

**Non-Violence, the Highest Virtue****Dr. Manoranjan Senapaty**

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**Abstract:**

The research paper entitled non-violence, the highest virtue is a humble attempt to lay focus on our ancient Indian tradition in connection to the human behaviour and social adjustment. Here in this research paper most of the Sanskrit texts those are representing the moral, ethical and ontological inputs are covered. Up to my knowledge non-violence is the only virtue in the highest order that can bring perfection to a person if practiced as per the sayings of the scriptures. In this connection the vivid examples from the holy treatises Gita are narrated here. Apart from this the aim and duty of human beings are also explained in this research work. The numbers and functions of sense organs those are depicted in the noble work Manusmṛti are also focused. It is shown here that through the control of sense organs one can be able to practice non-violence. Non-violence is considered to be the universal harmony. The system of peacefulness can be established across the globe through the institution of non-violence.

**Key Words:** truthfulness, brahmacharya (celibacy), charity, violence, non-violence, niṣkāma karma, Mahābhārata, Śṛti, Smṛti and Upaniṣads, prosperity, liberation, desires, human goals, selfishness, action, scriptures, Śrīmadbhagavatgītā, renunciation, tradition, Budha, Jaina, sacrifice, infatuation, passion, jealousy, anger, greed, Six inherent enemies, welfare, samanvayavāda (system of equality), brotherhood, detachment, Veda.

**Introduction**

The importance of non-violence has been accepted since time immemorial. The absence of violence is understood to be non-violence. In general the killing of life is deemed to be violence. The absence of ill feeling, harsh talking and misbehaviour through our mind, body and speech is known as non-violence. More over the renunciation of all types of violent actions is called non-violence. Truthfulness, brahmacharya (celibacy), charity, etc are the root source of non-violence. The non-violence is the virtuous path, it is the best quality in the highest order and more over it is known as the best medium to obtain salvation or freedom. The greatest form of the supreme soul is known as non-violence. The mind that is affected by even any action performed by us of the living beings is known as violence. The violence can be in this way categorised into three major divisions, such as mental violence, verbal violence and physical violence. It has been declared by our ancient sages that non-violence is the greatest virtue (**Ahimsā Paramo Dharmah**).

**Aim of human life as per Gita**

Śrīmadbhagavatgītā analyses the concept of disinterested action (niṣkāma karma). Different arguments have been mentioned here in connection to the necessity of actions of human beings. Some critics accept the glory of karma (action) while others accept the importance of knowledge. But to face the practical requirements the importance of karma (action) has been appreciated. The nature also inspires the people to perform actions.

All people must be action oriented, so that they must have the knowledge of action. Karma alone is the obstruction of all sorts of unvirtuous deeds, eradication of all sorts of unhappiness and more over karma is the source to obtain all kind of prosperity. Śrīmadbhagavatgītā is the source and life of Indian culture, tradition and heritage. And Gita is considered to be the summary of all Upaniṣads. Gita is the part of the great epic Mahābhārata which is considered to be the fifth Veda. Gita plays a vital role in the field of Indian philosophical systems. The subtle knowledge of Veda also has been reflected in Śrīmadbhagavatgita. Hence Gītā is regarded as the representative philosophical treatise of Śṛti, Smṛti

and Upaniṣads. Gītā explores the knowledge of the structure of the soul, concept of karma, knowledge and devotion, system of disinterested action, importance of sacrificial deeds, aim and objectives of four fold human goals, and more over the concept of the supreme soul.

In connection to the question, what is life, ultimately the answer follows, the obtainment of four fold human goals is known as life. The concept of dharma (virtue), artha (prosperity), kāma (desires) and mokṣa (liberation) is known as the four fold human goals. The essentiality of karma is noticed in every aspects of getting dharma, artha, kāma and mokṣa. The desired actions caused to the heaven but are not meant for salvation. If man engages himself in performing the prohibited actions then he gets the hell. But the karma done in an disinterested manner by renouncing all sort of desired actions causes freedom. Therefore it is told in Gītā –

