

March 13 Day 43

"My imperfections and failures are as much a blessing from God as my successes and my talents and I lay them both at his feet." M.K. Gandhi

Remaining in Beginner's Mind and confessing our errors brings us another gift. When we admit that we are not perfect, we open ourselves to the real work we are here to do. We are born into the world to complete a task. No one else has come into this world to complete this particular task because it is a task, first and foremost, that must be completed within us and *then* by us. Whether we call it a mission from God, or karma or destiny or the will of Allah is immaterial. We have it to do!

The path of nonviolence we have set our feet upon begins and ends within ourselves. What occurs outside of us is merely an effect of the work we do within. As hard as it may sometimes seem, giving thanks for our imperfections and failures is as important as being grateful for our successes. Perhaps more so, because our successes can lull us into forgetting the work within.

Our imperfections and failures are blessings precisely because they remind us of our real work. They are beacons, pointing the way to the task we are here to do. Failures are simply external evidence of our imperfections. When we fail we are being given a gift, because it reminds us that we are not yet perfect. We will never finish the interior work, it is the job of a lifetime. The gift of failure is that it allows us to continue the path of our own personal spiritual evolution.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my imperfections and failures, seeing them as gifts from God. Today, I will see every failure as a Divine opportunity to peel away one more petal from the lotus that hides the jewel of my Higher Self. This is path of nonviolence.

March 14 Day 44

"Interdependence is and ought to be as much the ideal of man as self-sufficiency." M.K. Gandhi

All of Life is, by nature of its Oneness, truly interdependent. Physicist David Bohm refers to this as the "Implicate Order of the Universe". Because all energy and matter in the universe arose from one single action (the Big Bang), he says, there is an "unbroken wholeness of the totality of existence as an undivided flowing movement without borders." In other words, whatever value or moral test we may put it to, the underlying truth is that we are interdependent, whether we like it or not.

Chaos Theory is built upon this model. It simply says that because everything is interdependent, it makes the universe so complex we cannot fully understand anything nor the unintended consequences of any act. Thus, as the most famous example in Chaos Theory suggests, "A butterfly flapping its wings in Brazil can cause a Typhoon in China."

Each of us should be working toward the goal of self-sufficiency. Without self-sufficiency, we are always in lack and lack always creates the tendency to violence, for we seek to take what we do not have. But at the same time, our interdependence must not be forgotten. Seeking self-sufficiency without considering interdependence will always become selfish, for it ignores all needs but our own. Selfishness is always, by its nature, violence.

Thus, when we do whatever it is we are called to do, we must understand that no action ever occurs in a vacuum. Our actions have consequences far beyond those we expect or intend. They are affecting every other life on this planet; in ways we can't even anticipate. In addition, the acts of every other person affect us in some way. We are completely interdependent with and on one another.

The truest path to nonviolence in any society is the recognition and practice of seeking self-sufficiency *together* in our complete interdependence.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my interdependence with all life. Today, as I seek all I need to sustain myself, I will watch for how my actions affect others and their ability to be self-sufficient. When I can see my actions affecting others, I will ask, "Is there another way, a more loving way to act?" Then I will follow that course. That is the path of nonviolence.

March 15 Day 45

"As human beings, our greatness lies not so much in being able to remake the world - that is the myth of the atomic age - as in being able to remake ourselves." M. K. Gandhi

Humanity has shown its ability to remake the world. It has also shown its inability to predict the results of the changes it makes. Few of the "improvements" man has made in the world have ultimately proven to be beneficial to the planet or, indeed, mankind itself. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers work on the Mississippi River is a perfect example of man making problems worse whenever he interferes with the orderly flow of nature. There is one area, however, where mankind has not only shown it can make changes, it has shown that it can make lasting beneficial changes. That area is in the remaking the human consciousness.

Humanity has spent so many centuries exploring its world, changing its world, and establishing mastery over its world that it has missed this most important area for exploration - the human mind. When, as individuals, we finally begin the exploration of our own "*terra incognita*", that unknown territory of our own psyche, we discover the most exciting, valuable and world changing territory of all.

