

***Ahiṃsā as the Inner Discipline of Indian Philosophy: A Study of
Mīmāṃsā, Yoga and Vedānta***

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Abstract

Ahiṃsā is often translated as non-violence, but in Indian thought it is much deeper than the simple absence of physical injury. It is a discipline of the body, speech and mind. It asks a human being not to harm another by action, by words, by intention, by carelessness, or even by supporting harm done by others. This article examines the idea of *ahiṃsā* primarily through three important systems of Indian philosophy: *Mīmāṃsā*, *Yoga*, and *Vedānta*. *Mīmāṃsā* is usually known as the school of Vedic ritual, yet its deeper concern is dharma and the right meaning of sacred action. When read carefully, many ritual words such as *ālam bhana* and *medha* need not be treated as permission for cruelty. They can also be understood as symbolic, cosmic and purifying acts. *Yoga* presents *ahiṃsā* as the first *yama*, the first social vow, and makes it the foundation of all other moral practices. Patañjali and Vyāsa show that true non-violence is not limited by caste, place, time or situation. *Vedānta* gives *ahiṃsā* a metaphysical basis by teaching that the same Self is present in all beings. To injure another is, in a deep spiritual sense, to injure oneself. The article argues that *ahiṃsā* in Indian philosophy is not a weak or passive idea. It is a strong way of seeing life, training desire, interpreting scripture and building a peaceful society.

Keywords: *Ahiṃsā*, *Mīmāṃsā*, *Yoga*, *Vedānta*, *Yama*, *Dharma*, *ālam bhana*, *yajña*, Self, Indian philosophy

Introduction

Indian philosophy does not begin with dry theory. It begins with life. It asks how a human being should live, how desire should be guided, how knowledge should be used, and how freedom can be reached without wounding the world on the way. In this search, *ahiṃsā* stands like a quiet lamp. It is not always the loudest word in every text, but it keeps returning. Sometimes it appears as a rule. Sometimes it appears as a vow. Sometimes it appears as a sign of wisdom. Sometimes it appears as the natural fragrance of spiritual vision.

The word *ahiṃsā* is made from the negative prefix and the root *hiṃs*, meaning to injure, strike, hurt or harm. Its first meaning is therefore non-injury. But the Indian use of the word is richer. *Ahiṃsā* is refraining from killing. It includes not giving pain, not creating fear, not supporting cruelty, and not allowing the mind to become a hidden workshop of anger. A person may avoid physical violence but still wound others through insult, envy, exploitation, neglect or selfish interpretation of religion. The Indian sages were aware of this subtle problem. Therefore, they placed *ahiṃsā* not merely in the hand but also in speech and thought.

A well-known traditional definition says, *ahiṃsā sarvathā sarvadā sarvabhūtānām anabhidrohaḥ*, meaning “*ahiṃsā* is the absence of hostility towards all beings, in every way and at all times.” This definition, connected with the *Yoga* tradition through Vyāsa’s commentary on

Patañjali's *Yoga-sūtra*, is very important.¹ It does not say that *ahimsā* is only an outer rule. It says that the heart must give up *abhidroha*, the inner movement of ill-will. This makes *ahimsā* a psychological discipline as well as an ethical one.

The subject becomes more interesting when we bring together *Mīmāṃsā*, *Yoga* and *Vedānta*. This three-system approach to life is from different doors. *Mīmāṃsā* studies dharma through Vedic injunctions and ritual language. *Yoga* studies discipline, mind, suffering and liberation through practice. *Vedānta* studies Brahman, the Self and the final truth of existence. Yet all three touch the same flame. *Mīmāṃsā* asks whether ritual can be understood without violence. *Yoga* asks how non-violence can become a practical vow. *Vedānta* asks why the wise person cannot hate or injure any being after knowing the Self.

This article uses a simple method. It reads important Sanskrit statements, gives them in Roman diacritics, explains their meaning in simple English, and then draws out their philosophical importance. The aim is not to repeat old ideas mechanically. The aim is to show how *ahimsā* can be understood as a complete vision of life. The idea is not a museum object. It speaks about food habits, ritual practice, animal life, social speech, religious authority, ecological care and personal freedom. In a time when violence often wears respectable clothes, the careful study of *ahimsā* can clean the mirror of our thinking.

