

MEHER BABA  
ON  
NON-VIOLENCE

0-20 Paise.

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*Man has a tendency to cling to catch-words and allow his action to be determined by them almost mechanically without bringing his action in direct relation to the living perception which these words embody.... ...*

*Non-violence, pure and simple means Love Infinite. It is the Goal of life...To reach this goal, there must be intense longing...This longing is not to be found in the masses. ...*

*A premature attempt to introduce Non-violence of the brave amongst the unprepared masses in actual war-time would not only fail but, on the other hand, there is a serious danger of bringing in the fatal 'Non-violence of the coward.'*

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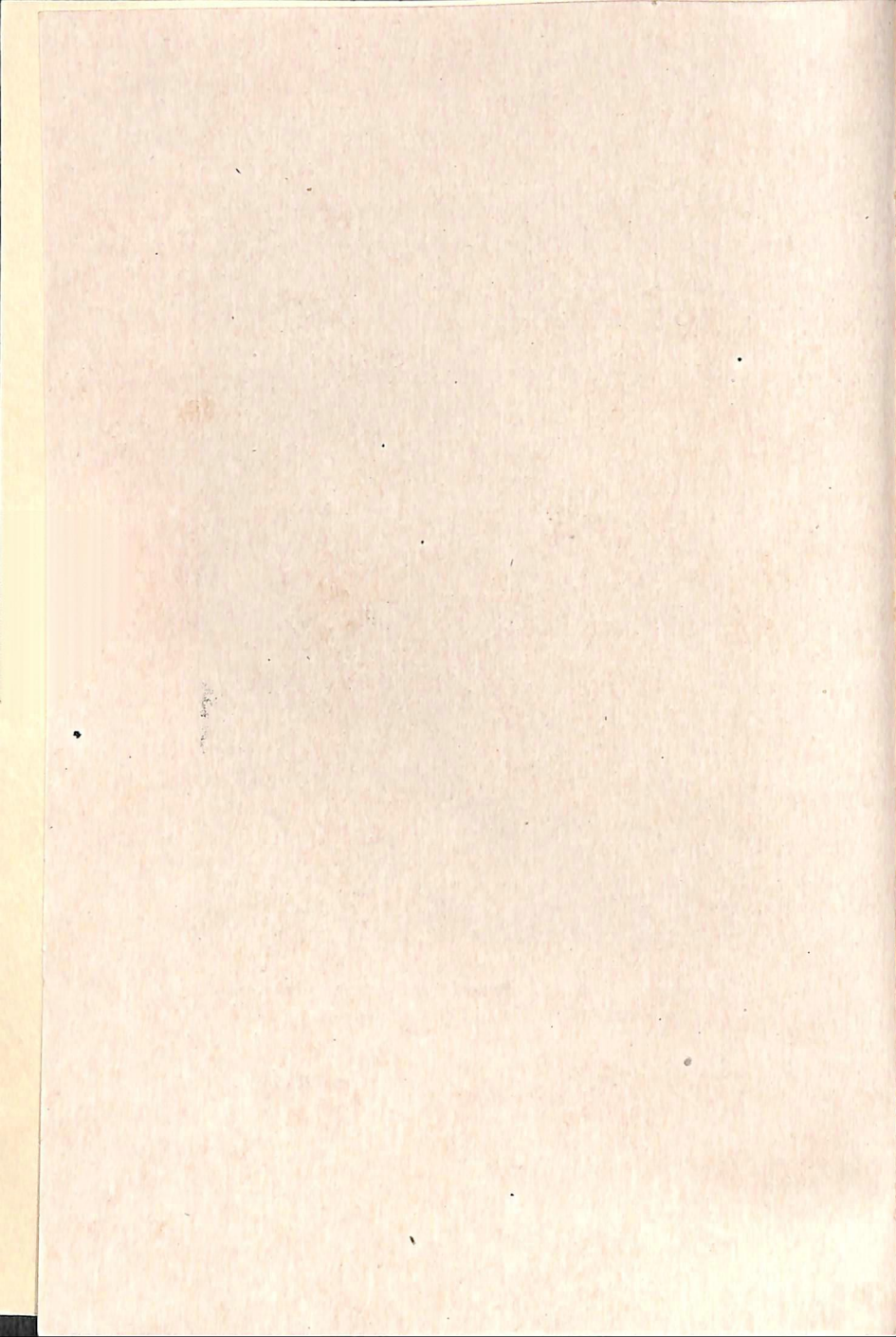




