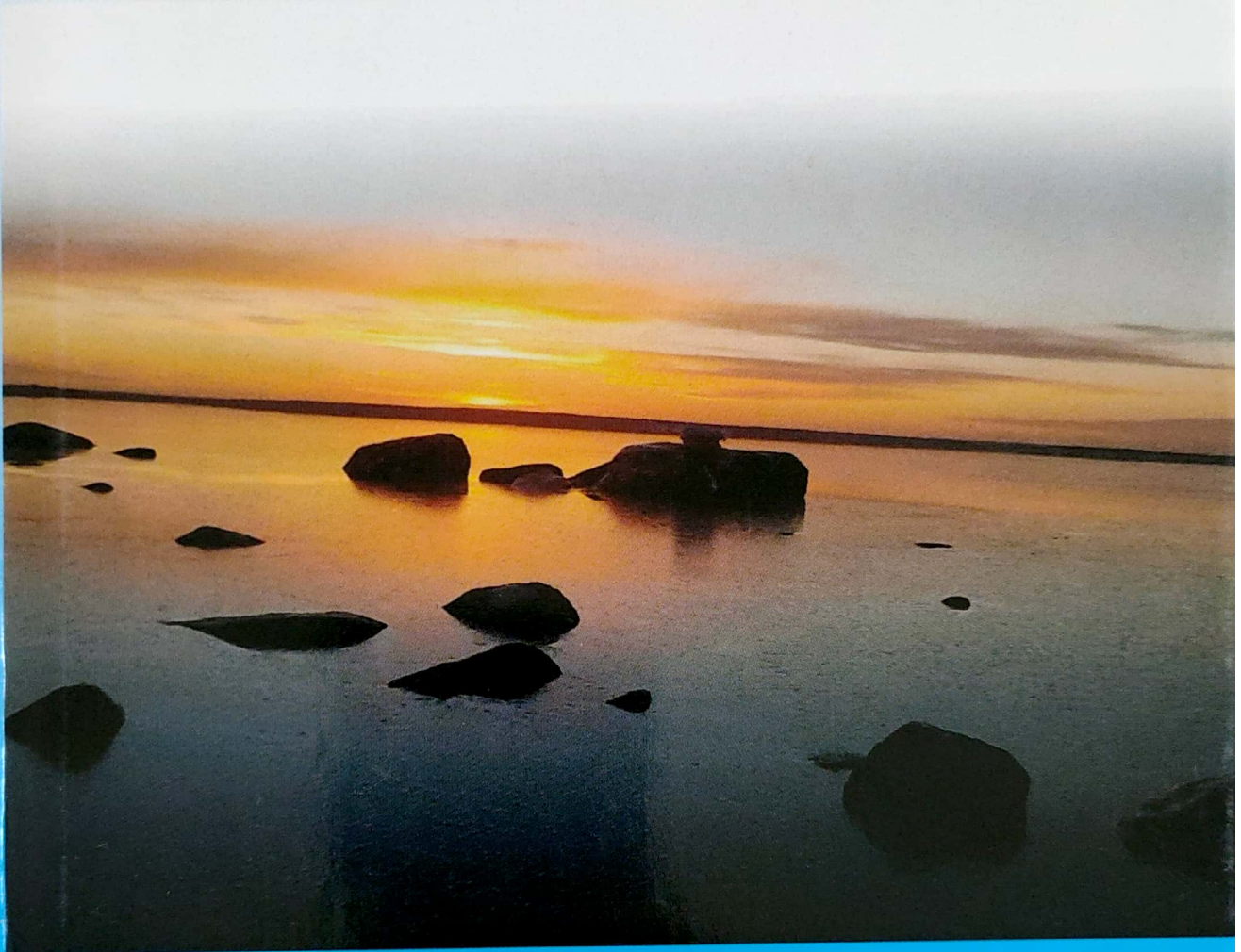


Nonviolence As a Way of Life
History, Theory and Practice



Volume II

Edited by

PREDRAG CICOVACKI

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Applied Jain Nonviolence: A Holistic Approach

SAMANI SHASHI PRAGYA

Both violence and nonviolence are inherent in us. Our minds also work in two ways: one dictates anger, the other counsels patience. Both the instigating and the restraining tendencies work together. It is here that the meditative practices of training in nonviolence, as developed by Acharya Mahapragya, have a role to play, allowing one to awaken nonviolence and put violence to sleep. This essay introduces four components of training in nonviolence, the root causes of violence, and the solution of the problem of violence. Addressing both theoretical and practical aspects, this holistic approach presents a novel vision of applied, spiritual, nonviolent meditation.

