

# Prem Yatra Volume 1

## Chapter 2

### Non-violence

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#### **The Importance of Spiritual Disciplines and Practices**

Just as one must clean a cup before one can fill it with milk, a sadhak must adequately purify his body and mind before practicing any form of yoga. Each branch of yoga defines this purification process differently. Karma yoga prescribes the spiritual disciplines and practices called yamas and niyamas; bhakti yoga outlines the practice of various rituals and vows; and jnana yoga encourages the removal of impurities, distractions, and the layers superimposed on the light of the soul.

All the highest religious sects in the world have accepted the yamas and niyamas to a greater or lesser extent. Indeed, any religious sect which does not observe these disciplines and practices at all cannot survive long. The great sage Patanjali has signified five disciplines to be observed: non-violence, truth, non-stealing, celibacy, and nonattachment. He has advised the proper observation of these basic practices, which will benefit the entire world. These universally humanitarian disciplines are of primary importance for traveling both the pravritti and the nivritti paths.

In the beginning of yoga sadhana, the sadhak must erect a fortress of yamas and niyamas to protect his sadhana. If he does not fortify his sadhana in this way, he is continually attacked by obstacles, which disturb it. There are two ways to fight a battle: from within the closed fort and on an open battlefield. One is required to struggle and fight no matter what field he is in. The five most powerful enemies of yoga are violence, deceit, stealing, sex, and attachment. They obstruct everyone traveling on the path to the Lord. Conversely, the five most powerful friends of yoga are non-violence, truth, non-stealing, celibacy, and nonattachment. Their protection and defense enable one's sadhana to succeed.

## **Violence and Non-violence**

Non-violence is the first of the five spiritual disciplines. Its primary position signifies its primary importance; it is the very seed of these basic spiritual disciplines. Indeed, when this seed sprouts, truth, non-stealing, celibacy, and nonattachment manifest spontaneously. One potent virtue attracts countless virtues; one potent vice attracts countless vices.

This is precisely why the practice of non-violence is religion without equal; it is the superb practice of religion for everyone.

Non-violence is called “ahimsa,” which is made up of two Sanskrit terms: “a” meaning “not” and “himsa” meaning “violent.” Since the scriptures prescribe the practice of non-violence, you might wonder: “Is violence a tendency of the entire society or only of sadhaks desiring to travel the spiritual path?”

When one analyzes the question from a gross perspective, one determines that neither are violent. Upon making a subtle analysis, however, one affirms that both are violent. That is, when observed from a superficial point of view, we see that both the seeker and the non-seeker are nonviolent.

How do we come to that conclusion? If you were to ask a family of elephants or deer, “Are lions violent or nonviolent?”

The entire family would exclaim in unison, “Lions are violent!”

Similarly, if you were to ask the lion cubs playing near the father lion, “Are lions violent?”

They would immediately reply, “My father is an idol of love. I have not seen violence in any corner of his heart.”

This is how gross vision shows partiality. Since neither the families of the elephant, deer, or lion are aware of each other, each family considers their own opinion to be true. Likewise, one who makes a gross evaluation shows partiality in considering the sadhak and non-sadhak to be nonviolent. However, the subtle evaluation is impartial and sees both the sadhak and the non-sadhak to be violent.

Each person possesses the tendencies toward violence to a greater or lesser extent. That is the reason why the great masters have included non-violence in the universal vow. The principle justification we use in considering ourselves non-violent is that we never carry weapons. We say, “We don’t even think of weapons nor do we even keep a knife or a pin in our pocket! But those murderers are always armed!”

However, one should not forget that weapons come in two varieties: gross and subtle. Those who do not use gross weapons use subtle weapons such as thoughts and words. Thought is un-manifest or subtle speech, and speech is gross or manifest thought. Thoughts and speech can be like poison or like nectar. Wounds from gross weapons heal in one or more months; but wounds from subtle weapons, which are poisonous, do not heal for a long time. The way in which we write or speak can bite the other’s

heart; so we commit violence whenever we speak bitterly. Sometimes our temperament often resembles a very cruel and violent animal, and so we displease our relatives and loved ones by speaking bitter words. So, it is most essential that we observe non-violence.