**Yatsāṅkhaih prāpyate sthānam tadyogairapi  
gamyate.**

**Akam sāṅkhyam ca yogam ca yah paśyati sa paśtati.1**

Hence all human beings must be engaged in actions by forgetting their ego and selfishness, as the only right of the human beings lies in actions but not in the results. Therefore lord Śrīkṛṣṇa has beautifully explored in Gītā –

**Karmaṇyavādhikāraste mā phaleṣu kadācana  
Mā karmaphalaheturbhurmā te sangostvakarmaṇi.2**

The source of this śloka is found in yajurveda, as it is told there-

**Kurvanneveha karmāṇi jijiviśeccatam śamah  
Evam tvayi nānyathetosti na karma lipyate nare.3**

The importance of the obtainment of the result of the action is vividly described in the scriptures, as it is said, “**nahi karma mahat kincit phalam yasya na bhujyate**”.<sup>4</sup> While telling the importance of the result of the action, Śrīkṛṣṇa says

**Karmaṇaiva hi samsidhimasthita janakādayah  
Lokasamgrahamevāpi sampaśyan kartumarhasi.5**

From this it is evident that both scriptural and practical rights have been stressed in Śrīmadbhagavatgītā. In Gītā it is mentioned that the wise one adopt the system of renunciation by quitting the concept of desired actions. In eighteenth chapter, when Arjuna asked about the

concept of renunciation and how-to entered into it, lord Śrīkṛṣṇa replies –

**Kārayaṇam karmaṇām nyāsam sannyāsam kavayo  
viduh**

**Sarvakarmaphalatyāgam prāhustyāgam vicakṣaṇah.  
Tyājyam doṣavādityeke karma prāhurmaniṣiṇah  
Yajñādānatapah karma na tyājyami cāpare.6**

### **Non-violence leads to virtue**

The importance and significance of non-violence has been described in all most all systems of human tradition. Not even a single preceptor is availed in this creation who has preached about violence, rather than they have accepted the glory of non-violence. Manusmṛti is regarded as the oldest codification of rules of Dharma which is a comprehensive term for all rules of righteous conduct in every sphere of human activities. Dharma regulates the rights and duties of every individual in order to ensure peace and happiness for all, by harmonizing the interests of the individuals and the society. The great sage Manu has accepted the importance of non-violence among the ten characteristics of dharma and more over it is his first interpretation which signifies the gravity and depth of Dharma. He has so beautifully described the importance of non-violence for the four groups of people living in society, as he says –

**Ahimsā satyamasteyam souchamindriyanigrahah.**

**Evam sāmāsikam dharma chāturvarṇye  
abravīnmanuh.7**

Even the great preceptor Patanjali, while analysing the limbs of yoga, at first, elaborated the importance of non-violence in the act of ‘Yama’, as it is mentioned Yogasūtra “**Ahimsāsatyāsteya-  
brahmacharyāparigrahā yamāh**”.<sup>8</sup> We can notice the importance of sacrificial deeds in the post Vedic period. Later on the entrance of violence is also noticed in Vedic sacrifice. But the priests declared that the violence occurred in Vedic sacrifice should not be taken as violence. As a matter of consequence, the opposite thought that is non-violence developed in the philosophical system of Budha and Jaina. And these two systems started preaching the glory of non-violence across the nation.



**Indriyanigraha, the source of non-violence**

In every human being, there are six natural instincts. They have been described as “**Ariśadvarga**” (Six inherent enemies) namely **kāma** (desire), **krodha** (anger), **lobha** (greed), **moha** (passion), **mada** (infatuation), and **mātsarya** (jealousy). Almost all the evil actions of the individuals which lead to the misery of others and to themselves are instigated by one or more of these enemies. They act through the sense organs (indriyas) which are present in every human being. Uncontrolled, indriyas instigate an individual to indulge in wrongful actions. One who does not establish control over the sense organs, is sure to go astray and suffer. Therefore, great importance was given to **Indriyanigrah** (control of senses). It was declared as one of the fundamental rules of virtue to be observed by all human beings. In chapter II, Manusmṛti explains this as follows –