One of the world's oldest religions, Jainism has as its primary philosophy *ahimsa* or "reverence for all living beings." Its latest prophet (*Tirthankara*), Mahavira, was born in 599 B.C. in North East India. He was the 24th in the line of prophets and thus Jainism is a *dharma* of unique antiquity. His entire life is

an example of how to live in perfect harmony with nature and not to cause pain to any living being via words, thoughts, or actions. Jainism has had a major influence on the spread of nonviolent values and practices throughout the history of India. The prime maxim of the Jains is “nonviolence is the supreme religion.” The development of the human race is founded on nonviolent conduct and behavior. The vows of truthfulness, non-stealing etc. are nothing but the nurturing factors of nonviolence. In the Jain religion, nonviolence is believed to be *savvabhuyakhemankari* (good for all living beings) and *maatristhaaniya* (like a mother). All moral rules and disciplines are included in this single principle.

From time immemorial, it is thought that man is a social being who respects his fellow human beings. Looking at global violence, however, one fails to understand how man got into grip of violence – or, to be more precise, how violence got a grip on him. The world is torn by tension, strife, crimes, terrorism, and regional conflicts. The present paper is an endeavor toward highlighting nonviolence as an antidote for the burning problems of today. The paper is divided into two sections. The first section deals with the roots of violence and a way out through the practice of meditation. The second section deals with the novel concept of training in nonviolence as incorporated by Acharya Mahapragya.



I

In the case of every problem, man wants to search for its root until he succeeds. Rising levels of violence are a major issue, and almost all the nations of the world are trying to find a solution. According to my view, there are many factors responsible for violence. We will go into them later. The violence prevalent in society cannot be ended without developing spiritual nonviolence and basing our life on it. Let us then discuss what is meant by spiritual nonviolence. It is based on the unity and equality of all souls. Once we know that every living being is subject to pain and pleasure in the

same manner as we and, therefore, that we must never inflict pain on them, never oppress or exploit them, never rob them of their rights, then we are on our way to realizing the meaning of spiritual nonviolence. And it is this nonviolence that can prevent the arson, looting, rioting and killings going on in society.

I believe that practicing meditation is a step toward spiritual excellence. To meditate is to see oneself, which in turn means seeing and searching the real base of nonviolence. Geneticists will locate its root in the genes inherited from one's forefathers. That would mean that man is helpless in the matter since he cannot control his heredity. Psychologists trace violence to one of the basic instincts. Environmental scientists blame it on the general atmosphere or circumstances surrounding a human being since his childhood. Some philosophers attribute it to *karmas*. Thus we are confronted with a plethora of views on the subject.

If we pause and think for a moment, we find that each one of them is partial or one-sided, though none of them can be termed as wholly untrue. We must take a holistic view. But even this might not provide the ultimate solution. More serious thinking is needed. Each of the theories based on genes, primal instincts, environment, and *karmas* has a more or less deterministic ring to it, which leaves one both pessimistic and helpless in the face of the inevitable. However, the doctrine of *karma* also suggests the possibility of changing the *karmas*. The possibility of change kindles new hope in the heart. After all, we can change; violence can change.

The key to change is the development of nonviolence. Both violence and nonviolence are inherent in us. Our mind also works in two ways: one dictates anger; the other counsels patience, puts the brakes on the anger. Both the instigating and the restraining tendencies are there. Good and evil are both present in us. The real question is which of the two we shall develop. Which one shall we awaken and which one shall we put to sleep? It is here that meditation has its role. Through

it we can awaken nonviolence and put violence to sleep. It is then a question of proper awakening. Unfortunately we are fully conscious of material things but totally unconscious of ourselves. Meditation makes us conscious of ourselves. It develops self-awareness. Once self-awareness has dawned, nonviolence develops.

We have read the earlier mentioned views of genes, instincts, environment, and *karmas*. Of these four, environment or the general atmosphere has an immediate impact on us and so it deserves our attention first. In this connection, it is noteworthy that right from childhood man is exposed to violence, crime, and immorality through the mass media – radio, television, cinema, internet, and newspapers. No wonder crime and violence permeate modern society. Sex, greed, fear, suspicion, and anger – they all breed violence and very little is heard of nonviolence in general. It is said that genes and instincts cannot be changed but *karmas* can certainly be, else there will be no relevance of penance, austerity, and the like. The need to change remains crucial. Both the root and the branches have to be changed. And as stated earlier, the most important and powerful means of bringing complete change is meditation. It alone has the power to develop nonviolence, self-realization, and the sense of the unity and equality of all sentiments.