The wider setting: *darśana* and the moral search

The Sanskrit word *darśana* means seeing. A *darśana* is not only a system of arguments. It is a way of seeing reality. Indian tradition speaks of six *āstika* or Veda-affirming systems: *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā* of Jaimini, *Yoga* of Patañjali, *Vedānta* of Bādarāyaṇa, *Sāṅkhya* of Kapila, *Nyāya* of Gautama and *Vaiśeṣika* of Kaṇāda. Each has its own style. *Mīmāṃsā* is careful about the meaning of Vedic sentences. *Yoga* is careful about the movements of the mind. *Vedānta* is careful about the final unity behind all appearances. *Sāṅkhya* explains the difference between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. *Nyāya* examines valid knowledge. *Vaiśeṣika* studies categories of reality. Together, these systems do not merely ask, "What exists?" They also ask, "How should one live with what exists?"

The question of *ahimsā* belongs to this second question. No philosophy becomes complete if it explains the world but makes the heart hard. A person may know many categories, quote many scriptures, or perform many rituals, yet if that person delights in hurting living beings, something essential has failed. Indian philosophy repeatedly joins knowledge with self-control. It asks the seeker to purify the instrument of knowledge, namely the mind itself. A violent mind cannot see clearly. Anger bends the truth. Greed changes the meaning of scripture. Pride turns religion into a weapon. *Ahimsā* therefore protects both the victim and the seeker. It protects the weak from injury, and it protects the strong from becoming blind.

This wider setting is important because *ahimsā* is sometimes reduced to a single moral slogan. It is much more than that. In *Mīmāṃsā* it becomes a problem of interpretation: how should one understand difficult ritual words? In *Yoga* it becomes a daily discipline: how should one train thought, speech and action? In *Vedānta* it becomes a truth of vision: how can one harm another when the same ‘Self’ is present everywhere? The three systems form a triangle. The first corner is scriptural responsibility. The second is practical discipline. The third is spiritual insight. *Ahimsā* stands at the centre of this triangle.

***Mīmāṃsā* and the re-reading of ritual action**

Mīmāṃsā begins with the famous *sūtra*, *athāto dharma-jijñāsā*, “Now, therefore, the desire to know *dharma*”.² This opening is simple but powerful. The school is not merely interested in ceremonies. It is interesting in *dharma*, that principle by which action becomes meaningful and beneficial. *Dharma* cannot be reduced to habit, custom or the convenience of a priestly class. It must be understood through careful inquiry.

In discussions of *ahimsā*, *Mīmāṃsā* is often placed in a difficult position because Vedic ritual literature contains terms that look connected with animal offering. Words like *paśu*, *medha* and *ālabhana* have been taken by some as proof that Vedic sacrifice requires killing. More careful reading opens another path. The word *paśu* need not always mean a living animal to be killed. In Vedic usage it can also denote a bound force, a cosmic principle, an object of ritual attention, or a symbolic representative. The word *ālabhana* can mean taking hold, touching, supporting, contacting or ritually employing. It need not always mean slaughter. The word *medha* can mean consecrated offering, wisdom, strengthening or a sacrificial structure. If one forces every such word into the narrow sense of killing, the scripture becomes smaller than its own language.

A key passage states, *agniḥ paśur āsīt tena ayajanta*, “Agni was the *paśu*; with him they performed the sacrifice”.³ Yāska also discusses this Vedic expression in the *Nirukta*, *agniḥ paśur āsīt, tam ālabhanta, tena ayajanta*.⁴ A crude reading may imagine an animal called Agni being killed. A wiser reading sees Agni as the cosmic fire, the power by which cooking, transformation, digestion and life become possible. In this sense, the “taking” of Agni in sacrifice is not violence against fire. It is the ritual recognition of fire as a creative principle.

The Ṛgvedic line *stomēna hi divi devāso agnim ajījanan śaktibhiḥ rodasiṣrām; tam ū akr̥ṇvan tredhā bhuve kaṃ sa oṣadhīḥ pacati viśvarūpāḥ*, “By praise the gods generated Agni in heaven with their powers, filling heaven and earth; they made him threefold for the worlds, and he cooks the plants of many forms”,⁵ supports such an understanding. Agni is not a helpless victim. Agni is a cosmic agency placed in heaven, atmosphere and earth. To interpret this as animal killing would be like mistaking a map for the mountain itself. The ritual language points to cosmic process.