**Indriyānām vicharatām visayeśvapahāriṣu.**

**Samyame yatramātiśtedwidwānyanteva vājinām.9**

A clear example has been given in the above verse regarding **indriyanigraha**. Just as an expert charioteer controls his horses from going out of the path, on account of training he had secured, Manusmṛti advises that every individual must acquire the capacity to control his sense organs by necessary training. It is a matter which we see in day-to-day life that human beings land themselves in misery by indulging in illegal and immoral acts by causing injuries to fellow human beings because of their incapacity to control their senses. There are 11 such organs, which are identified in Manusmṛti:

**Ekādaśendriyānyāhuryāni pūrve manīśīnah**

**Tāni samyakpravakṣyāmi yathāvadānupūrvaśah**

**Śrotram twak chakṣuṣī jihvā nāsikā chaiva**

**panchamī**

**Pāyūpastham hastapādām vākchaiva daśamī smritā**

**Budhīndriyāni panchaiśām śrotrādīnyapupūrvaśah**

**Karmendriyāni panchaiśām pāyvādīni**

**prachakṣyate.10**

When the mind is subjected to control, both sets of organs namely organs of senses and organs of action will be under control. A man commits guilt only on account of uncontrolled action of his organs of senses and if he keeps them under

control, he is sure to attain success in life. A person whose speech and conduct are pure, gains success.

**Yasya bahūmanasī śudhe samyagagupte ca sarvadā.**

**Sa vai sarvamavāpnoti vedāntopagatam  
phalamū.11 (Manu. II/160)**

**The utility of non-violence**

Even the mind, got affected by any sort of action performed by us is known as violence in nature. Taking the importance of ahimsā into consideration the ancient sages have declared its utilities. The welfare towards the country and the entire creation can be done only by love and affection. Lord Sri Krishna has declared the quality of human beings enriched with divine entities in Bhagavatgītā. As he says –

**Ahimsā satyamakrodhatyāgah śāntirapaiśunam.**

**Dayā bhūteśwaloluptvam mārḍavam  
hrīracāpalam.12**

The entire creation is just like a family and in **Yajurveda** it is told that like a friend we must develop the quality of universal welfare towards the entire creatures being endowed with love and affection. And the Vedic mantra goes in this way –

**Mitrasyāham cakṣuṣā sarvāni bhūtāni samikṣe.**

**Mitrasya cakṣuṣā samikṣāmahe.13**

Lord Budha preached the importance and significance of non-violence in the highest order. Not only in India but also all around the globe the depth of non-violence has been preached by the tradition of buddhistic system. Budha has clarified the essence of cultured person in the means of non-violence and not violence. As it is told –

**Na tena ariyo hoti yena prāñāni himsati.**

**Ahimsā sabbpāñānam ariyoti pavucyati.14**

**(Dhammapada 19/15)**

**Merits of Non-violence**

The glory of non-violence has been accepted in India since time immemorial. Accepting the essentiality of non-violence, it is said by the great preceptor Manu that the human beings have been able to achieve everything by adopting non-violence only. By the institution of non-violence only we can be able to establish the system of truth, happiness and universal brotherhood. In this way we would be able to protect virtue by taking care of the self as well as others which can

be called **samanvayavāda** (system of equality). Non-violence is the root source of truth, celibacy, etc. As it is told by Manu –

**Ahimsayaiva bhūtānām kāryam śreyonuśāsanam.  
Vāk caiva madhurā ślakṣṇā prayojyā  
dharmamiccā.15**

By adopting non-violence the enemies can be transformed into friends. Even the crooked persons can be turned into kind hearted persons. The impossible can be made into possible by performing non-violence. By the means of non-violence, the harsh words used by us can also be stopped and all these good qualities of non-violence have been described by Manu in the following verse –

**Nāruntudah syādātartopi na paradrohakarmadhīh.  
Yayāsyodwijate vācā nālokyām tāmudīrayet.16**

In this way the great sage Patanjali also has declared the importance of non-violence –