An excellent form of non-violence is selfless love, and the most extreme form of violence is hatred. When hatred grows in excess, an individual commits assault. It is a delusion to believe that violence is not committed unless hatred builds up.

Another misbelief is that violence is committed only by people who perform actions such as fishing or hunting. Violence can be committed anywhere, even in one's own living room! For example, whenever a husband or wife wound one another with bitter words, they are committing a very vicious form of violence.

### **Non-violence and the Family**

If you want to live a happy family life, do not let any violence in. No doubt, you imagine that wounds from arrows, swords, or bullets might feel unbearable. However, they are really much more bearable than wounds from words. The mind of someone who's in a rage gets so agitated that his eyes harden, his body trembles, and he acts as if he's no longer a human but a demon. He inflicts this torture on his own relatives and loved ones and then expects them to love him. How could that happen? If a house is burned up by fire, a new house can be built; but if a family is burned up by quarrels, a new family can never be rebuilt.

If you do not wish to attain yoga, devotion, or knowledge, don't! But if you want to live happily in this world, you will have to practice spiritual exercises to soften your eyes, heart, thought, and speech. Both the husband and the wife should practice the exercise of speaking sweetly in front of the mirror when the other is not home. And they should not consider this play acting, either; it is a form of learning to love.

Actors in a play must follow a script, while students who want to learn must firmly form new impressions through repeated practice. Only love can cultivate tolerance or forbearance, because the very nature of love is tolerance. How can one who has not even learned how to express affection ever show tolerance? Tolerance expresses itself as non-violence, whereas intolerance manifests itself as violence. If you are not victorious in cultivating affection and tolerance, you will definitely meet failure in every area of this life. Worldly sadhana is the first stage. Those who do not successfully pass through that stage can never be eligible for yoga, devotion, or knowledge.

Apathy is the seed of violence. The number of trees of hatred cultivated in the field of the mind, are directly proportional to the number of areas in which one is apathetic. When these trees are nourished, they bear fruit in the form of violence. The birth of such trees and their fruit inevitably signals the start of war.

Violence takes the attitude, "It's you against me to the death."

Violence takes this firm conviction and assaults the other, whereas non-violence takes a protective attitude and defends the other.

Although we read innumerable holy books and listen to countless religious discourses, we still remain as we were and do not change a bit! Isn't this amazing? How could this happen? There is just one answer for this: we're all thought and no practice. In order to start turning our good thoughts into deeds, we must start to gradually bring the unrestrained mind under control.

The root cause of family conflicts is fault finding or blaming. Since fault finding influences thought, speech, and conduct, the fault finder continually unsteadies his mind whenever he ruminates on negativity. One should cultivate the habit of appreciating virtue. By appreciating virtue, pure love increases and manifests in one's thought, speech, and conduct as well. Virtue finders inspire relatives or loved ones to stop bad habits by showing respect, goodwill, sweetness and affection rather than disrespect, ill will, bitterness, or hate. In a family it is very essential to integrate thought and practice. To start with, the whole family must sit together and decide that they want to have a loving, happy, and service-oriented environment for their family and that each individual would like to live happily and help every other member of the family live happily as well. Unless we give happiness to others, we will never attain happiness.

In the course of daily life together, differences of opinion or conduct might arise, but discrimination should be used to remove the source of such conflicts. One should be vigilant against allowing such superficial differences to cause deeper differences in the heart. As the differences of opinion increase within one member's mind, disagreements among family members increase. The head of the household should see the needs of the family and design and conduct simple experiments to intervene accordingly. Complicated experiments would not be effective in the beginning, because one does not learn new skills the moment he starts a new job. Skills come gradually! Aptitude, enthusiasm, faith, patience, and other virtues play an important part in skill development. Failure is inevitable, too, and one must reaffirm his commitment and continue the struggle toward success.

