

March 6 Day 36

“Action expresses priorities.” M.K. Gandhi

This quote is echoes one of Gandhi's heroes, Ralph Waldo Emerson, “*What you are stands over you the while, and thunders so that I cannot hear what you say to the contrary.*” The words that we speak are merely words. Our actions, however, express what is true for us in the moment of that action. We cannot proclaim nonviolence and expect others to believe us unless our actions reflect nonviolence. The Roman historian, Tacitus, said, “*where they make a desert, they call it peace.*” This is a wonderful description of those who proclaim nonviolence while using violence to achieve it.

Often in our zeal to achieve our goal, we commit violence upon those who oppose us. In doing so, we not only fail to achieve our goal, we actually set our cause back. Our actions, in every case, express our true priorities. We never get to say, “*But their actions made me...*” This statement is not only an echo of childish rationalization, it actually expresses our priority, winning.

When someone uses the principles of nonviolence as a tool to achieve their own agenda, they will always become violent when confronted with frustration and disappointment. The priority was, after all, not nonviolence, but achieving the goal. This is why nonviolent movements often fail. Only when our priority is nonviolence for nonviolence's sake can we succeed.

Remembering that our actions express our true priority are also a way for us to monitor who we really are. Humans are remarkably adept at self-delusion. But when we monitor our actions as a daily practice, we will always see the true priorities behind our illusion and denial. Seeing our illusions and self-denial, we can revisit our core beliefs and heal whatever it is that has caused us to lose sight of them in our actions and priorities.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my true priorities. Today, I will be aware of my actions and what they proclaim about my priorities.

March 7 Day 37

“The first condition of nonviolence is justice all around in every department of life.” M.K. Gandhi

How often do we hear people complain, “*It's not fair!*” when what they really mean is, “*It's not just!*” Justice and fairness are two entirely different things. In fact, what people really mean when they use the word “fair” is usually the childish concept of “*I want it my way!*” “*Fair*” used in the context of justice frequently means “*I want my idea of justice given to me the way I want it, and I want it now.*”

We are not talking here about the human justice or legal system. What passes for justice in the world is about manipulating the laws of man to give us the result we want. True Justice is just another name for the Law of Cause and Effect, or the Law of Natural Consequences. This Law of Higher Justice is sometimes difficult to live with, as it judges all equally, surely and dispassionately. True nonviolence requires that we allow this law to apply to every living being evenly and consistently. This means that our every action should be governed by this law, and applied in every area of life, professionally, personally, politically and philosophically. We do not get to apply them differently to one group over another, because we agree with one group and not the other or because one group supports us and the other opposes. The old political idea of “*He may be a scoundrel, but he's our scoundrel*” has no home in true justice.

nonviolence requires that we embrace this larger idea of Justice, where we allow the Laws of Natural Consequences to be applied evenly, consistently and equitably to all, and in every area of our lives. This means it starts in our families and our friendships and then expands out into all areas of human interaction. It means that we desire justice for everyone, including those who oppose us and use violence against us. Only in this

way can nonviolence become a reality, in our lives and in our world.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on what justice is to me. Today, I will be an impartial observer of how justice is, or is not, applied in the world around me. Today, I will know for each person I interact with the Truth that the Divine Law of Justice is operation in his/her life, whether I agree with them or not. This is the path of nonviolence.

March 8 Day 38

“Man and his deed are two distinct things. It is quite proper to resist and attack a system, but to resist and attack its author is tantamount to resisting and attacking oneself.” M.K. Gandhi

When we attack the character or personal life of the messenger of an opinion, we demonize everyone who holds that opinion. Demonization of those we disagree with is probably as old as humankind. It's possible to imagine the earliest of humans, demonizing those who encroached on their territory, characterizing them as devils, demonic spirits and so forth. But in today's world with mass communications and global access to the spoken and written word from everywhere, we are bombarded with it daily, as our recent election showed. Demonizing those people and causes we disagree with lowers the level of discourse to the point where we invite our opponent to demonize us. Such behavior never solves problems or settles conflicts but increases tensions and the possibility of physical violence.

That is only half of the truth, however. Gandhi has a deeper message here. There is one Universal Source of all life. When we attack and demonize any part of that life, we attack it all. WE are part of that All and as such, the Divine Power within us, and as us is infinite. Each of us is using that Divine Power to the best of our ability to see and know Truth. Whether we see it clearly or “through a glass darkly” is the result of every experience we have ever had. We see only as much Truth as our beliefs allow. Attacking any other person or group is attacking the Divine Consciousness of which we are all a unique expression. When I, in my unique expression of the One, attack you, in your unique expression of the One, I am attacking the One. In attacking the One, I attack myself, because I am that, too.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my oneness with those people and causes I oppose. Today, I will resist those opinions, beliefs and actions I disagree with, and NOT the messenger that delivers them. This is the path to nonviolence.

March 9 Day 39

“When nonviolence is accepted as the law of life, it must pervade the whole body and not be applied to isolated acts.” M.K. Gandhi

To be truly nonviolent, we must claim it in every part of our lives. As Gandhiji said, it must become the law of life. That means our whole life, not just our public life, nor our spiritual life, or our political life, not just our thoughts, or our words, or our actions. The law of life means every part of the life we are. The path of nonviolence, then, is the path of growing and evolving as an individual into the person who can live that law in all areas of life. We are NOT that now. That is why we talk about the path of nonviolence it is our goal.