*Be true to the trust I repose in you and remember me  
wholeheartedly. My love and Blessing to you.*

*25th Feb. 1965*

*—Meher Baba*





## INTRODUCTION

With the making of the Atom Bomb by yet another Power—which means, another Power with the dream of world domination has issued his challenge to the rest of the world, but as it is euphemistically called, “has joined the Nuclear **Club**”—the real workability of the Gandhian concept of Non-violence is again being questioned. History has proved that this concept was a right one for the particular set of circumstances for which it was conceived—the overcoming and throwing out a foreign power which had already seized the country and had established its system of tribute. But does it apply with another Power that would seize the country ?

Yet strangely, any debate on Non-violence no longer has any meaning at all, for what is being debated is not non-violence but the degree of **permissible violence** — whether a country, attacked with atom-bombs should retaliate with atom-bombs, or only with “conventional arms”? But “conventional arms” only means a certain level of proficiency in instruments of mass-destruction at a given time. Once it was clubs, then it became bows and arrows, then guns. When the majority of peoples in the world have atom-bombs **they** will be conventional arms. Admittedly, that will be a more frightful conventionality than the previous one, just as that one was to the one before it. But this only means that we,

humanity, are becoming a more frightful species (or with the same frightfulness, but becoming cleverer at it) and frightened at this frightfulness, desiring our own destruction.

But all this is by the way, mere conversational preamble to the matter in hand: the Discourse on Violence and Non-violence by Meher Baba. This is the **only clear and thorough exposition** of this subject that has been done, and it makes such fine distinctions as: Non-violence Pure and Simple; Non-violence of the Brave; Non-violent Violence; Selfless Violence; Non-violence of the Coward; Selfish Violence. Perfect non-violence is shown to be perfect love; and since perfect love is attainable only by very few at any time, our problem is not one of **violence or non-violence**, but of **motive in violence**. Compared with perfect non-violence all one's actions are violent. It is up to us to face and admit the motives of them. By constantly doing this we will at least arrive at honesty in action—even though it will still be violence.

And honesty in action will eventually bring upon us the Grace of the Perfect Master which, while destroying Ignorance completely is completely non-violent, and which alone can establish us in real Non-violence.



## VIOLENCE AND NON-VIOLENCE

Man has a tendency to cling to catch-words and allow his action to be determined by them almost mechanically without bringing his action in direct relation to the living perception, which these words embody.

### Going Behind Words

Words have their own place and use in life; but if action is to be intelligent, it is imperatively necessary that the meaning, which these words are intended to convey, should be carefully analysed and determined. Among the words, which need this type of exploration, there are few which are as important as the words, "Violence" and "Non-Violence"; they have a direct bearing upon the ideologies, which shape not only particular actions but also the entire tenor of life.

Spiritual life is a matter of perception and not a matter of mechanical conformity with rules, even when these rules are meant to stand for the highest values; it implies an understanding, which goes beyond all words of formulations. All words and formulations have a tendency to limit the Truth; therefore, those, who seek to bring out the spirit underlying these formulations, have often to launch upon a searching analysis of the formulated principles, and supplement this analysis by constantly retaining touch with concrete examples taken from life. This is particularly true of those guiding principles of life which are formulated with the help of the opposite concepts of Violence and Non-Violence.

The words "Violence" and "Non-Violence" are, in ordinary references, applicable to such diverse situa-

tions in practical life that no exposition of the issues involved can be complete, unless it takes note of these diverse situations and uses them as a starting point. However, for the purpose of exposition, it is not necessary to exhaust numerically all the possible diversities, which would be covered by these words; it is enough to consider some of the most representative situations. The representative situations mentioned below, have been selected because of their capacity to yield abundant light on the fundamental values which centre round the concepts of Violence and Non-Violence.

