

The Hindu Ethic of Non-Violence

Exploring Non-Injury as a Way to Achieve Harmony with Our Environment, Peace Between Peoples and Compassion Within Ourselves.

Many are the sources of Hindu thought which inspire men and women to live the ideals of compassion and nonviolence. The rishis who revealed the principles of dharma or divine law in Hindu scripture knew full well the potential for human suffering and the path which could avert it. To them a one spiritual power flowed in and through all things in this universe, animate and inanimate, conferring existence by its presence. To them life was a coherent process leading all souls without exception to enlightenment, and no violence could be carried to the higher reaches of that ascent.

These rishis were mystics whose revelation disclosed a cosmos in which all beings exist in interlaced dependence. The whole was contained in the part, and the part in the whole. Based on this cognition, they taught a philosophy of non-difference of self and other, asserting that in the final analysis we are not separate from the world and its manifest forms nor from the Divine which shines forth in all things and all peoples. From this understanding of oneness arose the philosophical basis for the practice of noninjury and Hinduism's ancient commitment to it.

We all know that Hindus, who are one-sixth of the human race today, believe in the existence of God everywhere, as an all-pervasive, self-effulgent energy and consciousness. This basic belief creates the attitude of sublime tolerance and acceptance toward others. Even tolerance is insufficient to describe the compassion and reverence the Hindu holds for the intrinsic sacredness within all things. Therefore, the actions of all Hindus are rendered benign or ahimsa. One would not want to hurt something which one revered.

On the other hand, when the fundamentalists of any religion teach an unrelenting duality based on good and evil, man and nature or God and Devil, this creates friends and enemies. This belief is a sacrilege to Hindus because they know that the attitudes which are the by-product are totally dualistic, and for good to triumph over that which is alien or evil, it must kill out that which is considered to be evil.

The Hindu looks at nothing as intrinsically evil. To him the ground is sacred. The sky is sacred. The sun is sacred. His wife is a goddess. Her husband is a god. Their children are devas. Their home is a shrine. Life is a pilgrimage to mukti or liberation from rebirth, which once attained is the end to reincarnation in a physical body. When on a holy pilgrimage, one would not want to hurt anyone along the way, knowing full well the experiences on this path are of one's own creation, though maybe acted out through others.

In Sanskrit himsa is doing harm or causing injury. The "a" placed before the word negates it. Very simply, ahimsa is abstaining from causing hurt or harm. It is gentleness and noninjury, whether physical, mental or emotional. It is good to know that nonviolence speaks only to the most extreme forms of wrongdoing, while ahimsa (which includes not killing) goes much deeper to prohibit the subtle abuse and the simple hurt.

In his commentary on the Yoga Sutras, sage Vyasa defines ahimsa as "the absence of injuriousness (anabhidroha) toward all living beings (sarvabhuta) in all respects (sarvatha) and for all times (sarvada)." He noted that a person who draws near one engaged in the true practice of ahimsa would be freed from all enmity. Similarly, Patanjali (circa 100 ce) regards ahimsa as the yogi's mahavrata, the great vow and foremost spiritual discipline which those seeking Truth must follow strictly and without fail. This was not meant merely to condemn killing, but extended to harm caused by one's thoughts, words and deeds of all kinds--including injury to the natural environment. Even the intent to injure, even violence committed in a dream, is a violation of the principle of ahimsa.

Beliefs, attitudes and actions interact to produce peace or violence. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (IV, 4, ii, 6) says: "Here they say that a person consists of desires. And as is his desire, so is his will. And as is his will, so is his deed; and whatever deed he does, that he will reap." Every belief creates certain attitudes. Those attitudes govern all of our actions. Man's actions can thus be traced to his inmost beliefs about himself and about the world around him. If those beliefs are erroneous, his actions will not be in tune with the universal dharma.

For instance, the belief in the existence of an all-pervasive Divinity throughout the universe creates an attitude of reverence, benevolence and compassion for all animate and inanimate beings. This equals ahimsa, non-hurtfulness. The belief in the duality of heaven and hell, the white forces and the dark forces, creates the attitude that we must be on our guard, and that we are justified in giving injury, physically and emotionally to others whom we judge to be bad, pagan or unworthy for other reasons. Such thinking leads to rationalizing so-called righteous wars and conflicts. We can sum this up from the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain traditions: ahimsa is higher consciousness, and himsa, hurtfulness, is lower consciousness.

