



BRAHMA KUMARIS WORLD SPIRITUAL UNIVERSITY

Experiments with Nonviolence Part Two in the BKWSU Series on A Season of Experimentation With Values

"I have been practicing with scientific precision nonviolence and its possibilities for an unbroken period of over fifty years. I have applied it in every walk of life – domestic, institutional, economic and political. I know of no single case in which it has failed."

-- Mahatma Gandhi

Context

Over the 25 years of our affiliation with the United Nations, the Brahma Kumaris have committed ourselves to exploring the spiritual dimension of the political and social issues on the UN's agenda. We do this, not only because it is the area of our expertise, but also because we believe that the seed of political and social issues lies in the rich soil of inner awareness of the various actors involved.

We believe that a sustained change in behavior can never take place only from treaties, pacts or other external commitments. Real transformation emerges from a deep internal shift in awareness, which in turn creates a shift in attitude, affecting the way we see a situation. And of course, when we see something with new eyes, we take different action, creating a different world.

The season from September to December includes four UN days affirming the primacy of values in human engagement: Peace, Nonviolence, Tolerance, and Dignity. In the interest of seeding real change in the world, the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (BKWSU) is engaging in a season of experimentation with values, in the hope that it will lead to new kinds of action. In October, we are experimenting with nonviolence.

Our hope with these experiments is to reframe the conversations and actions that emerge in conjunction with the four UN International Days, placing the locus of interest on a change in the awareness and experience of these values, eventually leading to new action.

Experiments with Nonviolence

October 2 is the UN International Day of Nonviolence. On this day the world pauses to reflect on our long relationship with violence and on the irrefutable evidence of the success of nonviolence as modeled by Mahatma Gandhi and then followed with great success by Nelson Mandela in South Africa and by Dr. Martin Luther King in the U.S.

In his autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments With Truth*, Gandhi recounts the long story of his experiments with nonviolence in the most intimate detail: in what he ate, what he wore, and in his commitment to Brahmacharya, but he always insisted that nonviolence required first and foremost a shift in mindset: “Nonviolence, to be a potent force, must begin with the mind. Nonviolence of the mere body without the cooperation of the mind...has no potency.”

For Gandhi, nonviolence emerged from a central awareness: a natural and universal love for mankind: “Nonviolence is a power which can be wielded equally by all – children, young men and women or grown-up people – provided they have a living faith in the God of Love and have therefore equal love for all mankind. When nonviolence is accepted as the law of life, it must pervade the whole being and not be applied to isolated acts”

It is important to understand that nonviolence is not merely a method to be applied in the moment of heated conflict. It cannot work if our hearts are filled with anger and our bodies are tense with the urge to retaliate. For Gandhi nonviolence represented a deep and sustained commitment: “For me, nonviolence is not a mere philosophical principle. It is the rule and the breath of my life....it is a matter not of the intellect, but of the heart.”

Applying nonviolence to a particular situation is not a moment in which we choose a different course of action. It is the natural playing out of a living, breathing internal awareness: it is the only thing that can happen as a result of living in a state of loving awareness. According to Gandhi, the results are limitless, “when the soul-force is fully awakened in us, it becomes irresistible. But the test and condition of full awakening is that it must permeate every pore of our being and emanate with every breath that we breathe...the more you develop it in your own being, the more infectious it becomes till it overwhelms your surroundings and by and by might over sweep the world.”

Gandhi referred to his lifetime of experimentation as “satyagraha,” literally the force (graha) which is born of truth (satya). It was grounded in understanding that what is eternal and true about the human being is not the material body, but the embodied soul. To develop a practice of nonviolence is to cultivate a continuous awareness of our true nature as spiritual beings, who are naturally loving.

A Call for Experiments With Nonviolence

Between now and the end of the year, we are issuing an invitation to thoughtful people in the public, civic and private sectors to participate with us in a season of experiments. We began in September with Experiments with Peace and continue in October with Experiments with Nonviolence. The experiment has three steps:

- (1) Use your own spiritual practice to cultivate an inner awareness of nonviolence as the natural nature of the soul. Do this practice at some

- time each day. It can be morning, evening, or while you are in action in the world. It can be prayer, meditation, chanting, or whatever is your own spiritual practice, but it needs to be a daily practice.
- (2) Notice what experiences of love and nonviolence begin to emerge from inside of you and manifest around you. Make a note in a journal of these experiences each day.
 - (3) Share the story of your daily practice and your subsequent observations once a week – sometime over each weekend. In sharing the story of your observations, we will be especially interested in whether you notice a change in **awareness, attitude, vision, and action**. We would like you to share your observations of your practice and resulting inner and outer changes on the BK UN blog – <http://www.bkun.org/blog> (under "Experiments with Values" on the right side of the page).

We will collect and read the results of these submitted stories. Over time we will analyze the results to see if conscious spiritual experiments with these truths (peace, nonviolence, tolerance and dignity) lead to a tangible change in awareness, attitude, vision, and action. We will publish the results of our experiments in early 2010.

Our hope is to expand awareness of the spiritual dimension of these four UN days that are dedicated to the fundamental human values of peace, nonviolence, tolerance, and human dignity so that it becomes, not just a deeply held wish, but a viable way forward, starting with the personal commitment of thought leaders in all sectors. We believe that consistent spiritual practice intended to shift the inner awareness to one of deep love and nonviolence will set in motion a spiritual chain reaction of loving thoughts and vision, and nonviolent actions, leading to a new loving and nonviolent world.

Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University

The BKWSU is a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and in consultative status with UNICEF.
The University was founded in India in 1937 and has branches in over 100 countries worldwide.
It has been affiliated to the United Nations Department of Public Information since 1980.

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