**Jātideśakālasamayānavachinnāh sārvaabhōumā  
mahāvratam.17 (Yoga. 2/31)**

**Ahimsā-pratiśthāyām tatsannidhou vairatyāgah.18  
(Yoga. 2/35)**

From the above discussed facts it becomes sure that at no circumstances we should kill or hurt the lives in this creation rather than showing the sense of non-violence towards them. But the crooked or foolish fellows must be obstructed from violence in order to protect the dignity and integrity of the society and the country. It never becomes a crime if we apply violence towards these types of people, because it is done for the welfare of the society. And more over the tradition of our country also teaches us that the criminals, ill-treating people must be punished. For this purpose a technical word ‘Veda’ has been used in our Vedic literature. And such is called in Veda as “**Ācārahīnam na punati Vedāh**”.<sup>19</sup>

### **Non-violence, the Universal harmony**

Non-violence is the best practice to achieve virtue. The human society always conquers over violence by adopting non-violence. Non-violence is such a quality by which the universal brotherhood can be established. And all types of virtuous deeds exist in non-violence. The human behaviours

through non-violence is considered to be the best one. And it is told in the **Mahābhāratam** that –

**Śṛyatām dharmasarvaswam śṛtvā  
caivādhāryatām.**

**Ātmanah pratikūlāni pareśām na samācaret.20**

Observing the glory and significance of non-violence, it is said by Manu that one should not live in this world for himself only and for his own shake he should not engage himself in killing the lives.

**Yo ahimsakāni bhūtāni hinastyātmasukhechhayā.  
Sa jīvamśca mrutaścaiva na kwacit sukhamedhate.21**

The action done in the sense of getting its result is known as inferior action in respect to Gītā. The people intend the result when they perform actions in connection to its results. And the result oriented actions causes both happiness and unhappiness. Which action is superior, in this connection it is said that the actions done with an intention of detachment and for the welfare of others are known as the best or the superior actions? The entire life is controlled by the actions. The human being can be only able to attend the perfection being stable in the performance of his duties. The person who being detached towards the worldly affairs and being selfless engage himself in the welfare of others attend the supreme abode of the god. The detached life gets happiness both in the physical and metaphysical world. And the same has been told in Gita –

**Hato vā prāpsyasi swargam jtvā vā bhokṣyasi  
mahim**

**Tasmāduttiṣṭha kounteya yudhāya kṛtaniścayah.22**  
The nature also inspires human beings to perform action and the same has been told in Bhagavatgītā –

**Na hi kaścitkṣaṇāpi jātu tiṣṭhatyakarmakṛt  
Kāryate hyavaśyah karmasarvaih  
prakṛtijairguṇaih.23**

### **Conclusion**

Non-violence always keeps the top most places in the system of good practices. Therefore, the famous saying is told by Veda “**Mā himsyāt sarvaabhūtāni**”.<sup>24</sup> The greatest performance of virtue is called the non-violence. Now even many great people are there who practice the system of non-violence by which the activities of human society is running smoothly around the globe. By the performance of non-violence, the human beings

can achieve their highest goals and also they will be able to bring prosperity to the human society. For this purpose it is said: “**Ahimsā Paramo Dharmah**”, non-violence is the highest virtue.

**Abbreviations:**

1. S.B.G. : Srimadbhagavadgita
2. Y.V. : Yajurveda
3. Ma. Smr. : Manusmṛti
4. Yo. Su. : Yogasutra
5. Dha. Pa. : Dhammapada
6. A. V. : Atharva Veda
7. Ma. Bha. : Mahabharatam
8. Ta. Bo. : Tattwabodhah

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1. S.B.G. 5/5
2. S.B.G. 2-47
3. Y.V. 4/2
4. S.B.G. 6/1
5. S.B.G. 3/20
6. S.B.G. 18/2
7. Ma. Smr. I/63
8. Yo. Su. 2/30
9. Ma. Smr. II/88
10. Ma. Smr. 2/90
11. Ma. Smr. II/160
12. S.B.G. 16/2
13. Y.V. 36/18
14. Dha. Pa. 19/15
15. Ma. Smr. 2/159
16. Ma. Smr. 2/162
17. Yo. Su. 2/31

18. Yo. Su. 2/35
19. S.B.G. 2/31
20. Ma. Bha.
21. Ma. Smr. 5/45
22. S.B.G. 2/37
23. S.B.G. 3/5
24. Ta. Bo.

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