Hindus oppose killing for several reasons. Belief in karma and reincarnation are strong forces at work in the Hindu mind. They full well know that any thought, feeling or action sent out from themselves to another will return to them through yet another in equal or amplified velocity. What we have done to others will be done to us, if not in this life then in another. The Hindu is thoroughly convinced that violence which he commits will return to him by a cosmic process that is unerring. Two thousand years ago South India's weaver saint Tiruvalluvar said it so simply, "All suffering recoils on the wrongdoer himself. Therefore, those who desire not to suffer refrain from causing others pain." A similar view can be found in the Jain scripture Acaranga Sutra:

To do harm to others is to do harm to oneself. You are he whom you intend to kill. You are he whom you intend to dominate. We corrupt ourselves as soon as we intend to corrupt others. We kill ourselves as soon as we intend to kill others.

Because of the knowledge of reincarnation, the Hindu knows that he may one day be in the same position of anyone he might be inclined to harm or persecute. The Hindu who is consciously aware within his soul knows that he is the time traveller and may incarnate, take a body of flesh in the society he most opposed, in order to equalize his hates and fears into a greater understanding which would result in the release of ignorance. The knowledgeable Hindu is well aware of all these possibilities.

Ahimsa is certainly not cowardice; it is wisdom. And wisdom is the cumulative knowledge of the existing divine laws of reincarnation, karma, dharma, the all-pervasiveness and sacredness of things, blended together within the psyche or soul of the Hindu.

Peace is a reflection of spiritual consciousness, and violence is a reflection of unevolved or base consciousness. The Hindu knows that at this time on this planet those of the lower nature, unevolved people, are society's antagonists. Being unevolved, they are of the lower nature, self-assertive, confused and protective of their immediate environment. All others are their enemies. They are jealous, angry, fearful. Many take sport in killing for the sake of killing, thieving for the sake of theft, even if they do not need or use the spoils. This is the lower nature, and is equally distributed among the peoples of the world in every nation, society and neighborhood. Those of the higher nature--ten, fifteen or twenty percent of the population--live in protective environments. Their occupation is research, memory, education, which is reason; moving the world's goods here and there, which is will. Those of yet a higher nature delve into the mysteries of the universe, and others work for universal peace and love on earth, as groups and individuals. The Hindu knows that those of the lower nature will slowly, over an experiential period of time, come into the higher nature, and that those of the higher nature, who have worked so hard to get there, will avoid the lower nature and not allow themselves to be caught up in it. Hindus believe in the progress of humanity, from an old age into a new age, from darkness into a consciousness of divine light.

There is a spiritual urge in every soul for peace. Even if a person is violent now, he or she inwardly yearns for peace. Man is essentially an instinctive, intellectual and superconscious, or soul, person. The instinctive nature is based on good and bad, mine and yours, up and down pairs of opposites. The soul nature is based on oneness, humility, peace, compassion, love, helpfulness. The intellectual nature is based on trying to figure both of these two out. It juggles knowledge from the lower nature to the higher nature and from higher nature to the lower nature. It works out formulas, finds solutions and processes knowledge.

The key is yoga, yoking the soul with the energies of the physical body (the instinctive nature) and yoking the energies of the soul with the energies of the mind (intellectual nature) and then, simply, one becomes consciously conscious in the soul. This is an experience to be experienced, and for the Hindu it is personal experience of God which is essential for liberation. The Hindu strives to be consciously conscious of his soul. When those soulful qualities are unfolded, he is filled with a divine love and would not hurt a flea if he could help it.

People everywhere today are wondering, what's the best way to teach peace to the world? The best way is to teach families to be peaceful within their own home, to settle all arguments and contention before they sleep at night, even if they stay up for three days, so the children can see that peace can be attained and then maintained through the use of intelligence. Humans do not have horns or claws, nor do they have sharp teeth. Their weapon is their intelligence. Children must be taught through the example of parents and by learning the undeniable facts of life, the basic tenets--that an all-pervasive force holds this universe together, that we create with this force every minute, every hour, every day, and because time is a cycle, what we create comes back to us. It is up to the parents to create the peacemakers of the future. It is always up to the parents. And remember, we teach children in only one way--by our own example.

