

February 13 Day 15

“Nonviolence is a matter of the heart. It does not come to us through any intellectual feat.”
M.K. Gandhi

With the work of Gandhi and King and Cesar Chavez and the Occupy movement of today, many think nonviolence is a political position or a tool for political action. It is and it isn't. Nonviolence is a way of life that embraces a change of heart, a change of beliefs and actions about all our relationships. Many who have been a part of movements where nonviolence training is routine. But training alone isn't enough. In fact, if nonviolence does not come from a deep heart place, no amount of training and intellectual understanding can ever produce nonviolence.

Many of us have discovered, as we did the work of self-growth, that interpersonal strategies for communications and building relationships were useless as long as they remained “in our heads”. Only when we have embodied them and moved them that “terrible eighteen inches” from our heads to our hearts can they have any value. These strategies, of whatever kind, are techniques in one-to-one nonviolence. Like them, nonviolent strategies for group action can only work when they come from the heart.

Our job, then, is to embody love and nonviolence as the only tools necessary to the heart, whatever tools the intellect may embody.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on bringing nonviolence from my head into my heart, opening myself to feeling love and nonviolence, not as an idea, but an embodied reality. In all my interactions today, I will check first with my heart, before responding from my head. This is the path of nonviolence.

Let peace begin with you.

February 14 Day 16

“So long as we have not cultivated the strength to die with courage and love in our hearts, we cannot hope to develop the ahimsa (nonviolence) of the strong.” M.K. Gandhi

Gandhi's struggle, and Dr. King's struggle, of nonviolence was much more dramatic and dangerous than most of ours, so this language is also stronger than most of us would use. But the message is clear: if there is anything which we fear so deeply that we would lose our courage and abandon love in the moment, we have not yet embodied nonviolence in our hearts.

In everyday terms, this means that nothing said to us, no action taken against us or another, should be able to drive us from nonviolence. The founder of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy said, *“Stand porter at the door of thoughts”*. Every thought is a choice. Once, on the path of nonviolence, every interaction, every relationship, no matter how difficult, becomes an opportunity to be aware of the thoughts we allow ourselves to think.

Often, we hear people say that they can't help reacting with anger when others attack them. Yet, in the split second between the perceived attack and our response, a whole thought process occurs. That process has been described like this: we are attacked, we judge what has occurred based on past experiences, a feeling arises based on that judgment, we react. It may only take a second (actually about 0.6 seconds), but that process always occurs when we are reacting to someone's attack upon us. Then we can choose love or fear and anger in response.

Being aware of this process and watching for it in every interaction is one way to cultivate the strength we need to hold to love no matter what. Responding to the love within us instead of reacting to the world outside us is the path of nonviolence.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on this question, “Are there any circumstances under which I would surrender my commitment to nonviolence?” Today, I will watch for opportunities to choose nonviolence over violence. Today I will choose cultivate the strength to love. This is the path to nonviolence.

Let peace begin with you.

February 15 Day 17

“Where love is, there God is also. Where there is love there is life”. M.K. Gandhi

Love is a spiritual path. When we come to each interaction with unconditional love, we are practicing our Oneness with the Divine. Love is not an action, it is a consciousness of “unconditionally caring about the happiness of another”. Approaching each relationship and each interaction from this consciousness, we guarantee that the Divine is also present.

“Where love is, there God is also.” The reverse of this statement is equally true: where the consciousness of love is absent, the consciousness of God is absent. Where the practice of love is absent, the practice of God is absent. All of us have met those who have powerful religious beliefs or years, even decades of spiritual practice. Yet those same people can exhibit attributes which utterly lack the presence of love. How is this possible?

It's possible because, even though they experience the Presence of the Divine in their spiritual practice, they lack it when it comes to practice in the world. Having a sense of spiritual superiority, there is a duality between their spiritual life and their physical, mental, and emotional lives.

“Where there is love there is life”. At first glance, our ego minds rebel against this idea. Yet Gandhi's logic is inescapable. If love is not present, the Divine is not present. If the Divine is not present, life is impossible, for to be alive IS to be Divine. Metaphysically, this is obvious, but Gandhi is also making a statement about nonviolence. Rumi said, *“Out beyond ideas of right and wrong, there is a field. I'll meet you there.”* Dr. Greg Baer, the author of *Real Love* and one of my teachers, says that there are two fields of consciousness. Ideas of right and wrong exist on their own field, what he calls the *Field of Death*. Judgment, self righteousness, and “right and wrong” always lead to violence, emotional or otherwise. Rumi's field beyond those ideas, Baer calls the *Field of Life*, because true nonviolence can only exist on this field, beyond ideas of right and wrong.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on love as the Divine, inviting Its full expression as my life. Today, in every action and interaction, my spiritual practice will be to ask “How can I be more loving here?” That is the path to nonviolence.

Let peace begin with you.

February 16 Day 18

“Recall the face of the poorest and weakest man you have seen and ask yourself if this step you contemplate is going to be any use to him.” M.K. Gandhi

The Iroquois nation's constitution says, “*Look and listen for the welfare of the whole people and have always in view not only the present but also the coming generations, even those whose faces are yet beneath the surface of the ground - the unborn of the future Nation.*” Gandhi and the Iroquois people are bringing us the same message, whatever we contemplate, we should ask ourselves whether it is for the good of all: the weak, the poor, the powerful, the rich, the young the old, those who agree with us and even those who don't agree with us.

How often do we find ourselves thinking, “If only they'd do it my way, then everyone would be happy!” In fact, most of the time, this is simply our egos, justifying what we believe would make us happy. Although we try to deny it, pointing to our sacrifices for our “cause”, this is a profoundly selfish way to approach change. Unless our actions serve all of life, we are acting from the purely human nature of our egos, not from love. All life means the weakest, the youngest, the yet unborn. nonviolence means taking off the “blinders” of our own egos and always coming to any action with the desire to serve ALL, including those who hate us, those who have hurt us and those who wish to hurt us. “All” includes all life. nonviolence always serves life and that means all life.

Spiritual Practice

Today I will meditate on this question, “Who do I serve?” One way to do this is to keep repeating the question each time an answer comes “bubbling up”. Today, in every action and interaction, I will ask this question, “Who does this action serve? Does it serve all life?” This is the path of nonviolence.

Let peace begin with you.

February 17 Day 19

“I have found through bitter experience the one supreme lesson to conserve my anger, and as heat conserved is transmuted into energy, even so our anger controlled can be transmuted into a power which can move the world.” M.K. Gandhi

Anger is the great enemy of nonviolence because anger is violence. Yet anger, rightly understood can be a source of great power. Anger is, in every case, our reaction to fear. It may be fear that we're not getting what we or others want or need. It may be fear that what we or others have will be taken. Whatever the fear may be, our anger is always rising out of it.

Anger expressed is always self-defeating. Anger creates a win or lose mentality in both parties to any interaction. No matter what the outcome of such an interaction may be, we have set the stage for the next round of conflict. Angry people always “keep score” and always look for evening it. In that mentality, there are NO winners, only losers. In other words, anger expressed is always self-defeating.

This does not mean we “stuff” our anger, to do so is simply to bottle it up inside of us until it becomes too large, too powerful and too painful to contain. Then it bursts forth uncontrollably as violence. When we understand this we can begin to explore the fear behind our anger. Knowing what we fear, our course of action becomes clear and the energy behind our anger and fear has a path, a direction and a power that far transcends anger. Once our course of action is

clear, fear disappears and the power that was our anger becomes a force for nonviolence. Only in this way can we transmute anger into the power behind nonviolence.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will recognize anger as my fear disguised. I will find the cause of my fear and begin using the energy behind it as the power of peace. This is the path to nonviolence.

Let peace begin with you.

February 18 Day 20

“God alone knows the mind of a person, and the duty of a man of God is to act as he is directed by his inner voice. I claim that I act accordingly.” M.K. Gandhi

Whatever our personal beliefs about God or not-God, none of us deny the existence of a conscience. Whether we think of it as the voice of the Divine, the voice of our conscience or the voice of the collective consciousness, there is a still, small voice within. It is this voice that is the true voice of nonviolence. Unless we are certain that we hear that voice, not the voice of our egos, we can never be certain that the path we follow is truly the path of nonviolence. The true path of nonviolence is the path that serves all.

Consider those in popular movements of change in our society today. Do their words and action serve all? Or do they serve the interests of themselves or some group by harming others? This is how we can tell whether people are truly following their “inner voice” or simply their ego voice.

Most of us are so busy in our ego minds that we fail to hear that inner voice. We simply fail to listen for it. Emerson said, *“Let us be silent that we may hear the whispers of the gods.”* Only when we take time each day to still the “monkey mind”, chattering away in our heads, can we listen for that voice. Only when we listen for it can we hope to hear it. Only when we hear it can we know that it is the true “inner voice”, not the ego voice that directs us.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will take time to meditate, listening for that still small voice within me. Today, every word I speak, every action I take will be measured by this yardstick, “Does this serve all or does it serve only me?” This is the path to nonviolence.”

Let peace begin with you.

February 19 Day 21

“Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will.” M.K. Gandhi

Gandhi didn't simply speak these words, he lived them and exemplified them. Edward R. Murrow, reporting on Gandhi's funeral said, *“governments and dignitaries from all over the world have joined hands today to pay homage to this little brown man in the loincloth who led his country to freedom.”* Gandhi was a man of small stature, with little physical strength. In fact, his public fasts in the name of nonviolence left him frail and weak for long periods of time.

His strength of will, his sense of right and wrong, not just for himself, or for Indians, but for all humanity, gave him a strength of spirit and will that were unconquerable. He sought to free all Indian people, Hindu and Muslim, Sikh and Jain, Christian and Buddhist. Even more, he sought to free the British from their actions and their Karma, the Cause and Effect consequences, of their enslavement of the Indian people had caused. His devotion to his beliefs and his cause made him willing to take any personal risk necessary to succeed in his goal.

His will was not “to do”, or to force those around him to do. His will was “to be” the living embodiment of his beliefs in truth, love and nonviolence. As a result, Gandhi, this “little brown man”, was one most

of the famous and, in his own unique way, most powerful men of his generation. Yet he did it in a way that made Albert Einstein say of him, "*Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.*" That is the power of will, to hold and to be a Truth for all beings and to hold it so powerfully that it must manifest. Beyond that, to hold yourself and your expectations so lightly that right action must occur. In this way, nonviolent action can succeed against all odds.

Affirmative Practice

Today, I will meditate on "*the will to be*". Today, I will use my will to hold to and be my truth, expecting nothing and accepting right action and the perfect outcome, however it may occur. This is the path to nonviolence.