The same symbolic movement appears in the discussion of Vāyu and Sūrya. Vāyu is life-breath, movement and the power by which the cosmic body and the human body are organised. The R̥gvedic invitation, *vāyav ā yāhi darśata ime somā aram̐kṛtāḥ; teṣāṃ pāhi śrudhī havam*, “O beautiful Vāyu, come; these soma offerings are prepared. Drink of them and hear our call”,⁶ is not the language of cruelty. It is the language of invitation. Vāyu is honoured as a life-giving power. Similarly, Sūrya is not an animal to be injured but a radiant principle whose light makes visibility, growth and time possible.

This approach helps us understand ritual names such as *puruṣamedha*, *aśvamedha* and *gomedha* with care. *Puruṣamedha* is not a command to kill human beings. The *Puruṣa* hymn, *sahasraśīrṣā puruṣaḥ*, “The Puruṣa has a thousand heads”,⁷ shows that puruṣa is a cosmic being, not a private individual dragged into violence. Some ritual explanations say that people connected with different social functions are symbolically assigned and then released. The deeper movement is renunciation, self-offering and the surrender of ego. A later statement linked with the life of renunciation says, *saṃnyasya sarvakarmāṇi karmadoṣān apānudan; niyato vedam abhyasya putraiśvarye sukham vaset*, “Renouncing all actions and removing the defects of action, disciplined and studying the Veda, one may live peacefully with sons and prosperity”.⁸ The heart of the matter is not killing but rising beyond narrow selfhood.

Aśvamedha also demands careful reading. *Aśva* can mean horse, but in Vedic symbolism it can also represent energy, speed, royal power, the sun and the movement of time. The year-long movement of the *aśva* can be understood as a ritual image of the sun’s course. Many details of the rite, such as time, directions, guardians, binding and release, gain symbolic meaning in relation to the solar year and royal order. This does not erase the fact that some historical practices may have become violent. It does show that the scriptural imagination is broader than the later habit of literal slaughter.

Gomedha and *gavāmayana* are especially important because the cow is treated as motherly and nourishing. A traditional idea says, *gāvo vā ādityāḥ*, “The cows are the *Ādityas*”.⁹ Here go points towards radiance, nourishment and solar movement. Another strong moral sentiment says that the cow is like a mother and the bull like a progenitor. To harm such beings is not a sign of *dharma*. Some *smṛti* texts warn that practices like *aśvāmbha* and *gavāmbha* are to be abandoned in the Kali Yuga or Age. The verse *aśvāmbhaṃ gavāmbhaṃ saṃnyāsaṃ palapaitṛkam; devarāc ca sutotpattiṃ kalau pañca vivarjayet*, “In the Kali age five practices should be avoided: horse-offering, cow-offering, certain forms of renunciation, meat offerings to ancestors, and producing a son through the husband’s brother”,¹⁰ shows a clear moral caution.

The *Mīmāṃsā* discussion finally teaches an important lesson: scripture must not be read with a hungry knife. If a word has a non-violent meaning that fits the larger spirit of *dharma*, that meaning deserves serious attention. Ritual is meant for order, gratitude, purification and welfare. It is not a theatre for cruelty. If later human beings turned symbolic or cosmic rites into violence,

the fault lies not in the highest intention of dharma but in the fall of understanding. *Ahiṃsā* here becomes a hermeneutic principle. It guides interpretation. It asks the reader to protect life while reading sacred speech.

***Ālambhana*, symbolism and ethical caution**

The difference between *ālambhana* and *hiṃsā* is central. *Ālambhana* can mean contact, support or taking as a ritual basis. *Hiṃsā* means injury. Confusing the two creates moral danger. It allows a person to say, “The text commands harm,” when the text may be asking for symbolic participation in a cosmic process. Such confusion is not harmless. Language can become a blade if handled without conscience.

The deeper *Mīmāṃsā* insight is that Vedic rituals often make the unseen visible through representation. Just as a map helps a student understand geography without becoming the earth itself, ritual forms can represent cosmic events without literally repeating them. Fire, breath, sun, earth, plants, animals and human roles become symbols of larger realities. When the symbolic form is mistaken for physical license, ritual loses its moral centre.