Parents must teach children to appreciate those who are different, those who believe differently. Teach them the openness that they need to live in a pluralistic world where others have their unique ways, their life and culture. Teach them the value of human diversity and the narrow-mindedness of a provincial outlook. Give them the tools to live in a world of differences without feeling threatened, without forcing their ways or their will on others. Teach them that it never helps to hurt another of our brothers or sisters.

An individual can find total peace within himself, not through meditation alone--for peaceful actions must follow introspection--not through drugs, not through psychology or psychiatry, but through control. Peace is the natural state of the mind. It is there, inside, to be discovered in meditation and then radiated out to others.

How do we bring individuals to this point? Of course, if the educational system promotes it, in every community the greatest potential for peace will be achieved. The educational system is controlled by the adults, so they have to come to terms with the fact that they must not be hurtful--physically, mentally or emotionally--and accept the basic principles of the sanatana dharma: all-pervasive energy, cause and effect and coming back in a physical birth until all scores are settled. Once the adults accomplish this, these basic principles of life will naturally be passed on to the next generation.

Some souls are always coming up through the instinctive nature, and thus even though mature souls have achieved peace, others are coming along the path. In a complete humanity, there are always those of higher consciousness and those of lower consciousness. At this time on the planet, it is the intrinsic duty of higher-consciousness people to be more self-assertive, let their voices be heard and take up the banner in a heroic way, join committees, enter government, while at the same time maintaining the peace within their own home and holding a benign reverence for all living beings.

Ahimsa begins in the home, in the bedroom, in the kitchen, in the garden, in the living room. When himsa, harmfulness, arises in the home, it must be settled before sleep, or else those vrittis, those waves of the mind, which were disturbed by the creation of the situation, will go to seed to erupt at a later time in life. We cannot expect the children to control themselves if the parents do not control themselves.

Those who attain a personal peace by controlling their instinctive nature become the spiritual leaders of human society. People who do become these leaders retroactively control the masses because of their spirit, their soul force--not because of the mind force, their cleverness, their deceptions, their political power, their money or contacts. They are the people in the higher consciousness who control lower consciousness by lifting up the masses, as parents are supposed to uplift their children.

According to Hinduism, to have a nonviolent world would simply mean that all individuals have to somehow or other reconcile their differences enough so that the stress their differences produce can no longer take over their mind, body and emotions, causing them to perform injurious acts. Again, this would begin in the home. Peaceful homes breed gentle people. Gentle people follow ahimsa. Furthermore, the belief structure of each individual must allow for the

acceptance of the eternal truths, which I mentioned before--returning to flesh to reabsorb back the karmic energies released in a previous life, and of course, the belief in the existence of an all-pervading power. As long as our beliefs are dualistic, we will continue to generate antagonism and that will erupt here and there in violence.

At an international and national level, we must become more tolerant. Religious leaders and their congregations need to learn and teach tolerance for everyone and everything, for other faiths. First this must be taught to the religious leaders themselves, the rabbis, imams, roshis, swamis, acharyas, bhikkus, sants and priests. Tolerance and intolerance are basic attitudes found in our belief systems. These are things that one can learn.

In our various nations, in the United Nations and other world bodies we can promote laws which recognize and take action against crimes of violence. The world must as a body come to the conclusion that such crimes are totally unacceptable. To abhor violence is a state of higher consciousness.

Someone who was previously violent can become nonviolent. It is a matter of realizing what life is really all about and how harming others violates our own inner being. When an injurious act is committed, it makes a mark deep within the mind of the violator. Those individuals who become penitent bring higher energies into themselves, and these energies slowly heal this mark.

But there is more to it than this. Certain kinds of spiritual "therapy" must go along with the penitent mood for a total healing to occur, which would be absolution. This therapy is finding a way to pay back society for the harm caused in that act of violence. It may be working as a nurse's aid or as a volunteer to help in the healing of people who have been victimized by the violent acts of others. The modern laws of community service are good, but for a total healing and change of heart, the service to the community should be more directly related to the actual crime the person committed. Finally, over a long period of time, the matter is totally resolved in the mind of the person and those who know him. Then he would be as much a nonviolent as he was previously a violent person.

