



Govinda Valley Ashram & Yoga School

Code of Conduct Policy

Revision Log (Version Control)

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The wise who searched deep within their heart could discern between that which is and that which is not.

- Rig Veda

Purpose of the Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct affirms Govinda Valley's commitment to behaviour that is socially, morally, and spiritually responsible. This is required to ensure fulfillment of the Govinda Valley Ashram and Yoga School's mission, which is to train, educate and facilitate society in pursuing the genuine principles and practices of yoga. In support of this mission, and a learning environment that is harmonious, progressive, and necessary to the growth and learning of all, Govinda Valley expects all students and faculty to attain and maintain a high standard of personal conduct and commitment to yoga practice.

Scope of the Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct applies to all Students throughout the period of their enrolment with Govinda Valley Ashram and Yoga School – whether on or off-property.

Guiding Principles of the Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct provides the framework of principles and practices used to guide all students and faculty members in their dealings with each other, with Heart and Soul Retreats guests, management staff, suppliers, and the general public. It is based upon the eternal moral principles that form the foundation of all yoga practice. These are known as the *Yamas* and *Niyamas*, as delineated by Patanjali Muni in his famous *Yoga-Sutras*. They are as follows:

5 *Yamas* (The Five Restraints)

1. **Ahimsa** (non-violence): *Ahimsa* implies the non-injuring of any living creature in thought, word or deed. Rather, one should be compassionate and show mercy to all, recognizing the true equality of all living beings by dint of their spiritual nature. This principle is the foundation of yoga's commitment to a vegetarian diet.
2. **Satyam** (Truthfulness): *Satyam* refers to maintaining integrity in thought, word, and deed, as well as committing one's life to the highest path of truth and reality.



3. **Asteya** (Non-Stealing): *Asteya* means not taking for oneself what belongs to others. Moreover, it means not exploiting the resources of the creation unnecessarily beyond one's basic requirements, knowing well that all things are merely borrowed from the creator and never actually owned by ourselves.
4. **Brahmacarya** (Celibacy): *Bramacharya* means to restrain one's sexual energy for the sake of higher spiritual practice, and to not involve oneself with others simply for the sake of exploiting them as objects of desire.
5. **Aparigraha** (Non-Greediness): *Aparigraha* means giving up the tendency to accumulate more than necessary, or indulge oneself to excess.

5 Niyamas (The Five Cultivations)

1. **Saucham** (Cleanliness): *Saucham* means the cultivation of cleanliness - or purity - both internal and external. This enables one to always remain progressive in spiritual development, while maintaining an environment that is physically and mentally conducive to self-realization.
2. **Santoshā** (Contentment): *Santoshā* means an attitude of contentment with what one has, as opposed to anxiety for what one hasn't. Contentment develops from satisfaction from within the self, rather than the vain seeking of fulfillment in external things.
3. **Tapas** (Austerity): *Tapasya* means to voluntarily accept some difficulty for the sake of higher achievement. Essentially this means accepting the disciplines necessary to progressive spiritual practice.
4. **Svādhyaya** (Self-Study): *Sva-dhyaya*, literally 'study of the self', means to study the true nature of one's eternal spiritual existence. In practice this mainly involves two activities: Study of the ancient sacred texts that illuminate the subject, and reflection and contemplation through meditative practice.
5. **Isvara Pranidhana** (Surrender to the Supreme): *Isvara-Pranidhana* means dedicating one's existence to the service of the Supreme. This is accomplished through a progressive development of service and devotion, culminating in *prema*, the highest stage of transcendental love.

Code of Conduct

1. PLANT-BASED DIET

- 1.1. Refrain from consuming any meat, fish and eggs on or off property.



- 1.2. Refrain from bringing or consuming non-sattvic food on site; in particular that which contains meat, mushrooms, garlic, onions, leeks, eggs, etc.