This point is not only historical. It has present value. Many communities still face the question of how to honour tradition without repeating harmful customs. *Ahiṃsā* gives a path. It does not ask us to insult the past. It asks us to read the past with a cleaner heart. It allows ritual to remain meaningful while removing cruelty. It says that sacrifice should be the sacrifice of greed, anger and pride, not the blood of a frightened creature.

***Yoga* and *ahiṃsā* as the first social vow**

If *Mīmāṃsā* brings *ahiṃsā* into the field of interpretation, *Yoga* brings it into daily practice. Patañjali’s *Yoga* system is concerned with the purification of citta, the inner field of mind. A traditional praise of Patañjali says, *yogena cittasya padena vācāṃ malaṃ śarīrasya ca vaidyakena; yo’pākarot taṃ pravaraṃ munīnāṃ patañjaliṃ prāñjalirānato’smi*, “With Yoga he removed the impurity of the mind, with grammar the impurity of speech, and with medicine the impurity of the body. I bow with folded hands to Patañjali, the great sage.” This verse itself gives a complete vision: mind, speech and body must all be purified. *Ahiṃsā* touches all three.

Patañjali lists the *yamas* in a famous *sūtra*: *ahiṃsā-satyāsteya-brahmacaryāaparigrahā yamāḥ*, “Non-injury, truthfulness, non-stealing, celibate restraint and non-possession are the *yamas*”.¹¹ *Ahiṃsā* comes first. This order is not accidental. Truth without non-violence can become harshness. Non-stealing without non-violence can remain only legal honesty. *Brahmacarya* without non-violence can become pride. *Aparigraha* without non-violence can become dry withdrawal. *Ahiṃsā* softens and steadies the other vows.

Vyāsa's commentary makes the point even stronger: *tatrāhiṃsā sarvathā sarvadā sarvabhūtānām anabhidrohaḥ; uttare ca yama-niyamās tan-mūlāḥ*,¹² "Among these, *ahiṃsā* is the absence of hostility towards all beings, in every way and at all times; the later *yamas* and *niyamas* are rooted in it". This is one of the clearest ethical statements in Sanskrit thought. *Ahiṃsā* is not one rule among many. It is the root. It is the soil in which the other disciplines grow.

Yoga also refuses to make *ahiṃsā* a small vow limited by convenience. Patañjali says, *jāti-deśa-kāla-samayānavacchinnāḥ sārvaabhaumā mahāvratam*,¹³ "When not limited by class, place, time or circumstance, these vows are universal and become the great vow". This line has a sharp edge. A person may say, "I will not harm except people of this group," or "I will not harm in this holy place," or "I will not harm on this sacred day," or "I will not harm unless custom permits it." Patañjali cuts through these excuses. True *ahiṃsā* is not a festival decoration. It is a universal discipline.

The *Yoga* tradition also analyses how violence grows. Patañjali says, *vitarkā hiṃsādayaḥ kṛtā-kāritānumoditā lobha-krodha-moha-pūrvakā mṛdu-madhyādhimātrā duḥkhājñānānanta-phalā iti pratipakṣa-bhāvanam*,¹⁴ "Negative thoughts such as violence may be done by one, caused through others, or approved; they arise from greed, anger or delusion; they may be mild, medium or intense; they bear endless fruits of suffering and ignorance. Therefore, one should cultivate the opposite thoughts." This is a very modern psychological insight. Violence is not only the act of the hand. It is also planning, ordering, approving, enjoying and justifying harm.

The classification is fine and frightening. One may kill, make another kill, or silently approve killing. One may act through greed, anger or delusion. One may harm in a mild, medium or intense form. Each pattern creates suffering and ignorance. The mind that harms become less capable of truth. It becomes dull, restless and fearful. *Yoga* therefore prescribes *pratipakṣa-bhāvanā*, the deliberate cultivation of the opposite. Against hatred one must cultivate compassion. Against cruelty one must cultivate tenderness. Against greed one must cultivate contentment. Against anger one must cultivate patience.