Spiritual revelation or realization can bring someone who previously felt ok about it to not feel ok about injurious acts. One example that people are familiar with is the experience of the astronauts who orbit the earth. From their cosmic perspective they see no borders, no divisions, only a one small planet, and this has tended to make them peacemakers. Their journey in space has been called the Overview Effect and would indeed be a revelation of higher consciousness. In deep states of consciousness such visions also happen and do change peoples' lives. But contemplative experiences come for the most part to contemplative people.

Many people do have life-transforming mystical experiences, a soldier on a battlefield, someone who nearly dies. These experiences can change our view of the universe, but transforming experiences come to real nice people, people with love and trust. Maybe they are not too intelligent and get drawn into situations where they are overtaken by a fit of temper. But their remorse is immediate. A contrite or penitent reaction to hurting others is the sign of a higher consciousness person. Maybe the karma they caused is heavy, but their soul goes to work on the situation and the healing process starts within their mind. Possibly the intensity of the violent

mishap, which we might say is an uncontrolled mishap, itself creates a deep remorse which catalyzes the big awakening into higher consciousness.

Many groups on the planet today believe that killing and violence for a righteous cause is just and proper, and thus that war is dharmic. They would not agree with the idea that violence is necessarily of the lower nature. A righteous cause is only a matter of opinion. Conditions at hand may force a situation where violence or killing seems to be necessary. However, going to war affects the lives of innocent people. It's a big karmic responsibility. Combat through war, righteous or not, is lower consciousness. Religious values are left aside to be picked up and continued when the war is over or in the next life or the one after that. Higher consciousness people will not fight even if their lives depend on it. They are conscientious objectors, and there have been many in every country who have been imprisoned or killed because they would not take up arms against their brother and sister humans. This is the strictest Hindu law. But all 750 million Hindus are not living in a perfect state of ahimsa all of the time. Hindus, like other human beings, unfortunately do kill people. In self-defense or in order to protect his family or his village, the Hindu may have to hurt an intruder. Even then he would harbor no hatred in his heart. Hindus should never instigate an intrusion, or instigate a death, nor seek revenge nor plot retaliation for injuries received. They have their courts of justice, punishment for crimes and methods of defense against the aggressor or the intruder. Before any punishment, so to speak, all other avenues of persuasion and intelligence would be looked into, as Hindus believe that intelligence is their best weapon. In following dharma the only rigid rule is wisdom. My Sat Guru Siva Yogaswami said, "It is a sin to kill the tiger in the jungle. But if he comes into the village, it may become your duty." A Hindu would give warnings to the tiger, would try to capture the tiger without injury.

Have you ever noticed that some people work for peace and others seem always to work for contention? There are two kinds of children or souls that are born on this planet and spoken of in our Vedas and other scriptures. Some come to earth from up down and others from down up. This means that the children who come to earth from up down come from a place in the inner world of higher consciousness and the children who come to earth from down up come to earth from a place in the inner world of lower consciousness. We call the place of higher consciousness the Devaloka and the place of lower consciousness the Narakaloka. The Devaloka is a heaven world and the Narakaloka is not.

The Narakaloka exists wherever violence and hurtfulness take place, whether in the inner or outer world. We see such things in action on television. On the astral plane the terrible happenings perpetuated by Narakaloka people are much worse than in the physical world. Children who are born into earth consciousness from the Narakaloka will not respond to meditation, yoga or any kind of quieting controls. They are strangers to self-discipline, and enemies to their own parents. But the children who are born into earth consciousness from the Devaloka do respond to meditation, yoga and all kinds of methods of self-control. These are the gentle people. Self-control & personal advancement are the reasons they have taken a birth. How then to tell the difference between these two kinds of people? The mere fact that someone becomes penitent would show us that they are really a Devaloka person. This is because Narakaloka people don't become penitent. There is another way to tell the difference and that is by looking into the eyes of the person. Narakaloka people generally have dull or sullen eyes,

whereas Devaloka people have bright, clear, wide-open eyes. The former come from the world of darkness, the latter from the world of light. It is difficult to tell the difference at times because the Narakaloka people are very cunning, and they will try to appear in the way they feel they should to meet up to your standards. They must be tested.