As social beings, all humans like nonviolence since it guarantees the peace that in turn is the prerequisite for happiness. The roots of violence are deep and extensive; therefore, to destroy them is difficult. However it is not impossible. Meditation is the best way to do it. Before discovering the relation between meditation and nonviolence, it is necessary to find out the root cause of violence, and also the factors that sustain violence.

One of the most important factors is *stress*. Violence is not possible in the absence of stress. A relaxed person cannot commit violence. The muscles get tense, the mind becomes tense, and feelings turn tense too. Violence is the natural

outcome. Most tension is born of an agitated or uncontrolled passionate mind. There are two types of stress: that which is born of uncontrolled passions and that born of the sense of depression. To the former belong cases of stress arising out of anger, ego, and greed; to the latter those caused by despair, defeat and indolence. A man undergoing depression many times commits suicide. Whatever the provenance, all types of tension generate violence.

Against the backdrop of tension and stress, it becomes meaningful to talk about meditation and nonviolence. The main aim of meditation is to free a man from stress: for physical stress, the practice of *kayotsarga* (abandonment of the body), a motionless form of meditation; for mental stress, exercise of long breathing; and for emotional stress, the practice of *anityaanupreksha* (contemplation of impermanence) and *ekatvaanupreksha* (contemplation of solitariness). Along with that, concentration on *jyotikendra* cures specific types of emotional tension. The main thing being emphasized here is the efficacy of meditation as a cure for all varieties of stress and tension.

Another factor involved in violence is *chemical imbalance*. When there is an imbalance of glandular secretions in the body, people become violent. Every endocrine gland has its specific functions. The function of pituitary gland is different from that of the pineal and, similarly, the thyroid and adrenal glands have their particular functions. A harmonious functioning of these glands keeps an individual balanced. Any imbalance in the former results in an imbalance in the latter. Meditation can restore the lost balance. As per Acharya Mahapragya, *chaitanyakendrapreksha* (practice of perception of psychic centers of the endocrine systems) is an effective means of curing the imbalance. Concentration on the *jyotikendra* (the pineal), *darshankendra* (the pituitary), *vishddhikendra* (the thyroid), and *tejaskendra* (the adrenals) balances the flow of the hormones of the pineal, pituitary, thyroid, and the adrenal glands respectively. Such an understanding is duly backed by the findings of modern

biochemistry. Since violence can be ascribed to hormonal imbalances in the body, meditation turns out to be the best therapy.

The third factor responsible for violence is an imbalance in the *naditantra* (nervous system). Occasionally we come across cases of motiveless or unintentional violence. When policemen question the agents of such violence, they simply say that they resort to violence for no reason other than deriving joy. This type of violence is due to the imbalance of the nervous system and its cure lies in *samavrittishvaspreksha* (exhaling breath through one nostril and inhaling through the other). It requires alternate breathing through the two nostrils – inhaling through the left and exhaling through the right nostril and then in the reverse order, and repetition of the cycle. *Hatha yoga* recognizes two parts of the nervous system, the right being called the *pingala* and the left *ida*. In the language of medical science, *pingala* is the sympathetic nervous system and *ida* is the para-sympathetic nervous system. By practicing *samavrittishvaspreksha*, a balance between the two systems is created. Besides this, the practice of an internal trip (travel of the conscious mind from the bottom to the top of the spinal cord) also helps to restore the central nervous system balance. Once the three parts of the nervous system – central, sympathetic and para-sympathetic – start functioning in a balanced manner, violence automatically disappears.

Another way of looking at the problem is in terms of the two attitudes – positive and negative. Ordinarily man has a preponderance of the latter. Hatred, jealousy, fear, and lust are all symptoms of a negative attitude and they are also factors that contribute to violence. Racism, casteism and all other forms of discrimination generate violence due to the presence of negative attitude. There is a need to think positively, thereby making it impossible for the mind to harbor bad feelings for others. Meditation develops positive thinking by insisting on practicing perception of the self. One who meditates on the self reduces negative feelings and develops positive feelings. Seeing oneself, a regular practice of introspection,

anityaanupreksha (contemplation of impermanence), etc. is a sure means of developing positive thinking and eliminating negative thinking, the fourth factor responsible for the violence.