The fruit of perfect *ahiṃsā* is described beautifully: *ahiṃsā-pratiṣṭhāyām tat-sannidhau vaira-tyāgaḥ*,¹⁵ "When one is firmly established in *ahiṃsā*, hostility ceases in one's presence". The meaning is not magic in a childish sense. It is the natural influence of a purified being. A person deeply established in non-violence does not send out signals of fear, rivalry or domination. Even those who are usually hostile feel disarmed. The old commentarial imagination says that animals with natural enmity, such as snake and mongoose, horse and buffalo, mouse and cat, may give up hostility near such a yogin. Whether read literally or symbolically, the meaning is luminous: the atmosphere of a non-violent person becomes a small forest of safety.

***Vedānta* and the spiritual ground of non-injury**

Vedānta gives *ahiṃsā* its deepest metaphysical ground. If the same Self is present in all beings, then violence is based on false seeing. It arises because we imagine the other to be separate, disposable or inferior. *Vedānta* does not deny practical differences. A child, a cow, a tree, a scholar and a stranger are not the same in social function. Yet the inner light of existence is one. When this is seen, cruelty begins to look absurd.

The *Īśā Upaniṣad* begins, *īśāvāsyam idaṃ sarvaṃ yat kiñca jagatyāṃ jagat*,¹⁶ “All this, whatever moves in the moving world, is covered by the Lord”. This sentence is a seed of *ahiṃsā*. If all is pervaded by the divine, nothing is merely raw material for selfish use. The world becomes a sacred dwelling. The human being is no longer an owner with absolute license. He becomes a trustee, a participant, a caretaker.

The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says, *eṣa sarveṣu bhūteṣu gūḍho 'tmā na prakāśate*,¹⁷ “This hidden ‘Self’ in all beings does not shine forth openly”. The Self is hidden because ordinary sight is covered by desire and fear. We see names and bodies quickly, but we do not see the inward presence. Spiritual practice is the slow education of sight. *Ahiṃsā* becomes possible when the other is no longer seen as an object.

The *Bhagavadgītā* gives this *Vedāntic* vision in practical language: *sarvabhūtastham ātmānaṃ sarvabhūtāni cātmani; īkṣate yogayuktātmā sarvatra samadarśanaḥ*,¹⁸ “The self-disciplined by *Yoga* sees the Self abiding in all beings and all beings in the Self; such a person sees equally everywhere”. This equal vision does not mean foolish sameness in daily duties. It means equal sacredness. It means one cannot enjoy the pain of another. The next step is *ātma-aupamyā*, seeing others by comparison with oneself. The *Gītā* says, *ātmaupamyena sarvatra samam paśyati yo'rjuna; sukhaṃ vā yadi vā duḥkhaṃ sa yogī paramo mataḥ*,¹⁹ “One who sees pleasure and pain everywhere by comparison with oneself is considered the highest yogin”. This is ethical imagination at its finest. Before harming, one can ask: would I accept this pain for myself?

The *Mahābhārata* tradition gives a clear moral expression:

ahiṃsā paramo dharmastathāhiṃsā paro damaḥ /

*ahiṃsā paramaṃ dānamahiṃsā paramo tapaḥ //*²⁰

“Non-violence is the highest *Dharma*, and non-violence is the highest restraint. Non-violence is the highest charity, and non-violence is the highest penance.” The same tradition knows the complexity of life, kingship, duty and social conflict. Yet it never allows cruelty to become spiritually beautiful. The highest fragrance of dharma is still non-injury.

Vedānta also contains debates on ritual violence. Some commentators, while accepting the general prohibition *na hiṃsyāt sarvā bhūtāni*, “One should not injure any beings,” discuss whether Vedic ritual action can form a special case. The debate is technical and connected with the rules of general and special injunctions. But the deeper *Vedāntic* movement is towards purification of the heart and knowledge of the Self. Even when technical discussions exist, they should not be used as a license for ordinary cruelty. The person seeking Brahman cannot cultivate a taste for harm. A heart full of violence is not a fit mirror for the Self.

From rule to character

Ahiṃsā travels through three levels. First, it is a rule: do not injure. Secondly, it is a discipline: remove the inner causes of injury. Thirdly, it is a vision: see the Self in all. These levels should not be separated. If *ahiṃsā* remains only a rule, it may become external and fear-based. If it remains only inner feeling, it may fail to protect actual beings. If it remains only metaphysical language, it may become beautiful but weak. The fullness of *ahiṃsā* requires all three.

