

15 SHILAS (RULES OF BEHAVIOR) · 39 SOCIAL NORMS

Caryácarya Part 2, "Paiṅcadasha Shiila", c. 1975 · Caryácarya Part 2, "Social Norms", 1978

15 SHILAS (RULES OF BEHAVIOR)

1. Forgiveness.

To remain free from any wish to take revenge on anyone. Forgiveness is a matter of one's own life: a wrong done to me I may forgive as far as possible; a wrong done to society is not mine to forgive.

Forgiving is also for the one who forgives. Without forgiveness the mind keeps going back to the same thought, it does not let go, and you suffer from it. To forgive is to free yourself.

Research agrees. People who held grudges in their thoughts showed a higher heart rate and blood pressure than when they imagined forgiving (Witvliet CVO, Ludwig TE, Vander Laan KL, 2001, Psychological Science). Across 103 studies with 26,043 people, forgiveness went with better health, mental health most of all (Rasmussen KR et al., 2019, Psychology & Health). In controlled trials, learning to forgive lowered depression, anger and stress (Akhtar S, Barlow J, 2018, Trauma, Violence & Abuse).

Ánanda Vacanámrtam Part 4, "The Ten Characteristics of a Dhármika" (1978); Subhásita Saṁgraha Part 10, "Taking the Opposite Stance in Battle" (1970)

2. Magnanimity of mind.

A large heart: to care for others' interest, not one's own small one. Example: you are given two apples, and one of them is worse, rotten. You give the better one to a friend and keep the bad one. You do not think of your own selfish gain, you think of the other person. Courtesy is only a sign; magnanimity is to help the person one has hurt, even at one's own cost.

Human Society Part 1, "Social Justice" (1959)

3. Perpetual restraint on behaviour and temper.

Not to let anger and excitement rule one's words and actions, at any time. An angry person has already lost his judgement; a calm one can act wisely.

Subhásita Saṁgraha Part 10, "Taking the Opposite Stance in Battle" (1970)

4. Readiness to sacrifice everything of individual life for Ideology.

The ideology of Ananda Marga is self-realization and service to all: átma mokśártham jagat hitáya ca. Self-realization includes all the rules of conduct and all the spiritual practices; service includes work for the welfare of humanity and of the whole universe. It is the base of life: it decides how a person lives.

In everyday life one tries to follow the ideology. When there is a choice between following it and doing something that goes against it, one chooses the ideology and gives up other things for it.

To sacrifice one's life for the ideology means this: if it comes to betraying one's ideals and going against them, even under the threat of death, one must stand by them. One must keep to one's principles strictly, and be ready to follow the ideal so far that one would give one's life for it. It is a readiness, not a daily demand, but it shows what the ideal is: it is what makes a person human. "We say human life is an ideological flow", and "where there is no ideological flow it is an animal." One who gives up the ideal gives up that flow and slips down.

Ánanda Vacanámrtam Part 30, "Ascribe Brahma-hood to All" (1971); A Guide to Human Conduct, "Shaoca" (1957): "one who is dedicated to an ideal must be prepared to gladly and eagerly give up one's all – even one's life – for the collective interest."

5. All-round self-restraint.

Control in every sphere: food, sleep, speech, desire. Control does not mean killing a desire, it means guiding it.

A Guide to Human Conduct, "Brahmacarya" (1957)

6. Sweet and smiling behaviour.

To meet people warmly, with a kind word and a smile, so that they feel welcome and at ease.

7. Moral courage.

To do and say what is right even when it is unpopular, risky or against one's own interest; not to keep silent before injustice.

8. Setting an example by individual conduct before asking anybody to do the same.

First do it yourself, then ask others. People follow what they see, not what they hear.

9. Keeping aloof from criticizing others, condemning others, mudslinging and all sorts of groupism.

Not to speak ill of people and not to form cliques. When a few people sit together they start to criticize others, and this degrades the mind; it is better to sing the glories of the Lord.

Subhásita Saṁgraha Part 10, "Taking the Opposite Stance in Battle" (1970)

10. Strict adherence to the principles of Yama and Niyama.

The ten moral principles are the base of the whole practice; without them sáadhaná is not possible. See the Yama and niyama page.

11. Due to carelessness, if any mistake has been committed unknowingly or unconsciously, one must admit it immediately and ask for punishment.