### **Using Goals in Life**

There are two types of people in this world: those who have ideals and those who don't. Every genius in every field inevitably has some kind of ideal, which guides and develops his life. People without an ideal can never patiently and consistently focus on any one aim for long. They'll struggle to accomplish one aim today and another aim tomorrow.

Many years ago, I stayed in Halol, the same village where Amrit was born. He was a boy of fifteen or sixteen at the time and used to come to me regularly every day. We loved each other deeply. Whenever he came to me for affection, I used to advise him to be loving and virtuous and to practice celibacy so that he would succeed in life. Amrit would take my advice affectionately, contemplate it deeply, and then struggle to assimilate it into his daily life. Since the idea I gave him totally suited his aptitude, he was able to incorporate it, and even today he is still sincerely practicing the same ideal. For this reason alone, he is living a genuine life here in America and is inspiring his disciples to also live a genuine life.

Be idealistic! An ideal should not be accepted immediately, but only after considerable contemplation. If the ideal suits one's personality, even to a slight degree, it will be easier to practice. But if it contradicts one's personality, it becomes more difficult to practice and eventually must be abandoned anyway.

One who forgets his ideal is not a sincere person. Just as flowers carry their fragrance and lamps carry their light wherever they go, idealists carry their ideal wherever they go.

Now, I will try to give you brief suggestions to aid your daily practice.

1. Make it a habit to rise early in the morning. Immediately upon awakening, remember the Lord if only for two minutes. Then quietly finish your regular morning bathroom routine and repeat the name of the Lord or chant a bhajan or dhun.
2. After freeing yourself from your morning routine, meditate in a private place. If you fill your sadhana room full of pure and holy thoughts, it will always bring you to steadiness immediately upon entering it. In this way you should make your sadhana room a temple of God, a place of pilgrimage, and a land of austerities for you.
3. During sadhana, seek refuge in postures, pranayama and other yoga practices to purify the body. To purify the mind, seek the support of prayers, mantra chanting, bhajan, meditation, reading holy scriptures, and other practices of knowledge. Perform all your actions lovingly rather than mechanically. In this way, you will integrate the approaches of action, devotion, and knowledge to excel in life.
4. Perform group prayers both in morning and evening. Every day after prayer, inspire everyone to behave lovingly. Accept each other's faults and beg forgiveness from one another for your faults.

If a furious lion can be tamed by love, why can't our own relatives, who are not so violent, be controlled? To study the mantra of love is as good as studying the mantra of non-violence. There is no place for violence in love. Love means self-surrender.

### **Animals, Birds, and Love**

Love also has an influence on animals and birds. While on my way to the chapel here from my residence today, the ashram cat had caught a mouse in his mouth and was walking toward the ashram. Right after witnessing an act of violence, I am seated here before you to teach about non-violence.

Perhaps after finishing his lunch he may come here to the chapel, before even washing his mouth, and sit in the lap of any one of you. If he actually did so, we could say that one who has acted violently just a moment before is now playing lovingly with you. The feelings, which were there in his mind while catching the mouse, do not exist while sitting in your lap.

Then, doesn't the cat know how to love the mouse? Yes. Cats always love mice. It does not matter if the cat has never set eyes upon the mouse before! And no matter how sad he may be, he will immediately become happy at the sight of any unfamiliar mouse. But a mouse can never love any cat no matter how joyous the cat may feel. The moment a mouse sees a cat, he becomes immediately dejected. A mouse could never love a cat, and a cat could never hate a mouse. This is Nature's Law or the Lord's Play.

We love birds and animals. And birds and animals can feel our love and love us in return. If even a mouse-killing cat routinely succumbs to our love, why wouldn't our father, mother, brother, sister, son,

daughter, wife, and the rest of our family invariably succumb to our love? Wouldn't they at least have the discretion of a killer-cat?

### **Anecdote: The slave and the lion**

Today I'll tell you a story, which goes back to the age of slavery in a particular, but unnamed, country.

Once upon a time, there was a slave who desperately wanted to escape the tortures inflicted by his master. One dark night he seized his chance to run from his master's house. When he eventually came to the edge of a large forest, he was tired by his long run and decided to rest there beneath a large tree. He thought to himself, "Well, the forest seems to be a safer haven than the city."

