

Ahimsa is the Foundation of Yoga

By Sri Yogi Dharma Mittra



May the Lord bestow upon us the divine way to obtain Ahimsa. Reduce your wants and lead a happy and contented life. Never hurt the feelings of others and be kind to all. Think of God as soon as you get up and when you go to bed.

Yama is the first of the eight limbs of Yoga. Yama is Sanskrit for restraint. The Yamas are given in order for us to practice restraining ourselves from behaviors that may not benefit us. So, to lead an honest life in word and thought, it benefits us to restrain from dishonesty by practicing Satya (truthfulness). To restrain ourselves from non-violence, causing no harm or discomfort to any living being, any creature that has eyes, a beating heart, and breath, we practice Ahimsa (non-violence or non-killing).

Of all the virtues involved in the science of yoga, there is none higher than Ahimsa. Ahimsa is the golden thread that runs through all Yoga practice and is the foundation on which all Yogis build the Divine life. In order to keep this vow we must have the right knowledge and attitude. Practice of Ahimsa develops pure, unconditional and universal love.

The one message of all saints and sages is the message of love. Ahimsa is the highest of all traits found in the mind, speech and actions of all perfected souls. There is only one religion - the religion of love, of peace. There is only one message, the message of unconditional and universal love. Ahimsa is the supreme duty of a Yogi. If you are established in Ahimsa, you have attained all virtues. All virtues spring forth from Ahimsa.

Ahimsa may appear to merely imply non-killing. But, non-injury is not merely non-killing. The true meaning of Ahimsa is non-harming in thought, word and action. The absence of causing any harm to any living creature. Ahimsa is true strength. No Self-realization is possible without Ahimsa.

First control your physical body and do not give in to the lower and diabolical retaliation tendencies. This may be very difficult in the beginning. Remain calm, reflect and meditate. Remember the Guru and the teachings of forgiveness from all of the Masters. Very soon the old samskaras (past impressions) will begin to subside and

mind will become calm. Eventually you will gain tremendous strength and resolve and the lower reactive nature will be transformed into the sublime, gentle and kind nature of the true Self.

After controlling the body, begin to control speech. Make a solemn promise to speak only loving, truthful words, mindful that no harsh words be uttered. Observe silence. Just as with the conquering of physical violence, the violent speech tendencies will slowly diminish and be gone completely.

Eventually, you will learn to conquer all thoughts involved in harming or injury. This is sometimes the most difficult samskara to conquer, but you must always remember you are not your thoughts...they are merely a product of Prakriti, or nature. But as a Yogi, we must eventually control all thought projection, and the most important of all these is to control harmful thoughts. Never think of injuring anyone. Every time an injurious thought appears, remember the One Self dwelling in all. By injuring any aspect of God, you injure your own Self. By loving any aspect of God, you love your own Self.

This is pure love. The ability to place our selves in others is essential, thus how can we hurt others? It's just impossible! In other words, you must strive for at least a small amount of self-knowledge. Then it will be understood that only one Self, or one Supreme Self dwells in all beings. It's natural for old souls who are possessed by compassion to keep Ahimsa. In a short time they can enter the kingdom of God. Ahimsa is the foundation of yoga and all religion. Without it, we truly can not enter the Realm of God. The mind will never settle without Ahimsa, and Meditation will be almost impossible. Remember that Yoga is the settling of the mind into silence.

The imperishable force of God protects all who are rooted in Ahimsa. The practitioner of Ahimsa loses all fear and finds God very quickly, realizing the unity and oneness of Consciousness. All beings love life and have an equal right to live free from violence. The Yogi who realizes this will be in harmony with all creation. Make sure to learn to Love all.

May the Lord bestow upon us the divine way to obtain Ahimsa.

May all beings that I hurt by hands, ears, mouth, or thought accept my apologies and allow me to pay back whatever is necessary. Oh Lord may I be punished for my transgressions. Forgive me for all sins I've committed, and for all that are still to come.

A Students Reflection on Ahimsa thru the supreme example that is Dharma or righteousness:

I have the daily blessing of hearing Sri Dharma Mittra maintain the classical teachings of Yoga by reminding his students about the Yamas and Niyamas. Students are always reminded of the importance of a vegetarian diet. This is done very gently. It is lovingly suggested that we give up meat.

Sri Dharma has taught me by example what it means to practice Ahimsa. One day I was given the instruction to clean up a dead mouse or to ask Sri Dharma to do it. I chose to do it. I stood and watched in fascination as a bunch of ants crawled in and out of the physical body left behind by the mouse. Sri Dharma came in just as I moved closer to reach for the body. Sri Dharma told me to wait. He picked the body up with a bag over his hand, went outside, and gently tapped the body so the ants would fall off. I observed in awe. I was going to simply throw it out. I didn't think of the ants. I realized that they still had life. Their life would end were I to simply pick up the mouse's dead body and throw it away. With no air to breathe, they would suffocate in the bag.

Recently, in a brief conversation, Sri Dharma commented on how cold it was getting. I thought "Oh, he too worries about the cold." He followed up the statement by saying that he felt sad for all the animals. Again, I stood in awe.

As I see it, animals are early incarnations of souls in evolution. So, it makes sense to take care of them and to not take their lives. They are no less than us even though we are more evolved. I am filled with amazement when I think of the service that dogs do, working in Law Enforcement and helping guide the blind. They can also be our companions, along with cats, chickens, cows, pigs, lambs, goats, and so on.

Why is it important for Yoga Practitioners to have a vegetarian diet?

Sri Dharma reminds his students that God is at the center of the chest. This is our spiritual heart. As he teaches, the stomach residing underneath the heart center, is therefore the Lord's table. This made sense to me when I first heard it. In this day and age, there is far greater understanding of the effects of what we put into our bodies. Better than, putting dead flesh on the Lord's table, is drinking fresh juices and eating foods that vibrate with life. This is of great benefit to the body.

"Animals are our inferior brothers, they are not meant to be eaten, but must be treated with love."Sri Dharma Mittra

It is important to know that the production, slaughtering, and consumption of meat or animal products, and the methods by which animals are reared (animal concentration camps), in the commercial industry, are highly unethical. By not shopping at what Sri Dharma calls "the morgue", you are freeing yourself from participation and promotion of animal cruelty.

"Nothing will benefit human health and increase the chances of survival of Life on Earth as much as the evolution to a Vegetarian Diet."Albert Einstein

By practicing ahimsa with the smallest of creatures, we eventually become more compassionate to all beings. As we modify our diets, our bodies are cleansed of years of dead flesh that has physically, emotionally, and spiritually affected it. Our heart centers become clearer. We become more open. Where the body was once burdened, we

become lighter. This lightness is also needed for Asana, the third limb of Yoga. I would also venture to say that it is needed for all eight limbs.

All the students are grateful for the blessing of being in Sri Dharma Mittra's presence and seeing him offer the classical teachings to others as they were offered to him by his Guru. We are grateful to be his students and for everything he teaches us, especially by his supreme example.

Sri Dharma Mittra has been teaching in New York City since 1967. He is known worldwide for his Master Yoga Chart of 908 Postures and Maha Sadhana I & II DVD's. Sri Dharma's Shiva Namaskara Vinyasa propels the practice of Yoga into the 22nd Century. "The rock of Yoga", Dharma remains the humble and steadfast yogi. He has always been only wishing, "to serve and share my knowledge with others". He teaches daily at his school Dharma Mittra Yoga New York Center in the heart Gramercy Park. To find out information on classes, consultations, and Life of a Yogi Teacher Training Programs go to: www.dharmayogacenter.com