When we make a mistake, a feeling of guilt can torment us. When we tell someone about it, ask for the punishment and carry it out, the guilt goes. It is as if a stone were lifted from our shoulders.

Ananda Marga Caryácarya Part 2, "Sáadhaná (Intuition Practice)" (1956): "If there is even a little fault in you, you should keep your mouth closed and accept it all, and you should thank the person for pointing out your fault and ask for punishment."

12. Even while dealing with a person of inimical nature, one must keep oneself free from hatred, anger and vanity.

Even with an enemy one keeps one's mind clean. Anger and hatred harm the one who holds them first; a calm mind deals with the enemy better.

Subháśita Saṁgraha Part 10, "Taking the Opposite Stance in Battle" (1970)

13. Keeping oneself aloof from talkativeness.

Not to talk too much or idly. Empty talk wastes energy and often turns into gossip.

14. Obedience to the structural code of discipline.

To follow the rules and the order of the organization one belongs to, not one's own will.

Why. If everyone acts on his own will, everyone pulls in his own direction, the work does not add up, and the collective is weak. Lack of discipline has often been the main reason a society was destroyed, and the indiscipline of some can make the peaceful life of the others impossible. Discipline is therefore absolutely necessary to keep the collective alive.

It does not forbid thinking. In the Marga reason comes after obedience: if after obeying one feels a rule is wrong, one has every right to argue and to have it changed; but arguing before obeying leads to indiscipline.

A Few Problems Solved Part 7, "Social Psychology" (1957)

15. Sense of responsibility.

What a person has taken on, he must see through to the end: do it, answer for it, not drop it half-way, and not pass the responsibility to others. If someone has taken up a task, he is the one answerable for it until it is finished.

39 SOCIAL NORMS

1. You should offer thanks to someone from whom you are taking service (by saying, "Thank you").

Every service, however small, deserves a "thank you". It shows respect and keeps the one who serves from being taken for granted.

2. You should promptly reply to someone's namaskāra in a similar way.

A greeting left unanswered hurts. Better still, greet first.

Subhāśita Saṁgraha Part 10, "Taking the Opposite Stance in Battle" (1970)

3. One should receive or offer something with the following mudrá: extend the right hand, touching the right elbow with the left hand.

A gesture of respect: one gives with full attention, with both hands, as it were.

4. One should stand up if any respectable elder person comes up to him/her.

A sign of respect for age and experience.

5. When yawning, cover your mouth, and at the same time make a snapping sound with your fingers.

So as not to show the inside of the mouth to others, and to keep the yawn from spreading tiredness.

6. When talking, always use respectful words about someone who is absent.

What we say of the absent shows who we are; and they cannot answer.

7. Before you sneeze, cover your mouth with handkerchief or hand.

Not only so as not to spread illness: also so that the droplets of saliva that fly out in a sneeze do not land on other people.

8. After cleaning the nasal duct, wash your hands. When distributing food, if you sneeze or cough, using your hand, wash your hands immediately.

Cleanliness for the sake of others' health.

9. After passing stool and using water, wash your hands with soap, rubbing the soap in the right hand first, and then cleaning the left hand with the right.

This way the soap itself stays clean (the soiled left hand never touches it) and others can use it after you.

10. Before you come up to people who are engaged in talking, seek their permission.

Their conversation may be private; one does not interrupt.

11. You should not engage in private (organizational) talk in a train, bus or other public transportation.

Strangers hear everything; organizational matters are not for them.

12. Do not take another's article without his or her prior consent.

This is asteya, non-stealing, in daily life.

13. Do not use anything that belongs to someone else.

Even without taking it away: what belongs to another is used only with permission.

14. When talking, do not hit anyone with harsh or pinching words: say what you want to say indirectly.

The truth can be told without wounding.

15. Do not indulge yourself in criticizing others' faults and defects.

First, it is a pointless waste of time. Second, it soils your own mind: when people sit together and criticize, the mind degrades. The rule is not "criticize once you are sure you have no such fault yourself". First look at yourself: this keeps you from judging; and if the fault has to be spoken of, say it kindly to the person himself, not behind his back.