*Situation No. 1.* Suppose a man, who does not know how to swim, has fallen in a lake and is being drowned and that there is near by another person, who is good at swimming and who wants to save him from being drowned. The man who is being drowned has a tendency to grasp desperately the person who comes to his help and the clasping is often so awkward that it may not only make it impossible for the drowning man to be saved, but may even bring about the drowning of the one, who has come to help him. One, who desires to save a drowning man, has, therefore, to render him unconscious by hitting him on the head, before he begins to help him. Striking upon the head of the drowning man, under such circumstances, cannot be looked upon either as Violence or as Non-Violence.

*Situation No. 2.* Suppose a man is suffering from some contagious disease, which can only be cured through an operation. Now in order to cure this suffering man as well as to protect others from catching this infection, a surgeon may have to remove the infected part

### **Starting With Representative Situations**

#### **The Case of a Drowning Man**

#### **The Case of a Surgical Operation**



from his body by the use of his knife. This cutting of the body by a knife is also among the things which cannot be looked upon either as Violence or Non-Violence.

*Situation No. 3.* Suppose an aggressive nation invades a weaker nation for selfish purposes and some other nation, which is inspired solely by the noble desire of saving the weak nation, resists this aggressive invasion by armed force. Fighting for such resistance in the defence of the weak nation cannot be looked upon as either Violence or Non-Violence, but can be called Non-Violent Violence.

**The Case of an Aggressive Nation**

*Situation No. 4.* Suppose a mad-dog has run amock and is likely to bite school-children and the teachers in the school destroy the mad-dog in order to protect the children. This destruction of the mad-dog does imply Violence but there is no hatred in it.

**The Case of a Mad-Dog**

*Situation No. 5.* Suppose a physically strong man is insulted and spat upon by an arrogant man who is nevertheless weak and suppose that the strong man, who has got the power to crush the arrogant man, not only desists from hurting the arrogant man but calmly explains to him the gospel of love. This action implies Non-Violence, but it is the non-violence of the strong.

**The Case of Non-Violence of the Strong**

The first three situations mentioned above clearly bring out that the question whether a situation implies violence or non-violence cannot be decided except by entering into many subtle and delicate considerations: (1) with regard to the diverse details pertaining to the situation and (2) with regard to the nature of the motive, which pro-

**Need For Delicate Considerations**

mpts action. And the last two situations bring out that even where it is easily possible to say that a particular situation implies violence or non-violence, the violence or non-violence may be characterised by the presence of certain other factors, which substantially give it a meaning, which goes beyond the ordinary meaning attached to these words.

A detailed analysis of the case of the hit on the drowning man (situation No. 1) shows that though it involves the use of force without the prior consent of the person on whom it is exerted, the force used is ultimately used with the motive of saving the drowning man. The situation includes the application of force without the consent of the man against whom it is used: and in this sense, it may be said to be a case of violence; but the force is used for the good of the drowning man and not with any desire to inflict injury or harm to him; and in that sense, it may also be said that it is not a case of violence. In these special senses, the situation can be said to involve violence and non-violence respectively; but in the ordinary sense of the words, it cannot be looked upon as a case either of violence or non-violence.

The case of the operation for the cure of contagious disease (situation No. 2) is slightly different from the case of the drowning man. Here also there

**Comments on the  
Case of an Surgical  
Operation**

is application of force (amounting even to the cutting of the affected part of the body); and the application of force is for the good of the person against whom it is used: but in most cases of such operations, the patient gives his prior consent for the application of such force as may be necessary for the execu-



tion of the operation. Further, the operation is intended not only to protect the patient himself from the further ravages of the disease, but is also intended to protect others from the spread of infection. The application of force here springs out of the motive of doing unmixed good both to the patient as well as many others who might come into contact with him. Since no harm or injury is intended, the application of force in this situation does not amount to violence in the ordinary sense: and it also cannot be adequately looked upon as non-violence, since it is a clear case of cutting a part of a living body.