So, feeling safe, rested, and pleased with himself, he entered the forest.

He had now been walking for three days and eating only whatever wild fruit he could find along the way. Until now, food had been only a minor problem, since his major concern had been attaining freedom. Now his desire for freedom was fulfilled.

But the slave did not know that he had chosen a part of the forest that was inhabited by large, ferocious beasts until he suddenly heard the roar of a lion. His body began to tremble uncontrollably, and his heart raced wildly with fright.

Turning his eyes skyward, he began praying fervently, "Oh Compassionate One! I have struggled hard to free myself from slavery. I have not had even a moment to enjoy my freedom before being faced with the threat of immediate death. If you desire my death now, however, Jam prepared to come to you.

The lion roared again, and the slave looked all around. Even more fear flared up when he spotted the lion sitting nearby under a large tree. But, curiously enough, the lion did not seem to be interested in him. The expression on the lion's face even seemed to show some pain. The slave began to realize that, after all, the lion's roar had not been the roar of the hunt, but a cry of pain. When this dawned on the slave, his fear began to subside.

It seemed that both the lion and the slave were unhappy. They were two individuals in distress whose paths had crossed by chance. Under these circumstances, it is easy for one who is suffering to have sympathy for a fellow sufferer.

The slave stood up and approached the lion. He saw that one of the lion's hind legs was so infected by a thorn that he could not get up. Yes, the lion had been roaring from the pain of his wound.

The slave felt great sympathy at the sight of the lion's pain. Compassion is so incredible! Imagine, a bond of tender feelings between a human being and a wild lion!

The slave sat beside the lion and looked at the wound. He saw a very large thorn deeply embedded in the lion's leg, and, after gently extracting it, he tossed it into the underbrush. Next he found a small stream nearby, and, fashioning a make-shift cup from some leaves, he filled it with water. He gently

pressed the wound to squeeze out the pus, and then cleaned it with water. Fortunately, the slave had some knowledge of medicinal herbs. After briefly foraging the forest floor, he found a choice herb which he picked and pounded to a pulp. With this salve, he gently dressed the lion's wound.

The lion was obviously pleased by the slave's tenderness and care. He had sensed from the beginning that this new comer to the forest was a friend, not an enemy.

During the next two days, the lion and the slave became close friends. The lion could walk with some effort by then, so the slave would lead his limping friend to the stream for a drink. Although the lion had been hungry for three days, his love for the slave had so occupied his mind that he didn't notice his hunger.

In a few days the wound was healed. The lion could now hunt freely in the woods. Each day the lion would return from his hunt to sit beside his friend. Wordlessly and with great affection, the two would sit together and gaze into each other's eyes.

Then one day, after about a month of close companionship, the slave decided to try his luck in the city; and the companions parted company reluctantly. As the slave walked away, he looked back at least a dozen times to glimpse his new found friend sitting at the edge of the forest watching him leave.

The slave entered the city.

In those days any slave without a master was fair game for whoever wanted to possess him. A rich man noticed the slave loitering about and caught him. Fortunately for the slave, however, this new master was a loving man, not mean and cruel like his former master. He was immediately grateful for the kind way his new master treated him, so he began serving his master with love and soon became his favorite slave.

One day his new master heard of a fabulous prize offered to whoever would dare to wrestle with some ferocious lion that had just been captured in the nearby forest. He decided to attend the spectacle. Back then it was a popular entertainment to watch trained wrestlers try to fight fierce animals which had been captured in the forest.

On the day of the event, a large crowd gathered in the arena, including the master and his slave. Everyone was excited because famous wrestlers from all over the kingdom had come to compete for the prize money. Those who had arranged the match had not allowed the wrestlers to see the lion beforehand, however, and as soon as the ferocious lion was displayed, all the wrestlers refused to compete!

The spectators felt disappointed because it seemed that there was no one brave enough to wrestle the lion. The now desperate sponsors offered "the prize of his choice" to anyone who would wrestle the lion. But still no one came forward.