Peace will only come when the Narakaloka people are lifted up and made to obey the new standards in the world, standards which must be set by the Devaloka people. It is when the Devaloka people are in charge that peace will truly come; it can come in no other way. So, if the Devaloka people really desire to have a peace on earth, they should not be shy but take charge.

There is no other way, because the problems of conflict reside within this low-minded group of people who only know retaliation as a way of life. To antagonize others is their sport. They must be curtailed off and seen for what they are. Improvement has to come through their own self-effort. But, they are always overly stimulated by doing so many misdeeds that self-effort toward any kind of improvement is never even thought of. From their soul's evolution they must learn, and their own mistakes will be the teacher.

People of the lower-nature cannot be made peaceful. Narakaloka people are not open to persuasion. They are kings in their own domain. There are many doors into higher consciousness, and if the Devaloka people get too involved with people of a lower nature, they may have violence awakened within them. Lower consciousness people are always looking for recruits to bring into their world. This sounds like a sad story, but it is nonetheless true. You see it happening around you every day.

It would, of course, be wonderful to think that all people in this world are the same--and they are in the deepest sense. But our sages and rishis and wisdom itself tell us that we cannot expect the same of everyone in this birth. By recognizing the differences in each soul's maturity, we also recognize the process of reincarnation, which gives us young souls and old souls. However, the problem is not only with people of the lower nature, it is also with people of the higher nature. We must affirm again that at this time on the planet it is the solemn duty of higher-consciousness people to be more self-assertive, let their voices be heard and take up the banner of peace in a heroic way, join committees, enter government, while maintaining the peace within their own home and holding a benign reverence for all living beings.

Nonviolence should be redefined to include not only killing, but also causing injury physically, mentally or emotionally--even in the most subtle ways. We can injure ourselves, we can injure our environment, we can injure nature's other creatures and thus be a source of pain and sorrow. Or we can live a harmless life and be a source of healing and joy.

On a personal level, much can be done. Vegetarianism is a natural and obvious way to live with a minimum of hurt to other beings. Those who minister among Hindus have learned that vegetarian families have far fewer problems than those who are not vegetarian.

The abhorrence of killing of any kind leads quite naturally to a vegetarian diet. If you think about it, the meat-eater is participating indirectly in a violent act against the animal kingdom. His desire for meat drives another man to kill and provide that meat. The act of the butcher begins

with the desire of the consumer. When his consciousness lifts and expands, he will abhor violence and not be able to even digest the meat, fish and eggs he was formerly consuming. The opposite of causing injury to others is compassion and love for all beings. A great Hindu scripture puts it nicely: "How can he practice true compassion who eats the flesh of an animal to fatten his own flesh?"

If children are raised as vegetarians, every day they are exposed to noninjury as a principle of peace and compassion. Every day they are growing up, they are remembering and being reminded to not kill. They won't even kill another creature to feed themselves. And if you won't kill another creature to feed yourself, then when you grow up you will be much less likely to injure people.

By our own decisions and actions, in everything we do, we promote peace or we promote violence. What can we do as individuals or institutions to responsibly promote noninjury? Make a list of all the things you have purchased in the last six months, which bring harm to humans, animals, fish, fowl and other sentient beings. Read the labels on simple things like glue or soap and scratch off the list all the things that contribute to violent acts or aid in the destruction of the planet. Then find the willpower to not, for convenience sake, fall back into purchasing these things again. This is something you can do in the next twenty-four hours.

Talk about peaceful means of dealing with problems, not allowing even your words to promote injury & harm. Let your words bring peace into others' lives & hearts. Work on your own consciousness. Purify yourself so that you are free from anger, free from hatred, free from wanting anyone to suffer either at your own hand or in any other manner.