The sixth element is over-busyness or over-exertion of mental, vocal, and physical activities. Today man has broken all limits and has become too busy – a victim of over-exertion. The result again is violence. Nature ordains a balance between work and rest, both mental and physical, and between speech and silence. To stop unnecessary exertion of the body and the mind, as also of speech, is to lead a disciplined life. Observing silence just for an hour in the day will be a great boost to balanced living. Likewise useless and unceasing thinking can prove unhinging. So once again resting the mind for an hour during the day – keeping it free from all thoughts or concentrating one's mind on the single subject can prove immensely useful. Physical discipline, vocal discipline and mental discipline are intrinsic to meditation.

Violence originates in the limbic system, then appears at the level of thoughts and then in action. The first principle of nonviolence is purification of the emotions, and for that our body and mind have to be trained. The body should be trained through the different *asanas* and the practice of relaxation. The training of the mind is undertaken through *pranayama*, deep breathing and alternate breathing. The training of emotions is done through the practice of meditation on psychic centers and color meditation. By practicing all three of them, we can significantly restrain violence.

Forty Minutes Capsule Course for Developing a Nonviolent Personality

Training is prerequisite for developing a nonviolent personality. We have to recognize the fact that today, negative ideas hold sway in life and positive ideas are at a discount. Let me here suggest just one method of replacing negative with positive ideas. Sit down and adopt the posture of *kayotsarga* (total relaxation of the body) for ten minutes and then

practice making the mind free from all thoughts. It implies the absence of both memory and imagination, for both the past and future are fetters of the mind. Attaining such a placid state of mind is an art that one learns through long and constant practice. It amounts to cleansing the mind. After remaining in the state of thoughtlessness for ten minutes, a conscious effort should be made to probe the mind with a view to finding out the negative ideas harbored by it. This should go on for the same period: ten minutes. Then allow yourself to become aware of the positive suggestions and repeat them for the same length of time. Thus the forty minutes of training in nonviolence as recommended by Acharya Mahapragya will be the first lesson of developing a nonviolent personality. It is rightly said by Mahapragya that any discussion on nonviolence without an accompanying program of training is pointless.



II

War and violence were ancient discoveries. We continue to use them with ever more efficient tools. Their production, research and improvement, stockpiling, sales and use constitute the crime of killing, to be more accurate, the crime of mass killing. The unprecedented destruction and human tragedy caused by dropping atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki unnerved even those who had faith in violence. So people started thinking and talking about world peace and disarmament. New movements were launched to achieve these laudable aims, yet simultaneously nations continue to manufacture even more infernal weapons. We generally think that two contradictories cannot coexist. But there are the spectacles of nations making furious preparation for war and at the same time talking of nonviolence. Is it not a paradox that we talk about peace and nonviolence and prepare for war and violence?

Under these circumstances people who have genuine faith in nonviolence have to ask themselves whether they will

continue merely to talk of and preach nonviolence or whether they will take some serious steps in that direction. According to Mahapragya's view, a multiplicity of platforms for preaching nonviolence is not going to achieve anything. We are reminded of a farmer who went to a monk and told him sorrowfully how he had been digging a pit a day in his field for the past ten days without getting a drop of water. The monk said he would have got plenty of water if only he had concentrated on one pit and deepened it enough, instead of going on digging pit after pit. The lesson is obvious. Creating too many platforms or changing from one platform to another will be of no avail. What is needed is the strengthening and deepening of one's faith in nonviolence. Without adequate and proper mental training, faith is not possible. We therefore need training to counter the violence that one learns and is exposed to, since childhood.

The arms rob the poor of their basic needs and push them to starvation, malnutrition, lack of medical care, education, shelter, clothing, sanitation facilities, drinking water, etc. While millions starve, billions are spent for mass destructive weapons. This is a grave error and sin. Then the question remains, how to tackle violence? If a struggle is inevitable, we have to look for alternative forms of struggle, a new technique of nonviolent struggle as envisioned by Mahavira 2600 years back. Mahavira was a *kshatriya* (warrior) by birth. He became a preacher of nonviolence and yet the instincts of war did not leave him. The ways of *ahimsa* and war are different. He transformed the meaning of war and said: "have a war, fight, not with someone else but with yourself." This means, conquer your own enemies (passions: anger, pride, deceit and greed) through meditation and contemplation of the self. Indeed this technique of self-transformation is a unique solution to war. Even if there is one duly trained nonviolent person for every one hundred trained soldiers, a new miracle can be performed and a new order can be created.

