

## Gandhi on Nonviolence

Non-resistance is restraint voluntarily undertaken for the good of society. It is, therefore, an intensely active, purifying, inward force . . . . It presupposes ability to offer physical resistance.

Non-violence is the greatest and most active force in the world. One cannot be passively non-violent . . . . One person who can express ahimsa in life exercises a force superior to all the forces of brutality.

Non-violence cannot be preached. It has to be practiced.

[Human society is naturally non-violent.] All society is held together by non-violence, even as the earth is held in her position by gravitation. But when the law of gravitation was discovered the discovery yielded results of which our ancestors had no knowledge. Even so when society is deliberately constructed in accordance with the law of non-violence, its structure will be different in material particulars from what is today .... What is happening today is disregard of the law of non-violence and enthrone-ment of violence as if it were an eternal law.

I know that the progress of non-violence is seemingly a terribly slow progress. But experience has taught me it is the surest way to the common goal.

My faith in the saying that what is gained by the sword will also be lost by the sword is imperishable.

Non-violence is impossible without self-purification.

My greatest weapon is mute prayer.

In the composition of the truly brave there should be no malice, no anger, no distrust, no fear of death or physical hurt. Non-violence is certainly not for those who lack these essential qualities.

Mental violence has no potency and injures only the person whose thoughts are violent. It is otherwise with mental non-violence. It has potency which the world does not yet know. And what I want is non-violence of thought and deed.

Self-respect and honor cannot be protected by others. They are for each individual himself or herself to guard.

If we remain non-violent, hatred will die as everything does, from disuse.

It is the law of love that rules mankind. Had violence, i.e., hate ruled us, we should have become extinct long ago. And yet the tragedy of it is that the so-called civilized men and nations conduct themselves as if the basis of society was violence.

Democracy can only be saved through non-violence, because democracy, so long as it is sustained by violence, cannot provide for or protect the weak. My notion of democracy is that under it the weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest. This can never happen except through non-violence .... Western democracy, as it functions today, is diluted Nazism or fascism.

Non-violent defense presupposes recklessness about one's life and property.

The immovable force of satyagraha—suffering without retaliation.

Those who die unresistingly are likely to still the fury of violence by their wholly innocent sacrifice.

He who meets death without striking a blow fulfills his duty 100 percent. The result is in God's hands.

If intellect plays a large part in the field of violence, I hold that it plays a larger part in the field of non-violence.

As non-violence admits of no grossness, no fraud, no malice, it must raise the moral tone of the defenders. Hence there will be a corresponding rise in the moral tone of the "weak majority" to be defended.

Moral support cannot really be given in the sense of giving. It automatically comes to him who is qualified to take it. And such a one can take it in abundance.

A satyagrahi is dead to his body even before his enemy attempts to kill him, i.e., he is free from attachment to his body and only lives in the victory of his soul. Therefore when he is already thus dead, why should he yearn to kill anyone? To die in the act of killing is in essence to die defeated.

The general of a non-violent army has got to have greater presence of mind than that of a violent army, and God would bless him with the necessary resourcefulness to meet new situations as

they arise.

A non-violent army need not have the resourcefulness or understanding of its general, but they will have a perfect sense of discipline to carry out faithfully his orders.

In this age of democracy it is essential that desired results are achieved by the collective effort of the people. It will no doubt be good to achieve an objective through the effort of an supremely powerful individual, but it can never make the community conscious of its corporate strength.

If freedom has got to come, it must be obtained by our own internal strength, by our closing our ranks, by unity between all sections of the community.

A weak man is just by accident. A strong but non-violent man is unjust by accident.

If liberty and democracy are to be truly saved, they will only be by non-violent resistance no less brave, no less glorious, than violent resistance. And it will be infinitely braver and more glorious because it will give life without taking any.

When in the face of an upheaval such as we are witnessing these are only a few individuals of immovable faith, they have to live up to their faith even though they may produce no visible effect on the course of events. They should believe that their action will produce tangible results in due course.

Such non-violent resisters will calmly die wherever they are but will not bend the knee before the aggressor. They will not be deceived by promises. They do not seek deliverance from the British yoke through the help of a third party [the Japanese]. They believe implicitly in their own way of fighting and no other. Their fight is on behalf of the dumb millions who do not perhaps know that there is such a thing<sup>as</sup> deliverance. They have neither hatred for the British nor love for the Japanese. They wish well to both as to all others. They would like both to do what is right. They believe that non-violence alone will lead men to do right under all circumstances.

The task before the votaries of non-violence is very difficult, but no difficulty can baffle men who have faith in their mission.

The best preparation for and even the expression of



non-violence lies in the determined pursuit of the constructive program .... He who has no belief in the constructive program has, in my opinion, no concrete feeling for the starved millions. He who is devoid of that feeling cannot fight non-violently. In actual practice the expansion of my non-violence has kept exact pace with that of my identification with starved humanity.

Non-violence knows no defeat. It must, however, be true non-violence, not a make-believe.

A satyagrahi must always be ready to die with a smile on his face, without retaliation and without rancor in his heart. Some people have come to have a wrong notion that satyagraha means only jail-going, perhaps facing blows, and nothing more. Such satyagraha cannot bring independence. To win independence you have to learn the art of dying without killing.

Must I do all the evil I can before I learn to shun it? Is it not enough to know the evil to shun it? If not, we should be sincere enough to admit that we love evil too well to give it up.

A satyagrahi cannot wait or delay action till perfect conditions are forthcoming. He will act with whatever material is at hand, purge it of dross and convert it into pure gold.

Truth and non-violence are not possible without a living belief in God, meaning a self-existent, all-knowing, living Force which inheres in every other force known to the world and which depends on none, and which will live when all other forces may conceivably perish or cease to act. I am unable to account for my life without belief in this all-embracing living Light.

Crime is a disease like any other malady and is a product of the prevalent social system. Therefore [in a non-violent India] all crime including murder will be treated as a disease.

Murder can never be avenged by either murder or taking compensation. The only way to avenge murder is to offer oneself as a willing sacrifice, with no desire for retaliation.

In this age of the atom bomb unadulterated non-violence is the only force that can confound all the tricks of violence put together.

The lawlessness, if it can be so described, that I have advocated is like prescribing wholesome and necessary food for the body. Behind my "lawlessness" there is discipline, construction and

well-being of society. It is an effective protest against an unjust and injurious law or act. It can never take the form of selfish evasion of duty.