The case of fighting with an aggressive nation (situation No. 3.) is also very interesting and instructive. Here the fighting which is involved in offering resistance to the aggression of the nation with no selfish motive or personal interest but solely with the purpose of defending the weaker nation may entail much injury and even destruction upon the aggressive nation: and the use of force is not only without the prior consent of the aggressive nation against which it is used, but it is definitely against its deliberate and conscious will. But even in this situation, we do not have a clear case of violence, since in spite of the injury and harm involved, the application of force is not only for the good of the weaker nation, which is its victim, but is also in a very important sense, for the good of the aggressive nation itself, because through the resistance encountered in its aggression, it is gradually cured of its spiritual weakness or disease of having a tendency to invade and exploit the weaker nations. This violence is really not violent and so we call it non-violent violence.

The case of fighting with an aggressive nation (situation No. 3.) is in fact very similar to the case of the opera-

**Comparison of the Case  
of Aggressive Nation**

tion of infected part. In the case of fighting with the aggressive nation, the good of the weaker nation appears to be the primary result and the good of the aggressive nation (against which force is exercised) appears to be secondary result: and in the case of the operation, the good of the patient (against whom force is exercised) appears to be the primary result and the good of others appears to be a secondary result. But this is only a minor difference and when the two situations are carefully analysed and compared, it is found that they both equally promote the good of the target of force as well as many others involved in the situation.

Defending the weak is an important form of selfless service and it is a part of Karmayoga; and use of force, when necessary for this purpose, stands

**Defending the Weak  
is a Form of Selfless  
Service**

completely justified as an indispensable instrument for securing the desired objective. But any such fighting which may have to be undertaken to defend the weak must be without any selfish motives or hatred if it is to have unalloyed spiritual importance. It resembles the case of a man defending a woman who is being attacked by another man for vile purposes, thus saving the woman's honour and life and correcting the attacking man by punishing him and making him repent.

The case of destroying the mad-dog (situation No. 4) is definitely a case of violence, but it is justified because there is no hatred in it and because it is intended to promote the greater good of the children, who would be attacked by the mad-dog. The case

**Comments on the Case  
of a Mad-Dog and the  
Case of Non-Violence of  
the Strong**

of the strong man, who gives a sermon instead of seeking revenge (situation No. 5.) implies non-vio-



lence: but it is not a case of inaction. It neither implies passivity nor weakness but strength and true creative action of an impersonal nature. It is non-violence of the strong.

The detailed analysis of the above diverse situations as well as their mutual comparison bring out the fact that questions concerning violence

**Spiritual Under-Stand-  
ing is above Rules and  
Requires Application  
of Divine Love**

or non-violence, their justification or otherwise and the ascertainment of their true value or lack of value, cannot be decided by any formal enunciation of a universal rule. They involve many delicate spiritual issues and implications : and a right understanding of the status of violence and non-violence in the scheme of spiritual values requires a true perception of the meaning of the purpose of existence. Action, therefore, should not be governed by means of any slogans (however high-sounding) based upon the incomplete and insufficient ideas of mere violence or mere non-violence; it should be a spontaneous outcome of Divine Love, which is above duality and of Spiritual Understanding, which is above rules.



## FURTHER CLASSIFICATION

### NON-VIOLENCE :

(1) **NON-VIOLENCE PURE AND SIMPLE : (based on Divine Love)** Here one sees all as his own Self and is beyond both friendship and enmity, and never does a single thought of violence enter his mind under any circumstances.

(2) **NON-VIOLENCE OF THE BRAVE : (based on Unlimited Pure Love)** This applies to those who, although not one with all through actual realisation, consider **no one** as their enemy and try to win over even the aggressor through love and give up their lives by being attacked, not through fear, but through Love.

● ● (3) **NON-VIOLENCE OF THE COWARD : (based on Unlimited Weakness of Character and Mind)**

Those who do not resist aggression because of fear and for no other reason, belong to this class.

### VIOLENCE :

(1) **NON-VIOLENT VIOLENCE : ( based on Unlimited Love)** Violence done solely for defending the weak and where there is no question of self-defence or of self-motive.



