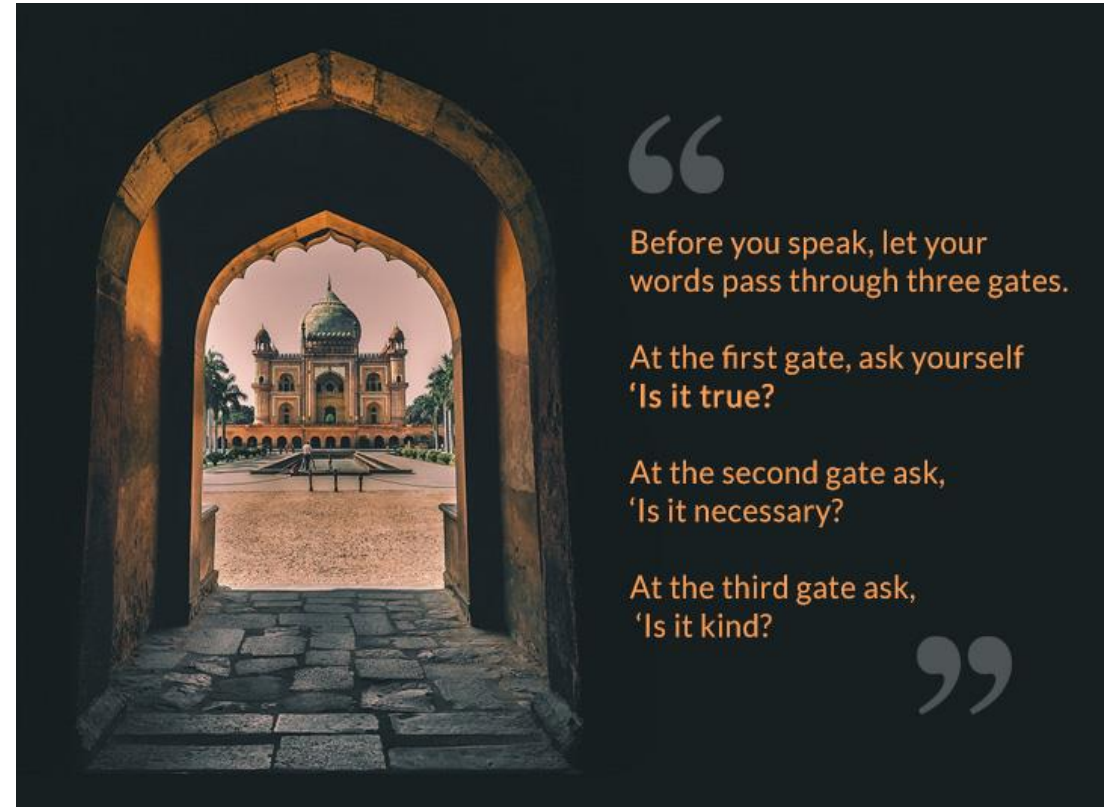
Asteya

- Asteya is the practice of not stealing, not being jealous, and of practicing generosity. Some examples include not taking things that aren't ours, not stealing someone else's work or ideas (plagiarism), not stealing someone else's time or energy, not forgetting to breathe in Yoga class, not taking resources or food that you don't intend to use or eat, and accepting who we are and where we are today with total contentment.



Satya

- Satya is the practice of honoring one's word, being honest, and thinking, speaking, and acting in truth. The practice of not lying, aka truthfulness, takes incredible strength, courage, and trust in oneself, especially in certain environments, yet it is one of the most important virtues in Yoga, as well as many religions. Some examples include being genuine or sincere, being honest with yourself each time you practice on your Yoga mat, giving feedback to others in a supportive and nurturing way, sharing your "real" thoughts and/or feelings with a therapist or a coach, and doing things that are in alignment with your higher purpose (dharma).



“

Before you speak, let your words pass through three gates.

At the first gate, ask yourself 'Is it true?'

At the second gate ask, 'Is it necessary?'

At the third gate ask, 'Is it kind?'

”

Brahmacharya



- Brahmacharya, literally “Godlike conduct,” is the practice of proper behavior, balanced lifestyle, sexual continence, moderation, self-restraint, and preserving one’s energy. Some examples include creating a safe space for yourself and others, keeping your attention on your own mat in a Yoga class, being courteous to others, not getting involved in romantic situations with co-workers or sexual situations with inappropriate boundaries, and conserving your energy when you are sick, injured, tired, and/or not capable of doing your best on a given day.