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2. STIMULANTS AND/OR SUBSTANCES OF ADDICTION

- 2.1. Abstain from intoxicants (drugs, alcohol, nicotine, caffeine etc) on or off-property.
- 2.2. Abstain from any substance and/or mediums of addiction (if the individual is living with an addiction of whatever kind, for example, video game addictions) on or off-property.

Please note: When it comes to any illegal or illicit activities such as substance abuse, sexual harassment, bullying, etc. we have a zero-tolerance policy. Any infractions in this regard will result in your immediate, non-negotiable departure from Govinda Valley.

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3. INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

The purpose of joining the Study Program at Govinda Valley is personal growth and spiritual transformation. Though we learn and work together as a group, a student's four-month stay at the Yoga School is very much an individual journey of self-discovery and personal transformation. For this experience to be truly effective however, it will require total focus and a steady commitment to your personal process for the duration of the course.

While friendships naturally develop, students should be cautious about fostering emotional intimacy and developing specific personal attachments. The foundational principle of spiritual growth emphasises self-sufficiency and freedom from dependency on external validation. Therefore, developing attachments of an emotional nature, particularly during this transformative phase, is discouraged. Such attachments will not only pose a significant obstacle to your individual spiritual development, but will also work to compromise the integrity of the *ashram* environment.

At Govinda Valley, we recognise that romantic relationships are a fundamental part of an individual's life journey. Such relationships however, require commitment and the necessary personal space for their development. The *ashram* setting is simply not conducive to this purpose. Indeed such activities directly undermine the basic intention of *ashram* life. Consequently, students who become involved – during the course of their stay – in pursuing such personal relationships will be asked to leave. This adjustment will not only better support the effective development of such a relationship, but it will help preserve the clear intention of everyone else's spiritual purpose.



- 3.1. Refrain from cultivating any new emotional or physically intimate relationship with another individual beyond the confines of a collegial friendship.

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4. DRESS CODE & CLEANLINESS

- 4.1. Dress in clean, modest apparel appropriate for all cultural, spiritual, and interpersonal circumstances for *ashram* life.
- 4.2. Outside of your physical practices and exercises, wear clean, modest clothing that is not revealing.
- 4.3. Abstain from nudity when in public spaces. Sunbathing and partial nudity are not permitted.
- 4.4. Remove shoes before entering the Lunar, Solar or Lotus Room and *Ashrams*.

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5. SERVICE (*SEVA*)

The yogic practice of *seva* involves rendering service in a spirit of humility and gratitude. Such *seva* is foundational to the whole meaning and purpose of yoga. In a profound way yoga and *seva* are essentially the same thing. Through the practice of *seva* we directly counteract all our self-centred and self-absorbed tendencies while cultivating a generosity of spirit and kind consideration for all other beings. Such attributes are critically important, not just for spiritual growth, but for any level of success and happiness in human life.

- 5.1. Arrive to service punctually (on time), in appropriate apparel for the task/s involved and in a cooperative attitude.
- 5.2. Take instruction from Department Heads provided they are reasonable and do not place yourself or others at risk of harm.
- 5.3. Adhere to the rules and expectations of your relevant service area.
- 5.4. Operate all machinery, electric tools or vehicles with caution and understanding of the safety measures and procedures. If this is not possible, seek an experienced person to assist you in operating them.
- 5.5. Sick leave – Communicate with your Department Head immediately if you feel you are unfit for service and cooperate to create alternative arrangements.

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6. INTERPERSONAL BEHAVIOUR

- 6.1. Interact with all individuals with an attitude of honesty, humility, and cooperation.

- 6.2. Refrain from gossip, demeaning, and untrue discussions or interactions with others.
- 6.3. Take instruction from Faculty and Directors provided they are reasonable and do not place yourself or others at risk of harm.
- 6.4. Communicate clearly, honestly, and with the intention and effect of promoting harmony with all individuals including guests, students, and faculty.
- 6.5. Topics of discussion should be constructive and conducive to spiritual development.
- 6.6. The practice of Silence (*maunum*) is not to be engaged in during service hours.