Each of us are born into the world with unique abilities to love, to serve and to achieve in the world. But our lives have been filled with those telling us we are "less than - not smart enough", etc. Hearing this message time after time in our youth brings us to an adulthood based on beliefs in our "not enough-ness". The result is that we bring to the world limited gifts, fear, and all the violence that goes with lack and fear attempting to fill itself.

But when we explore our interior world, when we find and heal those places that have kept us from our personal greatness, we suddenly burst forth, remade and renewed, in all our true magnificence. Then peace and nonviolence are our natural states, for there is no fear and no lack, the *only* two causes of violence.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my magnificence and all the beliefs that keep me from manifesting it. Today, I will rededicate myself to exploring myself and heal all the beliefs keeping me from living the magnificent light of nonviolence I was born to be.

March 16 Day 46

"I am here to plead for the acceptance by the country of the program of nonviolent, progressive non-cooperation. Now all the words I have used here are absolutely necessary and the two adjectives 'progressive' and 'nonviolent' are integral parts of the whole." M.K. Gandhi

nonviolence as a tool of action, whether political, social or personal, is not a path that we attain to instantly. To believe we can do so is like believing that we can reach the top of Mount Everest from sea level in a single step. Gandhi's use of the word 'progressive' in this context isn't political, but rather descriptive of a process of moving toward a goal.

Gandhi is describing a process called '*successive or progressive approximations*'. Long-time activist, Grace Lee Boggs says that "*we need to grow our souls*" and emphasizes that the "*secret to visionary organizing*" is "*a combination of philosophy and activism.*" In her own way, Boggs is also describing

this 'progressive' process. The process has us define for ourselves the limit of our ability to practice nonviolence, then stretch ourselves to that limit. Having reached it, we do the work of healing our hearts and souls to greater depths of love and nonviolence applying the deepest philosophical and spiritual beliefs of our souls. When we have done this, the process is repeated, redefining the limit of our ability based on our newly healed consciousness, stretching ourselves to that limit and then going back within to heal. This is the 'nonviolent, progressive program' Gandhi refers to.

This kind of nonviolent action, combining philosophy, spirituality and the work of stepping boldly forth in the world, is truly the path Gandhi taught. It is the work the world is waiting for, and those who walk the path of true nonviolence are called to practice it now, for now is the 'fullness of time' for the movement. But now can only be the time when we are the people.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my internal progress towards nonviolence. Today, I will take conscious steps toward 'growing my soul', spiritually, philosophically and emotionally. This is the path of nonviolence.

March 17 Day 47

"With me nonviolence is part of my religion, a matter of creed. But with the great number of Mussalmans (Muslims) is a policy, with thousands if not millions of Hindus, it is equally a matter of policy. But whether it is a creed or a policy, it is utterly impossible for you to finish the program of enfranchisement of the millions of India without recognizing the value of nonviolence."

K. Gandhi

Gandhi wrote these words in describing the struggle for nonviolence in the freedom movement in India in the mid 20th Century. They ring equally true for us, here, today. Wherever we fall on the political spectrum, whatever may be our goal in seeking change, whether in a country, an organization, a family or ourselves, it is "utterly impossible" to complete that work without taking a nonviolent path. John Lennon's song, "*All you need is love*", is the perfect anthem for nonviolence. Love is not only all we need, but for lasting and permanent change to occur, it is absolutely necessary.

Never, in the entire history of the world has a violent path *ultimately* triumphed. It may, in the short run, like European style colonialism, Soviet style communism, corporate style capitalism, or abusive control in families or societies, appear to succeed, but it can never succeed permanently. History is filled with examples of those "conquered" by violence ultimately regaining their freedom. It may not have been quickly, and it may not have been as anyone expected, but it always happens.