Aparigraha

- Aparigraha is the practice of non-possessiveness, non-greed, non-clinging, not coveting, and living simply. It outlines the differences between need Vs. want and highlights that “more is not always better.” Some examples include being less attached to having or owning “cool stuff,” not worrying about the future or clinging to the past, taking breaks when you need to and not competing with yourself or others on your Yoga mat, only buying clothes and products we actually plan to wear and use, donating to charity when able, complimenting others when they’ve done a good job, and not coveting what another person has on social media – because that’s not always real life.

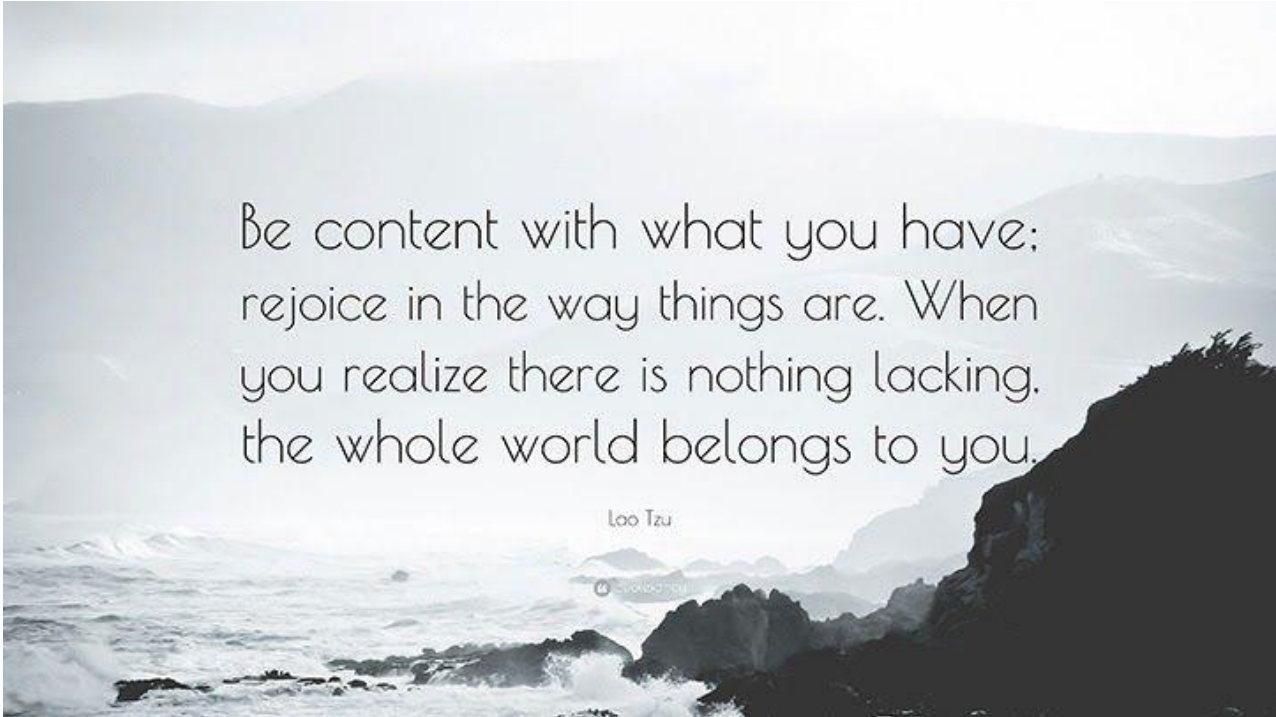


Saucha

- Saucha is the practice of purity or cleanliness, both from an inner and outer perspective. Some examples include regularly cleaning your room/apartment/personal environment, eating more fruits and vegetables and less processed foods, saying a prayer or “Grace” before eating, breathing through your nose on your Yoga mat, coming to class or work dressed professionally, keeping your mind focused on positive thoughts, and doing daily hygiene routines like showering, brushing your teeth, etc.



Santosha



Be content with what you have;
rejoice in the way things are. When
you realize there is nothing lacking,
the whole world belongs to you.

Lao Tzu

- Santosha is the practice of contentment, acceptance of “what is,” letting go of obsessive thoughts or plans for the future, and cultivating the feeling of being satisfied. Some examples include being content with yourself and accepting who you are, starting a regular meditation practice, not pushing too far on your Yoga mat, actively listening to others while engaged in conversation, and feeling satisfied with yourself at the end of the day knowing that you tried your hardest and did your best.

