Ahimsa

10-18-13

1. Recall that practice of Yama always requires an external second party. It is intro external action; arising from within but expressed outside. Also remember that whole purpose is to guide us on the path of Dharma. Dharma means principles of Vistara, Rasa and Seva. The dictates of Dharma should be clear and not require you to consult scriptures. Dharma-deshana means pointing to the dictates of Dharma. Deshana comes from Diish (Diisha i.e. direction, or boundary – So the word Desh, which is land indicated by boundary).
2. Ahimsa - Definition: Manah Vak Kayah sarva bhutanam pidanau Ahimsa

That action which stops someone’s physical, mental or spiritual progress by your speech, action or mind is called himsa. Although speech is part of the action but we tend to forget that improper speech can also be an act of himsa.

When you block someone’s progress, you are blocking vistara and so your action is against Dharma and it is himsa. If you commit suicide, it is also himsa because you are blocking your vistara, expansion of mind. If you kill an innocent animal in the forest because you enjoy hunting or fishing, it is himsa.

1. Himsa vs. use of force (in AM terms “violence”):

Use of force is necessary to sustain and survive. It is not himsa if the intent is not of harming and it is necessary for self sustenance. In Dharma and in law, it is the intent that is more important than the action itself. The use of force may be for self sustenance (survival), self preservation (food), self defense (self protection), or presumable self defense (pre-emptive strike). The application of the force must be measured, judicious and rational based on concrete evidences. This applies to individual as well nations.

When the intent is not to harm, the action is not motivated by mean propensities or blocking of someone’s expansion. The judicious application of the force may be necessary for your Dharmic progress, and unfortunately harm had to be done to others. Let us examine when such judicious force may be required.

1. Food Gradation:

It is the law of nature that the life is food of another life. Life subsists on another life. However, common sense (and Dharma) dictates that if you must take life take the life that has least developed consciousness. In general you can determine development of life by biological evolutionary scale or by the psychic evolution. For example, dog is behind monkey in biological evolution but more psychically developed than monkey. Therefore vegetarian diet is more Dharmic than meat diet, and eating meat when vegetarian diet is available is himsa. Under no circumstances one is justified in killing one human being for the sustenance of the other. Otherwise, one should follow the law of gradation for self preservation.

1. War Zone:

As a soldier you are justified in killing another soldier. That is not to say that you support war. Although b taking life you are stopping the development of another person, you had no intention of taking life except for preserving your own. At the same time, you should support humane treatment of prisoners of war and have no revengeful tendencies towards enemy soldier. To kill a soldier that has surrendered is himsa. Abusing a soldier, in any way that is your prisoner is himsa. In all cases application of the force must be judicious and measured.

1. Jatmitram, Jatshatru, and Nirapeksha:

Inherently a friend, inherently an enemy, and inherently neutral life:

To kill a Jatmitram (e.g. goat, cow, sheep, horse etc.) is himsa unless it is for food and also justified by the gradation law. To kill a Jatshatru is not himsa if it is for self sustenance, or self defense. It is himsa unless it is for food and also justified by the gradation law. Neutral life force may be Jatmitram or Jatshatru depending on the situation and should be treated as such. A monkey is neutral life but if it destroys your orchard, it is Jathatru. Man can be Jatmitram or Jatshatru. A criminal intent on harming you is Jatshatru and judicious and measured use of force (“violence”) is not himsa.