This lesson should never be forgotten. Any cause succeeds to the very extent that it is just for all. A cause can only be just to the extent that it is nonviolent. This is not a philosophical nicety that can be put aside at need. To do so is to make nonviolence a policy of convenience, to be cast off when it becomes uncomfortable or inconvenient. Thus, the work of "*growing our souls*" becomes ever more important. As we grow into nonviolence, we become more and more prepared to make the changes that can endure. Whether we consider ourselves religious, spiritual, or humanist, we all have a creed we live by. When we truly make nonviolence a part of that creed, we are ready for the task we have been called to perform.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on my belief in nonviolence. Is it a policy or is it my creed? Do I see it as a

means to achieve what I believe, or is it an end in itself? Is it my belief? Today, in my work of nonviolence, I will watch for any conflicts in my feelings or thoughts that answer this question for me. This is the path of nonviolence.

March 18 Day 48

"An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind."

M.K. Gandhi (This quote is commonly attributed to Gandhiji, and his family believes it is authentic, but no actual attribution to Gandhi himself has been found. It was used by Louis Fischer, one of Gandhi's major biographers, as a metaphor for Gandhi's core beliefs and it is certainly in complete agreement with everything he believed.)

This statement is a reference to the Biblical saying, *"An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."* Jesus said about this quote, *"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also."* Jesus' response is exactly what Gandhi's statement is saying.

At the level of human interactions, we know that as we react to violence of any kind with violence of our own, we make any form of peaceful resolution impossible. Answering violence with violence simply escalates the next series of responses. Ahimsa is impossible under these circumstances.

At the deeper level of *"human as spiritual being"*, the true path of nonviolence means that we do not react to violence, but respond from the principle of *Ahimsa*, deep love and respect for all beings. Gandhiji's path was this path of responding from principle, NOT a belief in the principle of Ahimsa, but the faith OF Ahimsa. It is a faith so deep that the principles of nonviolence are no longer something we *believe* in, but something we know and embody in every part of ourselves. This faith, called *"radically embodied faith"* by American theologian Robin Meyers is really the opposite of belief. It is so embodied within us that it opens our eyes to the depths of spiritual Truth in Ahimsa and we see past mere belief to the perfect unfolding cause and effect it is.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on the difference between belief and faith. Today, I will ask myself, "Have I embodied the faith OF Ahimsa or do I simply believe IN Ahimsa?" In my actions, do I react to the world or do I respond from Ahimsa?

March 19 Day 49

"Non-cooperation ... will not succeed unless we create an atmosphere of perfect freedom, unless we prize our opponent's liberty as much as our own. The liberty of faith, conscience, thought and action which we claim for ourselves must be conceded equally to others." M.K. Gandhi

The closer we come to change, the more violent becomes the struggle. Whether we are talking about a war between nations or the kind of verbal warfare we see in the political arena, this fact stands out. In the USA today, political parties have become nearly irrelevant. The emotional and verbal violence between people has become so extreme, that no intelligent or reasonable discourse is possible. Whether it is the pronouncements of the extreme left or the extreme right, both sides have plenty of room to point the finger at the other. It serves no useful purpose and only drives them further apart. Indeed, if we could but look down from the "high ground" we would see that it appears like nothing so much a children's schoolyard game. Unfortunately, it is a children's game that is affecting the very future path of our nation.

The “atmosphere of perfect freedom”, Gandhi refers to is the only path for the truly nonviolent. This can only occur when we stop pointing fingers at our opponents and point them only at ourselves. Granting them the right to the absolute freedom we demand for ourselves, creates that “atmosphere of perfect freedom.”

Will those opponents attempt to restrict our freedom? Possibly. That is where non-cooperation and nonviolence become our path. They may attempt to do so, that is the violent path. But let's be clear. Whether they play by the same rules we do is only important in games, and this is not a game. If we allow their anger, their fear and their actions to dictate ours, then we have already lost. They are always free to make their own choices, but we're allowing them to control ours.

If, instead, we step off of the playing field and embrace non-cooperation with their violent game, we will ultimately win. Quickly or slowly is not the issue. The issue is non-cooperation and nonviolence. Only through them can true freedom be established as the law of life.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on what freedom means to me. Today, in all my thoughts and actions, I will remember that even my most ardent opponents are entitled to all the freedom I demand for myself. This is the path of nonviolence.