Mīmāṃsā protects *ahiṃsā* by demanding responsible interpretation. Yoga protects it by training body, speech and mind. *Vedānta* protects it by transforming vision. Together, they show that non-violence is not laziness. It is active intelligence. It requires study, restraint, compassion and courage. It is easier to strike than to understand. It is easier to quote a text for one’s convenience than to interpret it with humility. It is easier to hate than to examine the wound from which hatred arises. *Ahiṃsā* is difficult because it asks for inner work.

This is why the Yoga classification of violence is so valuable. ‘Harm’ can be direct, indirect or approved. In modern life, much violence is indirect. A person may not hold a knife but may support systems that injure animals, exploit workers, insult communities or destroy nature. A person may not shout but may spread bitterness through writing. A person may not kill but may laugh at cruelty. *Yoga* would not call such a person innocent. It asks us to examine the chain of participation.

***Ahiṃsā* and Speech**

Speech is one of the means where *ahiṃsā* is tested. Words can heal, but they can also bruise the mind. The Yoga tradition places *satya* after *ahiṃsā*. This order teaches that truth must be spoken in a way that does not become necessarily violence. Vyāsa’s explanation of *satya* says that speech should be for the benefit of all beings, *sarvabhūtopakārārtham*, and not to harm others. Truth is not a stone to throw at someone’s face. It is medicine. Medicine may be bitter, but it should be given to heal, not to display superiority.

This does not mean that *ahiṃsā* asks us to hide truth. It asks us to purify intention. Sometimes one must speak firmly against injustice. Silence before cruelty can become approval. But firm

speech should not be hateful one. *Ahiṃsā* is not weakness. It is strength under discipline. It can oppose wrong without enjoying the humiliation of the wrongdoer.

***Ahiṃsā* and food**

The question of food appears naturally in discussions of non-violence. Indian texts contain different historical practices, but the moral direction is clear: reduce injury, cultivate purity, and do not turn appetite into a sacred excuse. When the cow is described as motherly and nourishing, and when traditions warn against animal slaughter in sacrifice, the ethical meaning is strong. Food is not only nutrition. It shapes the mind. A diet born from fear and blood may not support a calm contemplative life.

At the same time, the article must be honest. Indian society has always had diversity in food habits. The philosophical point is not to create hatred towards people. That itself would violate *ahiṃsā*. The point is to recognize the moral value of reducing harm wherever possible. *Ahiṃsā* asks every person and community to move towards gentleness according to capacity, knowledge and sincerity.

***Ahiṃsā* and Ecology**

Ahiṃsā also speaks to ecology. *Mīmāṃsā*'s symbolic reading of Agni, Vāyu, Sūrya, Earth, plants and animals show that ritual imagination once saw the cosmos as a living order. Fire cooks. Air breathes. Sun nourishes. Earth bears. Plants feed. Animals share the field of life. If these are seen only as resources, violence becomes normal. If they are seen as participants in a sacred order, restraint becomes natural.

The *Īśā Upaniṣad*'s opening, *īśāvāsyam idaṃ sarvaṃ*, has ecological power. A world covered by the divine cannot be treated as a warehouse without limit. Modern ecological destruction is often violence at a distance. Rivers are injured, forests are cut off, animals lose homes, and future generations inherit a wounded earth. *Ahiṃsā* must therefore grow from personal morality into environmental responsibility. The old word becomes a new necessity.

***Ahiṃsā* as courage**

Some people misunderstand *ahiṃsā* as fearfulness. This is a poor reading. True non-violence requires great courage. It is not the helplessness of one who cannot strike. It is the self-mastery of one who can strike but refuses to become a servant of anger. It is not passivity before injustice. It is the refusal to copy the cruelty of the unjust.

In *Yoga*, *ahiṃsā* is called a *mahāvratā*, a great vow. A small vow can be kept when convenient. A great vow tests the whole person. It tests the tongue when insulted, the hand when provoked, the mind when jealous, the stomach when tempted, the scholar when interpreting scripture, and

the leader when holding power. *Ahiṃsā* is a great vow because it asks the human being to become greater than instinct.