Lord Mahavira's teachings were basically founded on nonviolence. But Acharya Mahapragya gave multi-dimensions

to Mahavira's nonviolence. His principles on various issues – nonviolence, peace, socio-religious harmony, spirituality, science of living, morality, ecology and social economics – have been inspiring both to intellectuals and common men alike. His valuable views derived from Jain texts hold the utmost importance. His excellence remains in presenting the ancient wisdom as a solution to modern problems. His enlightening views can provide good grounds on which we can pave a new path to environmental protection and global harmony. Apart from his theoretical contributions regarding nonviolence, he has built a system of training which turns a violent being into a nonviolent one, an eco-foe into an eco-friend. In this context, he has classified two important aspects of training in nonviolence – theoretical and practical.

The former comprises comprehension of the philosophical theories of nonviolence. There are diverse doctrines of nonviolence, and if we enter into polemics we may get entangled in futile controversies. Therefore, we shall mention only a few basic metaphysical ideas without which the very concept of training in nonviolence cannot be understood. There are five metaphysical points which confirm the value of nonviolence and can help us build a healthy environment:

1. *Reality of Soul.* There exist six kinds of souls, according to Jainism. Earth, water, fire, air, and vegetation are considered immobile beings; mobile beings are humans, animals, and all living micro-organisms.

2. *Independence of Soul.* Every soul is existentially independent. It is responsible for its own sufferings or pleasures. From this point of view, the soul is the doer of its own fate. Nobody has the right to interfere in the independent existence of other beings or to inflict pain and violence on others.

3. *Equality of All Souls.* Speaking arithmetically, the number of souls is infinite. The states of different souls formed by the effects of their own *karmas* are also diverse. But from the point

of view of intrinsic nature, all souls are equally valuable; there is no difference whatsoever. This principle of "equality" is not confined to human beings but applies to each and every living being (nature, such as earth, water, fire, air and vegetation). The souls of all living beings are intrinsically identical and equal.

4. *Relatedness and Interdependence in All Facets of Living.* No one can survive by remaining absolutely indifferent to or independent from other beings. Therefore, the principle of relatedness applies to every particle of nature. Even a single leaf falling from a tree will have its effects on the whole universe.

5. *Co-Existence.* Thinking in terms of "Either I shall remain or he will remain" has no place in the cannons of nonviolence. Thinking on the lines of "You as well as I will live; this as well as that will prevail," is the terminology of co-existence and an ideology of nonviolence. Now let us proceed to explain Mahapragya's novel concept of training in non-violence.

Training in Nonviolence

It is essential to avoid senseless violence. People often quote one saying, "*Jivojivasyabhojanam*" ("one conscious being survives by consuming another"), but forget another – as quoted in *Tattvaartha Sutra*: "*Parasparopagrahojivaanaam*" ("conscious beings help one another"). The Jain scriptural aphorism, "All life is bound together by mutual support and interconnection," is vitally important. In this aphorism, life is viewed as a gift of togetherness, accommodation and assistance in a universe teeming with interdependent constituents. It can bring about holistic environmental protection, peace and harmony in the universe. If each conscious being is full of sympathy and helpfulness toward another, no conscious being can damage the interests of another. Even if one cannot help the inevitable violence associated with birth, one should at least strongly resolve to avoid senseless violence. Those devoid of the above resolution practice unimaginable cruelty against other conscious beings. Arnold Toynbee expressed similar

thoughts: “In this hurricane of annihilating material power, mankind will not be able to save itself from self-destruction unless all of us manage to practice nonviolence in relation with our fellow beings.”

The nonviolence training program as conceived by Acharya Mahapragya consists of the following four essential ingredients: (i) a conceptual understanding of *ahimsa* and its historical perspective; (ii) a change of heart, i.e., bio-chemical transformation resulting in curbing negative emotional propensities; (iii) a nonviolent lifestyle; and (iv) suitable practical training for employment.

Each component has elaborate steps including remedial and practical exercises of *preksha* meditation. The practical aspect of nonviolence consists of the four-fold training in nonviolence. They are as follows: (a) change in heart; (b) change in attitude; (c) change in lifestyle; and (d) change in purification of livelihood.