Suddenly, the slave's eye fell upon the cage of the lion. With a start, he realized that it was his friend pacing in the cage. He said to his owner, "Master, I would like to try for the prize, but under two condi-

tions: first, that I be able to love the lion, not wrestle with him, and second, that I be given the lion itself as my reward.”

The master was startled by the slave’s strange request, and yet he could see the slave’s earnestness. Something in his slave’s manner convinced him to go approach the sponsors of the event. The sponsors were surprised, but they consented to the slave’s conditions.

Addressing the departing crowd, the sponsors announced, “Brothers and Sisters! Although there is not a wrestler in the house courageous enough to fight this fierce lion, one slave has come forward and has volunteered to try and love him!”

Many spectators laughed; others were concerned or even worried for the slave; and all began to discuss the meaning of this turn of events. When the slave stood up and approached the cage, some speculated that he was so fed up with his life that he decided to end it with a daredevil stunt.

As the slave approached the cage, the crowd burst into spontaneous applause and cheers. Everyone felt their hearts skip a beat as he opened the cage door. They were convinced that as soon as he stepped into the cage, the lion would pounce on him and kill him.

When he was first brought into the arena, the lion had roared so loudly that several children in the audience fainted. How could such a fierce lion welcome the love of a slave?

As the slave opened the cage door, his eyes met those of the lion. The old friends were delighted to see each other again! The slave entered and gently hugged the lion around the neck while the lion affectionately licked his friend’s face. The audience was dumbstruck, then enchanted, as if a spell had been cast upon them! No one could fathom this turn of events. Was this a slave or a magician?

Yes, this was truly magic taking place before their very eyes; the magic of love. For if there is one thing in this world which is truly magical, it is love.

The arena was near a small hill outside the city walls. A pathway just beyond the hill led directly to the forest. The slave had decided beforehand to set the lion free, and the sponsors had agreed to his conditions.

Their bond of love was over.

Coming to the door of the cage, the slave addressed the crowd, “My respected elders, please give me your attention. Do not be afraid. My friend and I will now quietly and peacefully walk to the forest. I wish to see him safely home. Six months ago, the hind leg of this lion was infected by a thorn wound. I happened to be in the forest at that time and came upon him. Seeing his pain, I helped heal his wound and we have been best friends ever since. I am not a magician. What I have done did not come from magic, but from love.”

This explanation satisfied the crowd.

The slave reentered the cage and emerged with the lion; but despite his assurances, the crowd was still fearful. The lion was so entranced by his savior, however, that it paid no attention to the crowd. Within

a few moments, the two friends disappeared behind the hill as the crowd looked on in astonished disbelief.

## **Non-violence and Sadhana**

Stability of the mind is essential in sadhana. Non-violence in sadhana is observed according to the kind of sadhana practiced, and non-violence in the family is observed according to one's family situation. Ashramites should consider the ashram residents as their family and behave lovingly.

When one practices ahimsa, or non-violence, one refrains from causing distress, in thought, word, or deed, to any living creature.

Ripples are produced by, sand particles, a pebble, or a stone, falling into the steady water of a lake. Similarly, unsteadiness arises due to birth of any mutation in the mind. Violence is mutation, or abnormality; and non-violence is nature, or normality.

There are three standard stages of sadhana—ordinary, medium, and best. Similarly, there are three standards of non-violence—ordinary, medium, and best. An ordinary sadhak can't practice either the medium or best variety of non-violence because he lacks the capacity. He has to increase his capacity gradually.

One's mind becomes unsteady when he feels hatred towards someone. If in this situation one enters the meditation room and meditates, it is only natural that thoughts of hatred will capture his mind. As a result, hatred will be rooted more firmly. The sadhak has to remove the hatred, and, in such situations where he can't, he should never enter his meditation room. Those who meditate do so in a place where they are more comfortable. It can also be said that a place where an individual can continually repeat a single thought is his meditation room, whether it's a bedroom or a lavatory. Those people who steal, cohabit, or assault will engage in similar evil actions. Vicious and virtuous actions alike are merely the results of concentration.