The unity of the three approaches

The beauty of studying *Mīmāṃsā*, *Yoga* and *Vedānta* together is that each corrects a possible weakness in the others. *Mīmāṃsā* without *Yoga* may become only arguments over words. *Yoga* without *Mīmāṃsā* may ignore the careful interpretation of tradition. *Vedānta* without *Yoga* may speak of oneness but leave the mind untrained. *Vedānta* without *Mīmāṃsā* may neglect the responsibility of scriptural reading. But together they form a complete path.

Mīmāṃsā says: Read carefully, do not use sacred words to support harm. *Yoga* says: Live carefully, do not allow harm to body, speech or mind. *Vedānta* says: See carefully, the same Self shines in all beings. These three sentences can guide a full life. They also answer a common doubt. Is *ahiṃsā* only moral, only spiritual, or only social? All three attributes are in *ahiṃsā*. It is moral because it guides conduct. It is spiritual because it purifies the heart for liberation. It is social because it protects the vulnerable and creates trust.

***Ahiṃsā* for the present world**

The present world is full of refined violence. There is violence in war, in the market, in language, in caste pride, in gender injustice, ecological damage, in religious hatred, and in the quiet indifference that watches suffer without moving. In such a world, *ahiṃsā* must not remain a decorative Sanskrit word. It must become a working principle.

For education, *ahiṃsā* means teaching students to argue without contempt. For religion, it means worship without cruelty and interpretation without selfishness. For politics, it means power without dehumanizing opponents. For family life, it means affection without domination. For scholarship, it means honesty without arrogance. For ecology, it means development without destroying the living web. For personal life, it means training the mind before it becomes a battlefield.

The old texts do not give ready-made answers to every modern problem. They give something more valuable: a way of thinking. They ask us to examine action, intention, consequence and vision. They ask us to reduce harm, purify speech, question greed, and see life as interconnected. This is why *ahiṃsā* remains alive.

Conclusion

Ahiṃsā is one of the most mature ideas of Indian philosophy. It is not merely a rule against killing. It is a complete discipline of seeing, thinking, speaking and acting. In *Mīmāṃsā*, *ahiṃsā* appears as a principle of responsible interpretation. Ritual terms such as *paśu*, *medha* and

ālabhāna should not be quickly turned into permission for violence. The deeper meaning of sacrifice is purification, cosmic harmony and surrender of selfishness. In *Yoga*, *ahiṃsā* becomes the first *yama* and the root of all other vows. Patañjali and Vyāsa make it universal, not limited by class, place, time or custom. They also show that violence is not only done by hand; it can be done, caused or approved, and it grows from greed, anger and delusion. In *Vedānta*, *ahiṃsā* receives its highest ground in the unity of the Self. When the same *ātmā* is seen in all beings, cruelty loses its false justification.

The three systems thus carry *ahiṃsā* from ritual language to personal discipline and finally to spiritual vision. This movement is important for today. A society cannot become peaceful only by law. It needs a new way of reading, a new way of training the mind, and a new way of seeing others. *Ahiṃsā* offers these three. It does not ask life to become weak. It asks life to become clear, brave and compassionate.

The final message may be stated simply. *Dharma* is not served by cruelty. *Yoga* is not perfected by hatred. *Vedānta* is not realized by a heart that enjoys injury. The true seeker must make the body harmless, the speech truthful and gentle, the mind free from ill-will, and the vision wide enough to include all beings. Then *ahiṃsā* is no longer a word. It becomes a way of being.

References

1. *Yoga-sūtra*, 2.30
2. *Mīmāṃsā-sūtra*, 1.1.1
3. *Yajurveda*, 23.17
4. *Nirukta*, 12.24
5. *Ṛgveda*, 10.88.10
6. *Ibid*, 1.2.1
7. *Yajurveda* 31.1; *Ṛgveda* 10.90.1
8. *Manusmṛti*, 6.95
9. *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa*, 4.17
10. *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* (Kṛṣṇa-janma-khaṇḍa, Chapter 185, Verse 180)
11. *Yoga-sūtra*, 2.30
12. *Vyāsa-bhāṣya* on *Yoga-sūtra*, 2.30
13. *Yoga-sūtra*, 2.31
14. *Ibid*, 2.34
15. *Ibid*, 2.35
16. *Īśā Upaniṣad*, 1
17. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 1.3.12
18. *Bhagavadgītā*, 6.29
19. *Ibid*, 6.32
20. *Mahābhārata*, *Anuśāsanaparvan*, Chapter 117, Verse 37

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