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7. BULLYING, HARASSMENT, AND DISCRIMINATION

Bullying is repeated and unreasonable behaviour directed towards another or a group of people that creates a risk to health and safety.

Harassment generally involves unwelcome behaviour that intimidates, offends or humiliates a person because of a particular personal characteristic such as age, race, gender, disability, religion or sexuality.

Discrimination generally occurs when someone is treated less favourably than others because they belong to a particular group of people, or because they have a particular characteristic such as age, race, gender, disability, religion or sexuality.

Therefore, all students, staff, and faculty members must:

- 7.1. Refrain from any behaviour that may be classified as bullying, harassment or discrimination to ensure a safe and welcoming learning environment is maintained.
- 7.2. Alert Management or Department Heads immediately if you suspect or know that you or another person is at risk or experiencing bullying, harassment, and/or discrimination. Please note that Management is required to discuss any instances of the above amongst the Management Team and at times, the individual/s involved to determine the appropriate actions needed to preserve and promote the safety of everyone involved.

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8. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR SAFETY, HEALTH, AND WELLBEING

Govinda Valley is an *ashram* and Yoga School dedicated to education from the Vedic and Yoga worldview, and does not serve as any other facility for example but not limited to, a health, rehabilitation, and/or counseling service. Thus, whilst Govinda Valley will to the best of its ability create a safe and healthy environment to support the intention of education, it is every individual's responsibility to address their own health (physical, emotional and/or mental) concerns, safety, and overall well being. Therefore,

- 8.1. I take full responsibility to maintain, monitor and address my own mental, physical, and emotional health and well being.
- 8.2. I understand and acknowledge that the training, programs, and events held at Govinda Valley may expose me to inherent risks, including accidents, injury, illness, or even death. I assume all risk of injuries associated with participation including, but not limited to, falls, contact with other participants, the effects of the weather, including high heat and/or humidity, and all other such risks being known and appreciated by me. I acknowledge my responsibility in communicating any physical and psychological concerns that might conflict with participation in activity. I acknowledge that I am physically fit and mentally capable of performing the physical activity I choose to participate in.

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9. INTERACTION WITH HEART & SOUL RETREATS CLIENTS

- 9.1. Prioritise the comfort and convenience of Heart and Soul Retreats clients and assist them when requested or the need becomes apparent.
- 9.2. Take meals 15 minutes after clients.
- 9.3. Be mindfully silent (speak softly, move with minimal noise creation, and refrain from playing music) on the property from 9:00 PM - 7:30 AM.
- 9.4. No showers after 9.00 PM.
- 9.5. Refrain from any loud music at any time to maintain respectful silence of the retreat.
- 9.6. Play only sattvic yogic music in shared facilities.

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10. COMMITMENT TO THE TRAINING PROGRAM

- 10.1. If you must leave the course prematurely, advise the Student Supervisor of your intention to leave with 2 weeks of notice.
- 10.2. Accrue hours for premature leave following discussions with Management.

- 10.3. Attend all classes punctually – unless your service precludes you attending, or by agreement with the Teacher.
- 10.4. Attend the weekly General Meeting punctually.
- 10.5. Complete your sadhanic practice (prescribed practice) strictly every day and as detailed by the Course Teacher.
- 10.6. Complete your 28 hours of service weekly (typically 4 hours X 7 days).

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11. VEHICLES

Govinda Valley maintains a small fleet of vehicles. The conditions for use of a Govinda Valley vehicle are as follows:

- 11.1. You must have a current driver's licence that is acceptable in Australia (an Australian State Licence or an International Licence).
- 11.2. Be over 25 years of age and have at least two years of licensed driving experience.
- 11.3. Only use the vehicle at the request of the Management Team – and only for Govinda Valley business use (such as picking up supplies).

