

international non-violence (ahimsa) day

 web.archive.org/web/20140112100046/http://www.yogacolumn.com:80/

Today, October 2nd, is International Non-violence Day as declared by the UN in commemoration of Mahatma Gandhi's practice of non-violence to create political change. In Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, non-violence or *ahimsa* is the first yama and was one of the first discussions at a yoga philosophy class that I attended earlier this year with Shirley Daventry French. It is easy to think that we are non-violent because we do not brawl with people or throw plates in anger. Shirley taught me that Patanjali's Sutra means non-violence in thought and word, in addition to non-violence in deed. This can be a much more difficult practice when we think about the judgements we may have passed and snide comments to escape our lips.

I will try and take today to contemplate Sutra II.35: "When non-violence in speech, thought and action is established, one's aggressive nature is relinquished and others abandon hostility in one's presence."

Guruji in *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* explains the sutra on *ahimsa*, "Peace in words, thoughts and deeds, whether awake or dreaming, is a sign of goodwill and love to all." I think it is interesting that the notion of nonviolent dreams are raised suggesting that a person's character is reflected in their dreams. Guruji's interpretation goes even further to say that not only will a person benefit personally from practicing non-violence but benefit other people, "In the vicinity of a yogi, men and animals who are otherwise violent and antipathetic towards each other, abandon their hostility and exhibit friendliness and mutual tolerance." Perhaps this was why Gandhi's non-violent movement motivated so many of the people of India.

Iyengar Insight: Before peace between the nations, we have to find peace inside that small nation, which is our being.