Whenever the sadhak's mind becomes unsteady due to any abnormal thought, he should make it steady by engrossing himself in some activity which he likes or for which he has an aptitude. The situation which increases the unsteadiness of the mind should be firmly abandoned. Only the sadhak who has accomplished the art of changing the direction of the mind can become a master. Unsteadiness of the mind is an obstacle. An undesirable obstacle can only be removed by a desirable obstacle. Only a thorn can pluck out a thorn. It is worth remembering here that one should not lift a sword against another sword; instead, one should raise a shield against a sword. One has a right to defend the blow, but not a right to initiate the blow. This technique is for the sadhak on the pravritti path, not for the sadhak on the nivritti path.

Here some explanation is necessary. A traveler on the pravritti path is devoted to virtuous conduct and thoughts and is always vigilant. However, when the dependent prana in his body becomes independent, his steady, strong mind becomes unsteady and weak. In the beginning, the sadhak repeatedly experiences failure in such situations, and his firm mind becomes excited because of repeated failures. However, if he determines under what circumstances the dependent prana becomes independent and then he erects obstacles to its independence, he is able to resist failure.

Suppose someone abuses a sadhak. If he does not tolerate it, then the bodily dependent, controlled prana becomes free and disturbs the mind. As a result, the sadhak may abuse someone to counteract abuse or even commit an assault out of anger. This is the state of affairs while one is wide awake. If the same situation arises during the state of sleep, it will also have the same result. Therefore, a sadhak on the pravritti path has to have a subconscious mind with the same impressions as the conscious mind. Only then can the disturbances of the dream be restrained.

Although this single illustration is enough, I will give you another. When one sees a picture of a beautiful woman, the dependent, restrained prana becomes independent and disturbs the mind. In this situation, too, one has to make an attempt to lead the mind in the opposite direction. This is known as resistance. Since such a disturbance can also arise in the dream state, the sadhak has to make his subconscious mind devoted and dutiful too. Thus, some changes or variations are born due to susceptibility to physical or external disturbances, whereas others are due to susceptibility to mental or internal disturbances.

On the pravritti path, external and internal stability indicate predominance of the mind, whereas instability indicates the predominance of prana.

When a sadhak on the nivritti path is engrossed in the meditation of surrender to prana in his sadhana room, then the thoughts of attachment and hatred are born spontaneously.

A traveler on the pravritti path restrains the prana while strengthening his mind. During his meditation he does not allow disturbances to arise in his mind. If such a disturbing thought rises, the mind curbs the prana and renders it helpless. The traveler on the nivritti path, on the other hand, restrains his mind while strengthening the prana. During his meditation, prana awakens even the latent mental passions and fights them too. However, it can't overcome them; it meets repeated failure. Despite this fact, it does not abandon fighting. Eventually, it becomes very strong and attains victory over them.

Here, too, a little explanation is necessary. On the pravritti path more mental passions are produced, and on the nivritti path more physical passions are produced. It can also be stated that external excitements function in the pravritti path, and internal excitements function in the nivritti path. A sadhak on the pravritti path is cautious against allowing passions to rise. He obstructs them and prevents their disturbing his mind. A sadhak on the nivritti path, however, while in meditation does not obstruct the passions. Instead, he deliberately awakens them and tolerates the disturbances of mind caused by them. In the beginning, due to past impressions, the sadhak likes many of these passions.

However, when prana continually awakens those same passions, then, because of their abundance, the sadhak's attachments are gradually weakened. This is the middle stage.

In the beginning stage prana continually awakens the same passions which cause the arousal of malice in the sadhak's mind. Eventually, however, he becomes indifferent. In this way, the sadhak of sahaj yoga, triumphs over the mind through prana and attains liberation.

If the nivritti dharma sadhak associates himself with any activity, seeks the company of many people, becomes more talkative, and observes disciplines indiscriminately, distractions arise in his sadhana. In order that distractions do not arise, he should observe seclusion, silence, and abandon the company of people and such other unfavorable activities. Yes, he should behave affectionately with others. However, by secluding and abandoning the company of people, he can observe non-violence more easily.