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12. KITCHEN RULES

The Govinda Valley Kitchen is a dedicated sacred space. Yoga teaches us that the type of food we eat greatly affects our consciousness for better or worse. Therefore, at Govinda Valley we pay particular attention to the consciousness in the kitchen with regards to preparation, offering, and serving of food. In this regard, please note the following points:

- 12.1. Maintain a high level of personal hygiene at all times (shower, clean clothes, short nails).
- 12.2. Always wear an apron and cover your hair while serving in the kitchen.
- 12.3. Always wear sleeved shirts (Arm pits must be covered).
- 12.4. Always wear enclosed shoes.
- 12.5. Do not consume any food or drink item during preparation & cooking unless outside kitchen boundaries.
- 12.6. The cook in charge must ensure the food is sanctified before serving by chanting of appropriate mantras.
- 12.7. Always wash hands if you happen to touch the floor, your hair, mouth, or phone.
- 12.8. Separate between utensils for cooking, for transfer, and for eating.

- 12.9. If you want to have a snack or a drink of water, you must leave the kitchen area. Wash your hands and mouth before re-entering.
- 12.10. Do not store personal items in the kitchen fridges. A Student fridge is provided for personal use.
- 12.11. Do not take any food from fridges or storerooms without permission of the Department Head.
- 12.12. Unless agreed by prior arrangement with the Department Head we do not cater for any special food requirements.

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13. TAKING LEAVE

- 13.1. Arrange with agreement from your Department Head:
 - Day/s and time required for leave
 - The undertaking of extra service to accrue hours needed to accommodate leave from service
- 13.2. Sick leave - Communicate with your Department Head immediately if you feel you are unfit for service and cooperate to create alternative arrangements.
- 13.3. Refrain from an overnight leave throughout your first course at Govinda Valley.

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14. SUSTAINABILITY

- 14.1. Turn off lights, fans, and heaters before you leave a room.
- 14.2. Turn off wall switches when not in use.
- 14.3. Be mindful of water usage.
- 14.4. Limit use of clothes dryers as much as possible.
- 14.5. Sort rubbish into recycling and landfill bins.
- 14.6. Refrain from feeding birds, deer or any other wildlife. This prevents wildlife from becoming dependent on artificial food sources, entering the dining hall, biting guests and students, and eliminating in and around the dining area.

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15. STUDENT MANUAL

- 15.1. Please read the Student Manual and adhere to all the rules and expectations contained therein.

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16. INSTRUCTION OF DEPARTURE

- 16.1. Even after accepting a student's enrolment, Govinda Valley reserves the right, in its absolute discretion, to terminate that enrolment for any reason without notice or cause.
- 16.2. In cases where on review, Management concludes that a course participant is simply unable to maintain the necessary standards required, either by the training course itself, one's service obligations, and/or the communal lifestyle, then they may be asked to leave. In this case, generally a period of 1 week's notice for departure will be given. However, depending on the nature and severity of the breach, termination and departure may be immediate.
- 16.3. In all cases where the departure of a student is required, formal notice will be given in writing.

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17. BREACHES TO THE CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY

Govinda Valley expects that everyone associated with the project will conduct themselves in a professional, ethical, and socially acceptable manner at all times. Failure to comply with the principles or spirit of the Code/general policy framework, will be considered a serious breach of standards, and investigated.

- 17.1. Govinda Valley reserves the right to dismiss any persons off their property and terminate their stay, education and/or involvement effective immediately. This may be communicated verbally or in writing.
- 17.2. Specific breaches of the Code of Conduct/policy framework will result in disciplinary action. This may range from a verbal warning to termination of your scholarship, immediate departure, and forfeiture of your bond.
- 17.3. While the Student Code of Conduct provides general guidance and minimum expectations regarding your conduct, no code or policy can cover every conceivable circumstance you may face. In everything you do, you are expected to listen to and act upon your conscience and help maintain the Govinda Valley standards and facilitate the spiritual growth of yourself and others.

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I understand and agree to comply with all that is contained within the Code of Conduct.

_____ (Signed)

_____ (Full Name)

_____ (Date)