Subhāśita Saṁgraha Part 10, "Taking the Opposite Stance in Battle" (1970) · Ananda Marga Caryācārya Part 2, "Sādhana (Intuition Practice)" (1956): "Before censuring anyone for some fault, make sure that you do not have the same defect."

16. When you are going to a meeting with office personnel, you should seek prior permission, or send your identity card, or get verbal permission.

Respect for others' time and work.

17. You should refrain from reading the personal letters of others.

Their private life is theirs.

18. When in conversation, give scope to others to express their views.

Listen, do not dominate.

19. When you are listening to someone, make a mild sound now and then to indicate that you are listening attentively.

So the speaker knows he is heard.

20. When speaking with someone, do not turn your eyes or face elsewhere.

Attention to the person shows respect.

21. Do not sit in a "zamindary posture" and dance your feet in a silly manner.

The landlord's lounging pose looks proud and careless before others.

22. **If someone you are going to speak with is writing at the time, do not look at his or her writing paper.**
It is private until shown.
23. **Do not put your fingers in your mouth and take them out repeatedly, and never cut your fingernails with your teeth.**
Cleanliness, and a habit that looks bad to others.
24. **During conversation, if you fail to understand something, humbly say, "Excuse me, please."**
Better to ask than to pretend.
25. **When someone is inquiring about your health and welfare, you should offer your cordial thanks to the person.**
Their care deserves an answer.
26. **One should not go to another's house or call after 9:00 P.M.**
The evening is the family's time and the time of rest.
27. **If you must convey something negative to someone, you should use the words "Excuse me" and then start your talk.**
It softens the blow and shows respect.
28. **Before you take a meal, you should wash your hands and feet.**
In some countries people eat sitting cross-legged on the floor, and then dirty feet should not be where one sits to eat. Where people eat at a table, the feet need not be washed for the meal.
29. **If you want to take honey, you should take it with water.**
Raw honey is very concentrated: about four fifths of it is sugar. Taken as it is, in a spoon, it is too much for the body, and that is not good for health. Water thins it. The World Health Organization counts the sugar of honey among the sugars to be limited, as it does the sugar in syrups and juices (WHO, Guideline: Sugars intake for adults and children, 2015); and when Shrii Shrii Ānandamūrti advises it to the obese, it is only a little, no more than three spoonfuls a day.
Yogic Treatments and Natural Remedies, "Obesity" (1958)
30. **Do not talk standing before someone who is eating.**
It disturbs the meal.
31. **Do not sneeze or cough when you are at the dining table.**
For the sake of others' food and health.
32. **Do not offer a food dish to anyone with your left hand.**
The left hand is used for washing after the toilet.
33. **Do not take a bath or shower, or drink water, from a standing position.**
The bath: sitting, the inner organs are relaxed and take cold water better. Drinking: sitting, a person drinks calmly, and does not get hiccups or discomfort in the throat and stomach.
34. **Do not pass urine or stool from a standing position.**
Sitting, one empties oneself fully. And those who urinate standing soil themselves: drops fall on their clothes and on the space around. Sitting keeps the body, the clothes and the surroundings clean.
35. **When your left nostril (idā nādī) is active you should take liquid food, and take solid food when the right nostril (piṅgalā nādī) is predominant.**
When the breath flows through the right nostril the digestive glands secrete enough fluid to digest, so this is the time for solid food, and it is good for the right nostril to stay open for some time after the meal. When the left nostril is active the digestive juices are not at their height, so the food should be light.
Ananda Marga Caryācarya Part 3, "Procedure for Eating" (1956)
36. **When your idā nādī is working predominantly, you should utilize the time for your sādhanā.**
Idā, the left channel, is the channel of the mind; piṅgalā, the right one, is that of physical force. Sādhanā is work of the mind, so it is done when the mind's channel is working.
Ānanda Vacanāmṛtam Part 2, "Love – the Essential Prerequisite" (1978)
37. **You should offer a drinking glass touching only its lower portion.**
The fingers do not touch the rim others drink from.
38. **When you are serving drinking water to someone, first wash the glass with the help of your fingers, then without the help of your fingers, then fill it with water.**
Clean inside, and the last rinse without the fingers that touched it.
39. **If you are sweating profusely at the time of taking food, you should remove the sweat with your handkerchief.**
So that it does not fall into the food, and out of regard for others at the table.