(2) **SELFLESS VIOLENCE** : (**based on limited Human Love**) Violence done in self-defence when attacked treacherously and with no other selfish motive :— for example—when one's mother's honour is on the point of being violated by a lusty desperado and when one defends his mother; so also when the motherland's honour is at stake and it is being attacked by enemies, the nation's selfless effort at defending the motherland is selfless Violence.

(3) **SELFISH VIOLENCE** : (**based on Hatred and Lust**) When Violence is done for selfish motives by an individual or nation for power and selfish gains, etc.

**NON-VIOLENCE**, pure and simple, means Love Infinite. It is the Goal of life. When this state of pure and Infinite Love is reached, the aspirant is at one with God. To reach this goal, there must be intense longing and the aspirant, who has this longing to realise the Supreme State, has to begin by practising what is termed 'Non-Violence of the brave'. This applies to those who, though not one with all through actual realisation, consider no one as their enemy and try to win over even the aggressor through love and give up their lives by being attacked, not through fear but through love.

As pointed out, 'Non-Violence of the brave' is practicable for those individuals who have the intense longing to attain the Supreme State. This longing is not to be found in the masses. If, therefore, it is intended to lead the masses to pure 'Non-Violence', it is necessary to first prepare them for the 'Non-violence of the brave'. To achieve this aim 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 whatever. In times of actual war, when the masses are taken by surprise and when they 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 finally towards 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'. A premature attempt to introduce 'Non-violence of the brave' amongst the unprepared masses in actual wartime would not only fail but, on the other hand, there is the serious danger of bringing in the fatal 'Non-violence of the coward', i. e., the masses will not resist the aggression simply because of fear and for no other reason.

The masses may also be educated and led to the 'Non-violence of the brave' by making them follow the principles of 'Selfless Violence' instead of those of 'Non-violent Violence'. This selfless violence is violence done in self-defence when attacked treacherously. No other selfish motive should be allowed to justify the violence. Thus, for example, when one's mother's honour is on the point of being violated by a lusty desperado and when one defends her by resorting to violence, he is said to have followed the principles of 'Selfless Violence'. Similarly when the honour of the motherland is at stake and it is being attacked by enemies, the nation's selfless effort in defending the motherland is 'Selfless Violence'. A tinge of selfishness being there (as the mother is one's own mother), the love expressed here is limited human love.

'Non-violence of the coward' is, as pointed out, fatal; so also is 'Selfish Violence', i. e., violence for selfish



motives by individuals or a nation to gain power or other selfish ends.

It will therefore be seen that while Non-violence, pure and simple, is the goal of life. This goal has to be attained by individual seekers of God by following 'Non-violence of the brave'. The masses who have not the requisite intense longing for being one with Him, have to be gradually led towards this goal on the principles of 'Non-Violent Violence' or those of 'Selfless Violence' according to the circumstances. In conclusion, it must be very clearly understood that 'Non-violent Violence' and 'Selfless Violence' are merely means of attaining the goal of life, namely the pure and simple 'Non-Violence' or the 'Love Infinite'. These means must not be confused or otherwise mixed up with the goal itself.

The motive and the result are always determined by the general acceptance of their being 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 infinitely opposed to each other. 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 and gain infinite contempt. So 'Non-violence (of the coward)' we put under the headline of 'Non-Love', as we put 'Non-Violence (of the brave)' under the heading of 'Love'.

'Non-violent Violence' is justified not under the heading of love but under the heading of duty—duty done self-

## THE PRAYER OF REPENTANCE

We repent, O God Most Merciful, for all our sins; for every thought that was false or unjust or unclean; for every word spoken that ought not to have been spoken; for every deed done that ought not to have been done.

We repent for every deed and word and thought inspired by selfishness, and for every deed and word and thought inspired by hatred.

We repent most especially for every lustful thought and every lustful action; for every lie; for all hypocrisy; for every promise given but not fulfilled, and for all slander and backbiting.

Most especially also, we repent for every action that has brought ruin to others; for every word and deed that has given others pain; and for every wish that pain should befall others.

In your Unbounded Mercy we ask you to forgive us, O God! for all these sins committed by us, and to forgive us for our constant failures to think and speak and act according to Your Will.



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