Harmlessness*

by Ian Gordon Brown

May the Power of the One Life pour through the group of all true servers
May the Love of the One Soul characterise the lives of all who seek to aid the Great Ones
May we fulfil our part in the one work through self-forgetfulness, harmlessness and right speech.

The teaching given out by Hierarchy to humanity in any world period is always adjusted to man's immediate point of evolutionary development. The great concepts and principles implanted in men's thinking take root and grow according to the need of the times and the capacity for response by the available disciples, aspirants and men of goodwill. We have been told that the present hierarchical emphasis is on goodwill. This is not because goodwill is a better quality, idea or energy than, let us say, co-operation, or unity, or sharing, or brotherhood, but because at this particular time in world history the need for goodwill is paramount. Its wider understanding and use are of decisive importance for the future well-being of the planet.

In like fashion the universal emphasis on freedom now to be found in the human family is not only a response to the incoming Aquarian energies. It is also a sign that humanity is beginning to respond to the energy of Shamballa. Men are reaching consciously for an understanding of the purpose of life, and they sense that this purpose involves not only liberation from past limitations, but into new phases of planetary and solar life.

The Most Potent Force in the World

And so in the mantram of the new group of world servers we are asked to play our part in the one work through three means, self-forgetfulness, harmlessness and right speech. But what about harmlessness? How often have we really examined this concept? Have we ever got to the heart of its meaning? Is it not still somewhat amorphous and intangible in our minds, a little abstract and hard to get hold of, more easily defined by what it is not than by what it is?

Whatever our answer we know that harmlessness must be of outstanding importance. It is one of the three attributes that should characterise the action of the new group of world servers, a group that is ultimately destined to function as the ajna centre of the Lord of the World.

D. K. underlines the importance of harmlessness by saying: "The most potent force in the world today is harmlessness. I speak not of non-resistance, but of that positive attitude of mind which thinks no evil. He who thinks no evil and harms nought is a citizen of God's world."

It is a well-known fact that the negative forces are often the first to react outwardly to a new spiritual focus and inflow of energy. The stirring up of negative reactions and their conflict with positive principles and energies is a necessary and inevitable prelude to the creation of new and better conditions. The Laws of Action and Reaction, of Thesis/Antithesis/and Synthesis, and of Harmony through Conflict, cannot be avoided so far as the consciousness of the human kingdom is concerned. The first stages of International Co-operation Year were characterised by conflict and the breakdown of existing relationships. Only later did the positive achievements and benefits manifest. The beginnings of the International Year for Human Rights have likewise seen a predictable increase in the denial of human rights and attempts to limit human freedom and equality.

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Could it be that the rising tide of violence, and the use or threat of force and even terror to achieve political and social ends in the world today may signify the existence of a new spiritual focus and emphasis on its polar opposite — harmlessness? If this is so, there is a great need for all disciples and aspirants to think deeply on the theme of harmlessness and to cultivate their capacity to act according to this principle. Only thus can it become in actuality what it is poten­tially, "the most potent force in the world today."

The "Liberal's" Dilemma

In spite of the widespread distaste for war among the youth of the world, and the growth of movements on non-violent protest, the "liberal forces" are in some confusion and disarray. There are many who feel that the forces of reason and evolution have failed, and point to discrimination and injustice in the midst of affluence and the growing gap in living standards between the rich and poor nations as evidence of this failure. In their disillusion and frustration they turn to violence and revolution as the only remaining way to get change.

This is a most disturbing and dangerous trend. While violence and terror, however deplorable, are and have been important catalytic agents of social change, it can be shown historically that on their own they have never achieved their intended goals. Even when initially successful they quickly reach a point of diminishing returns and frequently prove counter-productive. Violence and terror cut both ways and do irreparable damage both to the user and to the social order.

Thus even in the field of the practice of violence do we get confirmation of the esoteric dictum that real and permanent outer changes of a progressive kind can only occur when the field of consciousness has been well and truly prepared.