Don't buy endangered plants, animals or products from exploited species such as furs, ivory, reptile skin and tortoise shell. Volunteer your time to help groups who are sincerely working for a peaceful world. Learn more about other cultures and philosophies, so your appreciation of them is genuine and deep. Work to strengthen your community and the people near you. Reduce stress in your life. Be joyful. Do all this and you will do much to bring peace and tranquility to your part of the world. This is what Mahatma Gandhi did, and look what a difference he made. One person who lives ahimsa truly can be an instrument of peace for many. And you can make a difference too by affirming within yourself the vow not to injure others either physically, mentally or emotionally. Remember this one thing: peace and the choice to live the ideal of noninjury are in your own hands.

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Sacred Texts Speak On Ahimsa

The roots of ahimsa are found in the Vedas, Agamas, Upanishads, Dharma Shastras, Tirumurai, Yoga Sutras and dozens of other sacred texts of Hinduism. Here is a select collection.

Peace be the earth, peaceful the ether, peaceful heaven, peaceful the waters, peaceful the herbs, peaceful the trees. May all Gods bring me peace. May there be peace through these invocations of peace. With these invocations of peace which appease everything, I render peaceful whatever here is terrible, whatever here is cruel, whatever here is sinful. Let it become auspicious, let everything be beneficial to us.--Atharva Veda: X. 191. 4

Let us have concord with our own people, and concord with people who are strangers to us; Asvins, create between us and the strangers a unity of hearts. May we unite in our midst, unite in our purposes, and not fight against the divine spirit within us. Let not the battle-cry rise amidst many slain, nor the arrows of the War-God fall with the break of day.--Atharva Veda

Let your aims be common, and your hearts be of one accord, and all of you be of one mind, so you may live well together.--Rig Veda X . 191

The twice-born should endure high-handed criticism; he should insult none. While yet in his body, he should not pick enmity with anyone; he should not return anger with anger; decried, he should say a good word.--Dharma Shastras: VI.

Nonviolence, truthfulness, nonstealing, purity, sense control--this, in brief, says Manu, is the dharma of all the four castes.--Dharma Shastras: X.

One should never do that to another which one regards as injurious to one's own self. This, in brief, is the rule of dharma. Yielding to desire and acting differently, one becomes guilty of adharma. --Mahabharata XVIII:113.8.

Those high-souled persons who desire beauty, faultlessness of limbs, long life, understanding, mental and physical strength and memory should abstain from acts of injury.--Mahabharata XVIII:115.8.

Ahimsa is the highest dharma. Ahimsa is the best tapas. Ahimsa is the greatest gift. Ahimsa is the highest self-control. Ahimsa is the highest sacrifice. Ahimsa is the highest power. Ahimsa is the highest friend. Ahimsa is the highest truth. Ahimsa is the highest teaching.--Mahabharata XVIII:116.37-41.

It is the principle of the pure in heart never to injure others, even when they themselves have been hatefully injured.--Tiru Kural, Verse 312.

If a man inflicts sorrow on another in the morning, sorrow will come to him unbidden in the afternoon.--Tiru Kural, Verse 319

What is virtuous conduct? It is never destroying life, for killing leads to every other sin.--Tirukural, Verse 321

Many are the lovely flowers of worship offered to the Guru, but none lovelier than non-killing. Respect for life is the highest worship, the bright lamp, the sweet garland and unwavering devotion.--Tirumantiram, Verse 197

May all beings look at me with a friendly eye. May I do likewise, and may we all look on each other with the eyes of a friend.--Yajur Veda: 36.18.

Spiritual merit and sin are our own making. The killer of other lives is an outcast. Match your words with your conduct. Steal not, kill not, indulge not in self-praise, condemn not others to their face.--Lingayat Vacanas

If the diet is pure the mind will be pure, and if the mind is pure the intellect also will be pure.--Manu Samhita

Ahimsa is not causing pain to any living being at any time through the actions of one's mind, speech or body.--Sandilya Upanishad

Whatever I dig from Earth, may that have quick growth again. O Purifier, may we not injure your vitals or your heart. --Atharva Veda XII

When one is established in non-injury, beings give up their mutual animosity in his presence.--Yoga Sutras

Without doing injury to living things, flesh cannot be had anywhere; and the killing of living beings is not conducive to heaven; hence eating of flesh should be avoided.--Dharma Shastras

Everyone should make offerings to all creatures; thereby one achieves the propitiation of all creatures. Every day one should make gifts, even if it be only with a cup of water: thus one achieves the propitiation of human beings.--Yajur Veda