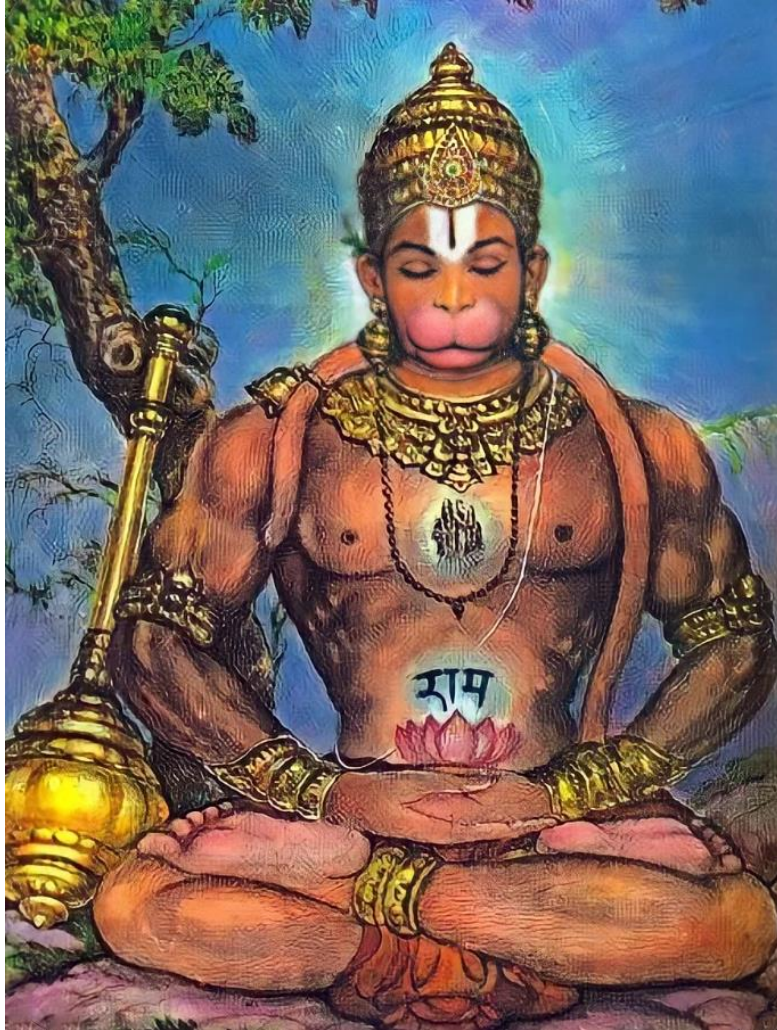
Tapas

- Tapas is the practice of self-discipline, austerity, self-motivation, learning new things, and overcoming challenges that brings about a transformative heat in the body, emotions, mind, or spirit and burns off impurities and/or one's ego. Some examples include developing a daily personal Yoga practice (sadhana) or a daily exercise routine, working on enhancing your form in an asana or pose on your Yoga mat, performing ujjayi pranayama breathing, and trying something new that you've always wanted to try even though it may be hard.

Tapas
तपस्

discipline, fervour, zealousness
burning off impurities, the yogic fire

Svadyaya



- Svadyaya is the practice of self-study, self-inquiry, and self-reflection. Some examples include keeping a journal, examining your thoughts when you meditate, observing how you treat others especially those who you have nothing to gain from, noticing how your performance on your Yoga mat varies when your energy is low/average/high, studying ways you can become more efficient in time management skills, studying sacred or religious texts, and introspectively learning about yourself as a human being and your role in the context of your life and your relationships.

Isvara Pranidhana

- Isvara Pranidhana, literally translated as “placing the Lord in front,” keeps one’s highest spiritual ideal in the foreground of one’s attention. It involves the practice of personal devotion, surrender, and absolute love for one’s chosen concept of God, Divinity, Spirit, saint, guru, or even Nature. Some examples include being of service to others, feeding the homeless, bowing on your Yoga mat to your True self, devoting your extra time to your religious/spiritual/Yoga practices, and feeling appreciation and reverence in your heart for the teachers, coaches, professors, and family members who have helped you become YOU.



Self-Reflecting On The Yamas And Niyamas

- As a self-reflective exercise, trace both of your hands on a piece of paper
- On one hand write **YAMAS** and on the other hand write **NIYAMAS**
- Write the Sanskrit name and 1 (one) definition for each of the 5 (five) yamas on your yamas hand drawing and the Sanskrit name and 1 (one) definition for each of the 5 (five) niyamas on your niyamas hand drawing
- Contemplate one way that you have personally practiced, wished you'd have practiced, or intend to start practicing for each yama and niyama
- Meditate, reflect, and write on the details of what happened and how it affected you or what it would take to begin each as a practice
 - Would practicing the yamas and niyamas change you for the better in any way? How?
 - What did/do you hope to learn about yourself as a result of each one?
 - Consider writing down your reflections in a notebook or journal and/or take a picture of the completed hand drawings on your phone or electronic device, so you can always remember (especially when placing your hands in prayer) some simple ways you can practice developing a yogic heart, mind, spirit, and life both on and off your mat.