(a) *Change in Heart* : The first dimension of training in nonviolence is change of heart. Here the word “heart” does not mean the physiological organ “heart,” but emotions or feelings. *Ayurveda* upholds that there are two hearts – one beside the lungs and other in the brain. The genesis of emotions is in the limbic system, a part of the brain. According to Acharya Mahapragya, change in heart means replacing the negative instincts with positive ones. Attachment, hatred, jealousy, and disgust are negative emotions. Friendliness, compassion, mercifulness, and love are positive emotions. The practice of *Kayotsarga* (relaxation) and green-colored contemplative meditation on the *Shanti Kendra* (centre of peace) on the upper forehead of the body can help to transform such emotions and bring about a change of heart. Unless the emotions are changed, the problem of nonviolence cannot be solved.

(b) *Change in Attitude* : Training in nonviolence is an innovative technique to train the person. It involves training toward a healthy mental state. From where does the training

in nonviolence begin? The answer to this question is a natural solution to the problem of violence. The beginning point of nonviolence is fearlessness. Unless and until there is non-attachment toward the body and material objects, man can never become fearless. Along with fear, the instinct of possessiveness and attachment of possession were also seeds of violence. The training is successful when one attains fearlessness and a detached attitude towards the material pleasures; contemplation brings about a change in outlook, in emotional state.



(c) *Change in Lifestyle*: The third dimension of training in nonviolence is change in lifestyle. At present, man wishes to become nonviolent but does not want to change his lifestyle. To become nonviolent, it is necessary to limit possessions and to get over them. Our consumerist attitude must be changed, because uncontrolled consumerism fuels the fire of violence. Our lifestyle today is based on fast food, fast action, and fast achievement. This rapid pace of life also works with consumerism. Man lives to consume rather than consuming to live. The consumerist lifestyle is causing pollution. Man does need food and shelter, but he can certainly do without indulging in luxury. In the present scientific age, man cannot leave comforts, but can limit the excessive comfortable and luxurious lifestyle. For the awakening of such wisdom, restraint is essential.

Today we realize that humans cannot live alone on this planet. Humans have to live in the company of non-humans. One cannot live without the other. This ecological argument provides a powerful basis for vegetarianism. So a vegetarian lifestyle is also essential for developing nonviolence and ecological balance. A reverent philosophy of equal coexistence and inter-dependence given by Lord Mahavira and as followed by Acharya Mahaprgya depicts the same. In *Aacaaranga Sutra*, it is very well said that, "*Je loyamabbhaikhai se attanamabbhaikhai, je attanamabbhaikhai se loyamabbhaikhainevaattanamabbhaikhejjanevaloyamabbhaikhejja.*" This means: "One who abuses the cosmos abuses oneself. Do not abuse self or others." It is

further said: "One who disregards the existence of earth, water, air, fire, vegetation, and animals disregards his own existence."

(d) *Change in Purity of Livelihood* : Since man is a social being, he possesses body, family, etc. He has to fulfill the needs of the body, nourish it and then protect it. To fulfill that purpose, he must earn, but violent means of earning must be avoided. Business that involves large-scale violence, such as deforestation, meat production, and so on and so forth through the fifteen restricted professions identified by Mahavira in Jainism, must be avoided. It implies choosing a fair means of livelihood, and refraining from acquiring and benefiting from the wealth which creates environmental and social problems. Hence training in right livelihood stands as an important aspect of nonviolence.

The call of our time is to build a healthy and harmonious society that can train us to change our attitude, heart, and lifestyle in order to have a successful symbiosis between man and nature. Let us all practice nonviolence, so that we may save nature. Survival of nature is survival of the whole universe. Acharya Mahapragya awakens the consciousness when he says that, "Man has been fighting for human rights and animal rights but it is time to think and work for "Mother Earth's right." Mother Earth does have a right to exist in its originality. The slogan "either restraint or perish" needs to echo in our life. Training will be useful and successful only when it brings about attitudinal changes. Training in nonviolence should be carried out firstly at the individual level, then at the family level and finally at the level of social and institutional consciousness. With this formula, all sections of society can live a life of peaceful co-existence. In this way the value of nonviolence is found in the practice of meditation, and this in turn can bring about a happy, healthy, and fraternal peaceful environment with the protection of all species and global harmony.