None of us has achieved that goal yet. Indeed, as long as we have physical bodies, we shall not have achieved it. Having physical bodies, we have needs and desires in all the various areas of our lives. Having needs and desires means the fear of loss, or of not getting what we desire will always drive us toward violence by our very nature. The evolution of humanity into a nonviolent species, then, begins with each of us in our personal

evolution. Our personal evolution means we must become aware of the urges, desires and fears that drive us to violence in all the various parts of our lives. Only when we make a conscious effort to be truly aware of all our acts, in all the arenas of our lives, can we truly begin practicing the law of life in our lives.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on nonviolence as the great law of life. Today, I will make my every action, in every part of my life a conscious opportunity to practice nonviolence. This is the path of nonviolence.

March 10 Day 40

“Moral support cannot really be given in the sense of giving. It automatically comes to the one who is qualified to take it. And such a one can take it in abundance.” M.K. Gandhi

Seeking moral support from others is something all of us do at times, especially when we believe we hold the “moral high ground”. But Gandhiji’s point here is that moral support is never given, it is earned. No one “owes” us the gift of support because of our position, our goals or our organization. Those who give us support for those reasons are not giving moral support, but ego support. Those who truly give us moral support do so, not as a gift, but as an automatic soul response to our consciousness. By consciousness, we do not mean the ordinary definition of “the normal state of conscious life ”. We’re talking about deep authentic spiritual consciousness.

Gandhi and King gained support and succeeded, not because of what they did, but because of who they were. The real work of nonviolence is always done within. Until that work is done, nothing that we do will bring us the support we seek. Once we have done that work, the rest, as Gandhi says, becomes automatic. When we have done the work in consciousness that makes us fit messengers of moral Truth, we become like spiritual magnets, attracting to us all those like-minded souls who resonate with both our message and our consciousness. In other words, once this interior work is complete, we become qualified, and the whole universe rushes in to support us by right of consciousness.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my consciousness. I will ask myself the question, “Have I done the work in consciousness that qualifies me to accept moral support.” Today, in all my actions I will ask, “Does this action, and the consciousness behind qualify for support?” Today, I will remember that if I am not getting the support I need, it is about my consciousness and no one else’s. This is the path of nonviolence.

March 11 Day 41

“It is unwise to be too sure of one’s own wisdom. It is healthy to be reminded that the strongest might weaken and the wisest might err.” M.K. Gandhi

The road to success in any endeavor is always strewn with the potholes of ego. One of the biggest is this, that we begin to believe the high opinion others may have of our lofty wisdom. Even worse is to believe that success on our path equates to a validation of our intelligence, wisdom and consciousness. It may, but it is not for us to believe it or we have closed the doors to the infinite possibilities of the universe.

The most important factor in continued success on whatever path we walk is to remember that we are not “finished”. Zen Master Roshi Shunryu Suzuki said, “*In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities, but in the experts, there are few.*” When we begin to believe that we are the expert at whatever we do, we have closed the door on recognizing new possibilities and ideas. When that happens, our downfall is inevitable. Our job is always to remain in the consciousness of beginner’s mind.

What might beginner’s mind look like to one who has walked far enough to become a leader in any movement?

It would look like this, “We are on the same path together, I am only a few steps further along.” This opens us to the conscious awareness that we can stumble, we can take the wrong path and we do NOT always have the perfect answer. In any arena, on any path, perfection is always a goal, not a destination.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on this question, “Am I in beginner’s mind?” Today, in all my actions and interactions, I will ask myself, “Are there possibilities here I have missed? Is there a new lesson here for me to learn?” This is the path of nonviolence.

March 12 Day 42

“I claim to be a simple individual liable to err like any other fellow mortal. I own, however, that I have humility enough to confess my errors and to retrace my steps.” M.K. Gandhi

Once we have attained to “Beginner’s Mind”, Gandhi calls us to learn “humility enough”. Perhaps one of the most nonviolent systems of thought to arise out of the American experience is that of the various Twelve Step Programs. They are programs of profound humility, honesty, self-responsibility, and acceptance. Step Ten of the Twelve Steps states “Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.” This step states precisely what Gandhi is claiming for himself. We may claim to be in Beginner’s Mind, but unless we admit openly to our mistakes, we are deluding ourselves. It also requires that we acknowledge our mistakes to at least one other person and then correct the error we have made.

This doesn't mean we admit errors to ourselves and then take steps to correct them without anyone knowing. “Humility enough” means that we admit our mistake to at least one other person and then take the steps to correct it. One of the great dangers for those who are called to a path of change is that we begin to believe our own inerrancy and invincibility. This action of admitting it to one or more other people will continue reinforcing that Beginner’s Mind and will always keep our feet on the path with “humility enough”.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on “humility enough”. What does this mean to me? How does it help me in the work I do on the path of nonviolence? Today, I will review all my actions and when I have made a mistake, I will find someone I trust to admit it to. Then I will take whatever actions necessary to correct my error.