That is not to say that there are no occasions when force may not be rightly used or when war becomes necessary and right in the last resort. There are values more sacred than the preservation of the form as humanity discovered in the second world war. But in an age of the balance of terror, when even so-called conventional wars can become genocide, it is vital that humanity should discover new means and techniques of achieving permanent changes without resort to violence. This need gives a new dimension of significance to the Czechoslovakian reaction to the entry into their country of Soviet and other East European troops. The resistance was not violent, but it was in no sense passive. For the first time in history a whole people adopted a technique based on positive harmlessness and on a national scale. We cannot at this time predict what the immediate future will bring. But nothing can take this particular achievement from the Czechoslovaks, and the future may record it as a turning point when humanity, esoterically speaking, decided that it would practise war no more.

Harmlessness

Thus the principle of harmlessness is a vital issue in the world today. Let us therefore see how the Master D. K. describes and defines it:

"Harmful magnetic conditions, as the result of man's wrong handling of force are the causes of evil in the world around us, including the three sub-human kingdoms. How can we, as individuals, change this? By the development in ourselves of harmlessness. Therefore, study yourself from this angle. Study your daily conduct and words and thoughts so as to make them utterly harmless. Set yourself to think those thoughts about yourself and others which will be constructive and positive, and hence harmless in their effects. Study your emotional effect on others so that by no mood, no depression, and no emotional reaction can you harm a fellow-man. Remember in this connection, violent spiritual aspiration and enthusiasm, misplaced or misdirected, may quite easily harm a fellow-man, so look not only at your wrong tendencies but at the use of your virtues.

"If harmlessness is the keynote of your life, you will do more to produce right harmonious conditions in your personality than any amount of discipline along other lines. The drastic purgation brought about by the attempt to be harmless will go far to eliminate wrong states of consciousness."
“Let harmlessness, therefore, be the keynote of your life. An evening review should be carried forward entirely along this line; divide the review work in three parts to consider:

1) Harmlessness in thought. This will primarily result in the control of speech.
2) Harmlessness in emotional reaction. This will result in being a channel for the love aspect of the soul.
3) Harmlessness in act. This will produce poise, skill in action, and the release of the creative will.

“These three approaches to the subject should be studied from their effects upon one’s own self and development, and from their effect upon those whom one contacts and upon one’s environing associates.”

Later in the same book the Tibetan writes:

“I tell you that the achieving of harmlessness in the positive sense (not in the negative) means the attainment of that step which leads definitely to the portal of initiation. When first mentioned, it sounds of small moment, and to bring the whole subject of initiation into such small account that it becomes unimportant. But let him who so thinks practise that positive harmlessness which works out in right thought because based on intelligent love: right speech, because governed by self-control; and right action, because founded on an understanding of the Law, and he will find that the attempt will call forth all the resources of his being and take much time to achieve. It is not the harmlessness that comes from weakness and a sentimental loving disposition, which dislikes trouble because it upsets the settled harmony of life and leads to consequent discomfort. It is not the harmlessness of the little evolved, negative, impotent man or woman, who has not the power to hurt because possessing so little equipment wherewith damage can be done.

“It is the harmlessness that springs from true understanding and control of the personality by the soul, that leads inevitably to spiritual expression in every-day life. It emanates from a capacity to enter into the consciousness and to penetrate into the realisation of one’s brother, and when this has been accomplished all is forgiven and all is lost sight of in the desire to aid and to help.”

Djwhal Khul goes on to emphasise that response to wrong vibration is not basically prevented by the methods either of “building a shell” or by “insulation” through the power of mantras and visualisation, methods so often discussed by the beginner. “These two methods,” he says, “are temporary expedients by which those who as yet have somewhat to learn seek to protect themselves.” He advises the “practice of harmlessness” as the “best and easiest way for the aspirant to work” and mentions that this provides the basis for the later stage where the disciple learns to absorb and transmute wrong and destructive vibrations and energies, by definitely and with a full awareness of what he is doing, gathering the evil emanations into himself, breaking them into their component parts and returning them whence they came, neutralised, impotent and harmless.

Harmony and Conflict

William James once asked: “What is the moral equivalent of war?” In this question he pointed to a truth about human nature which the esotericist recognises when he says that the human family is governed by the fourth ray of Harmony through Conflict. Man needs the stimulation of opposites in order to progress. He has developed the “habit of crisis,” without which he tends to crystallise and stagnate. How can this reality about man and the functions of conflict in his life, be reconciled with the philosophy and practice of harmlessness?

Jungian psychology throws a revealing light on this whole process in its concept of the “shadow,” which is cast by both the body and the personality. