



AHIMSA IS THE GREATEST VIRTUE

By: Ajay Sheth



Ajay Sheth is a Trustee of the Quest Foundation and publisher/editor of the Ma Swami Prerna magazine. He has dedicated his life to serving others and making a positive impact in the world. But what truly sets Ajay apart is his commitment to being a practitioner of Effortless Awareness. He has mastered the art of living in the present moment, letting go of ego and conditioning, and embracing life with an open heart and mind. Through his Effortless Awareness practice, Ajay has cultivated a profound sense of inner peace, compassion, and wisdom. He radiates a warm and loving energy, touching the lives of all those around him. As he continues on his journey of self-discovery and service, Ajay inspires others to embrace their path of effortless awareness, reminding us that being a true human being means living a life of authenticity, love, and freedom.

Non-violence is not a cover for cowardice, but it is the supreme virtue of the brave. – Mahatma Gandhi

From my childhood until I turned 52, my understanding of Ahimsa (non-violence) was limited to not killing insects, or at most, any living being. It was after I met my Guru, MaSwami, that I realized non-violence extends far beyond that. It includes not hurting any living being; not just physically, but also through thoughts, words, and actions, and cultivating compassion, tolerance, and understanding toward all beings.

The Deeper Meaning of Ahimsa

Bhagwan Mahavir's message of Ahimsa is not only the absence of physical harm but a holistic approach to life. It means not hurting anyone through Mann (thoughts), Vachan (speech), or Kaya (actions). It involves avoiding anger, aggression, abuse, criticism, harassment, retaliation, or emotional harm. Even subtle acts like mocking, intimidation, or dismissive gestures are forms of violence. True non-violence begins with awareness and mindfulness in every action.

Philosopher J. Krishnamurti observed that violence originates in the self – the ego – and the psychological separation it creates from the rest of humanity. Divisions based on nationality, belief, or ideology fuel conflict. As long as the ego exists, violence is inevitable. Violence is caused by internal and external conflict. Real non-violence arises not from suppression or resistance, but from honest introspection. When roots of violence – anger, hatred and our attachment to people, ideals and point of views - are seen clearly through introspection, they begin to dissolve.

One of the most common expressions of violence is anger. We often justify it by calling it “righteous anger” - whether our family, country, religion, or principles are under attack. But is there really such a thing as righteous anger, or is there just anger? Is there truly good and bad influence, or simply influence; judged based on whether it suits us?

Ahimsa as a Way of Life

Ahimsa is not just avoidance; it is a conscious, active choice. It calls for compassion, tolerance, and detachment. It includes strict vegetarianism, self-restraint, and minimizing harm to all life, thereby reducing negative karma and progressing toward liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

The Jain Maha-Vratas - Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truth), Asteya (non-stealing), Brahmacharya (celibacy), and Aparigraha (non-possessiveness) – and the principle of Anekantvada are practical tools to cultivate peace, harmony, and happiness. They enhance our ability to live compassionately and ethically; with tolerance, love and harmony.



Take a moment to reflect - Can one be truly happy or at peace while lying or stealing? When we wrong someone; whether through injustice, mistreatment, oppression, exploitation, harassment, or coercion; we disturb our inner peace. When we are attached to materials things, people and our own point-of-views, it is difficult to live a harmonious life.

For a peaceful living and to build respectful, constructive, and lasting relationships; love, harmony, compassion and tolerance are essential. Love is the true opposite of violence. It embodies empathy, kindness, and a desire to heal and connect. Love is transformative - it has the power to dissolve conflict, build bridges, and nurture peace.

Non-Violence in the Modern World

In a world where conflict, aggression, and violence dominate headlines, the principle of non-violence stands as a beacon of moral strength. Ahimsa, or non-violence, is more than the absence of conflict; it is a philosophy rooted in deep respect for all forms of life. When practiced sincerely, it can transform individuals, communities, and even entire nations. It is not a sign of weakness but a profound expression of courage, restraint, and ethical strength. It is not passive. It is an active resistance through peaceful means: boycotts, protests, and civil disobedience, without any physical harm.

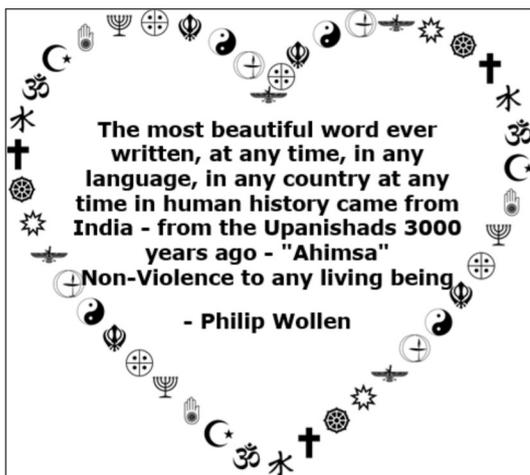
In daily life, it manifests in speaking kindly, avoiding gossip, practicing patience, choosing understanding over blame, and forgiving those who wrong us. It extends to how we treat animals, the environment, and ourselves. Cruelty in any form is incompatible with a non-violent life.

At its core, non-violence reflects the belief that all life is interconnected. To harm another is, in a spiritual sense, to harm oneself. This awareness creates a sense of shared humanity that forms the foundation of true peace and justice.

Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Nelson Mandela exemplify the power of non-violence. They showed that Ahimsa can uphold dignity, promote lasting peace, strengthen communities, and drive social and political change. In a world increasingly divided by hate and conflict, non-violence remains a necessity, not just a virtue.

Conclusion

Non-violence is the greatest virtue – not because it is easy, but because it is right. It transforms enemies into friends, breaks cycles of hatred, and nurtures peace. By embracing Ahimsa in thought, word, and action, we contribute to a just, humane, and harmonious world.



It is the highest expression of human character. It requires courage, discipline, and deep compassion. While it may not offer instant results, it lays the foundation for a just, humane, and peaceful society.

In a world teetering on the edge of conflict, non-violence is a revolutionary idea. It teaches us to rise above anger, embrace understanding, and conquer ourselves instead of others.

As Mahatma Gandhi said: "Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction."

Let us embrace this virtue and become instruments of peace in a troubled world.