The injury that we have caused to heaven and earth, mother or father--from that sin may the domestic fire ceremony pull us out.--Taittiriya Aranyaka

Without congestion, amidst men, She who has many heights, stretches, and level grounds, who bears herbs of manifold potency, may that Earth spread out and be rich for us. Let all the people milk Her with amity.--Rig Veda XII. 1

The peace in the sky, the peace in the mid-air, the peace on earth, the peace in waters, the peace in plants, the peace in forest trees, the peace in all Gods, the peace in Brahman, the peace in all things, the peace in peace, may that peace come to me.-- Rig Veda X

Do not injure the beings living on the earth, in the air and in the water.--Yajur Veda

The Lord said, 'Fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness in knowledge and devotion, alms-giving, self-control and sacrifice, study of the scriptures, austerity and uprightness, nonviolence,

truth, freedom from anger, renunciation, tranquility, aversion to slander, compassion to all living beings, freedom from covetousness, gentleness, modesty, courage, patience, fortitude, purity and freedom from malice and overweening conceit--these belong to him who is born to the heritage of the Gods, O Arjuna.'--Bhagavad Gita: Chapter 16

Hindu Leaders Speak On Ahimsa

"Refrain from killing knowingly even the trifling insects like a louse, a bug or a mosquito. Use no violence even to gain possession of a woman, wealth or kingdom. Never kill any animals even for the purpose of sacrifice. Non-violence is the greatest of all religions." --Swami Sahajanand

"O lover of meditation, become pure and clean. Observe nonviolence in mind, speech and body. Never break another's heart. Avoid wounding another's feelings. Harm no one. Help all. Neither be afraid nor frighten others." --Swami Muktananda

"Someone who believes in violence and continues causing injury to others can never be peaceful himself." --Swami Satchidananda

"To be free from violence is the duty of every man. No thought of revenge, hatred or ill will should arise in our minds. Injuring others gives rise to hatred."--Swami Sivananda

"You do not like to suffer yourself. How can you inflict suffering on others? Every killing is a suicide. The eternal, blissful and natural state has been smothered by this life of ignorance. In this way the present life is due to the killing of the eternal, pristine Being. Is it not a case of suicide?"--Ramana Maharishi, 1935

"The Hindu sage who sees the whole of life.. If he does not fight, it is not because he rejects all fighting as futile, but because he has finished his fights. He has overcome all dissensions between himself and the world and is now at rest.... We shall have wars and soldiers so long as the brute in us is untamed."-- Dr. S. Radhakrishnan.

"By ahimsa Patanjali meant the removal of the desire to kill. All forms of life have an equal right to the air of maya. The saint who uncovers the secret of creation will be in harmony with Nature's countless bewildering expressions. All men may understand this truth by overcoming the passion for destruction." --Sri Yukteswar to Paramahansa Yogananda.

"If you plant eggplant, you can pluck eggplants. If you sow goodness, you can reap goodness. If you sow evil, you will reap evil. Do good to all. God is there, within you. Don't kill. Don't harbor anger." --Siva Yogaswami

"The test of ahimsa is the absence of jealousy. The man whose heart never cherishes even the thought of injury to anyone, who rejoices at the prosperity of even his greatest enemy, that man is the bhakta, he is the yogi, he is the guru of all." --Swami Vivekananda

"Strictly speaking, no activity and no industry is possible without a certain amount of violence, no matter how little. Even the very process of living is impossible without a certain amount of violence. What we have to do is to minimize it to the greatest extent possible."--Mahatma Gandhi My Socialism, 34-35.

"We are all of the same race and religion. We are holy beings established in Divinity itself. This truth can be understood only by those who have grasped it through the magical charm of a life of dharma--not by other means. Because of that, sages have emphatically proclaimed again and again that it is necessary to love all existing lives as one's own."--Siva Yogaswami.

"Do good to all. God is there, within you. Don't kill. Don't harbor anger."--Siva Yogaswami.

"May all be happy. May we never see a tear in another's eyes!"--Sri Sri Sri Balagangadharnath Swamiji.

"Using words that do not offend and not speaking ill of others is tapas of speech."--B.K.S. Iyengar.