

An inspired essay by the enlightened master teacher Avatar Meher Baba

In modern times, there has been no greater advocate and teacher of love as the ultimate attainment of every human being. In this essay he explores the role of love as it pertains to the uniquely human problem of violence.

Non-violence, pure and simple, means infinite love. It is the goal of life. When pure and infinite love is reached, the aspirant becomes one with God. To reach this goal, there must be intense longing, and the aspirant who has this longing must begin by practicing the "*non-violence of the brave*." This applies to those who, though not one with all through realization, consider none to be their enemy and try to win over even the aggressor through love. They give up their lives through love, not through fear.

"*Non-violence of the brave*" is practicable for those who have the intense longing to attain the supreme state. This longing is not to be found in the majority. If, therefore, it is intended to lead the majority to "*non-violence*," it is necessary first to prepare them for the "*non-violence of the brave*." To achieve this in a practical way, it is necessary to make them follow, in the beginning, the principle of "*non-violent violence*"; that is, violence done solely for defending the weak, without any selfish motive.

In times of war, when the masses are not even in the mood to listen to advice about having intense longing to attain the supreme goal of life, the only practical way to lead them toward the goal is to begin by inculcating in them the principle of "*non-violent violence*" and then gradually introducing the "*non-violence of the brave*." Otherwise, nonviolence would not only fail but there would be serious danger of the fatal "*non-violence of the cow-*

ard" -- that is, non-resistance to aggression because of fear.

The masses may also be led to the "*non-violence of the brave*" by following the principles of "*selfless violence*" instead of those of "*non-violent violence*." This selfless violence is violence done in self-defense when attacked treacherously. No other motive should be allowed to justify the violence. Thus, for example if a woman is threatened with violation and one defends her by resorting to violence one can be said to have followed the principles of "*selfless violence*." Similarly, when the motherland is being attacked by enemies, the nation's effort in defending the motherland is "*selfless violence*." An element of selfishness being there, the love expressed is limited human love.



"*Non-violence of the coward*" is fatal; so also is "*selfish violence*" i.e. violence for selfish motives by individuals or a nation to gain power, or for other selfish ends.

It will therefore be seen that while non-violence, pure and simple is the goal of life, this goal is to be attained by individual seekers of God by following "*non-violence of the brave*." The majority who have not the intense longing for being one with God have to be led toward this goal on the principles of "*non-violent violence*" or those of "*selfless violence*," according to the circumstances. It must be very clearly understood that "*non-violent violence*" and "*selfless violence*" are merely the means of attaining the

goal of life namely pure and simple "Non-violence" or "Infinite Love." These means must not be confused with the goal itself.

The motive and result are determined by general acceptance as to whether they are good or bad. For example, "non-violence of the brave" and "non-violence of the coward" are both non-violence, but, from the viewpoint of the motive force behind it, "non-violence of the brave" is born of love and "non-violence of the coward" is born of fear which is opposite to love. Although as "non-violence" they are not opposites, their motives are opposed. The motive behind "non-violence of the brave" is losing one's life to gain infinite love, and the motive behind "non-violence of the coward" is to save one's own life. So "non-violence of the coward" can be described as "non-love," as we describe "non-violence of the brave" as love.



"Non-violent violence" cannot be described as love, but as "duty" - duty done selflessly for others according to Karma Yoga, which is eventually linked up with infinite love - but motivated by human love.

The difference between these two opposite forces cannot be obliterated; but the transformation of one force to another

can happen when expressed through the right channels. Food given wrongly becomes poison, but poison given in small quantities as a tonic may become food for the nerves. Indeed, all food is poison; it is only in the power of transformation that it becomes converted into good.

War is a necessary evil; it is in God's plan to awaken humanity to higher values. If humanity fails to profit by the lessons of war, it suffers in vain. War teaches that even the "man in the street" can rise to the greatest heights of sacrifice for the sake of a selfless cause. It also teaches that wealth, possessions, power, fame, family, and even life on earth are devoid of lasting value. The incidents of war can, through the lessons they bring, win man for God and initiate him into a new life inspired by lasting values.

In war, people make unlimited sacrifices and endure untold sufferings for the sake of their country or in the interests of political aims; they are capable of the same sacrifices and endurance for God. All religions have unequivocally claimed man for life in the Truth, and it is sheer folly to fight in the name of any religion. It is time for a fresh vision of the Truth that all life is one, that only God is real, and that God is all that matters. God is worth dying for. He is also worth living for. All else is vain and empty, the pursuit of illusory values.

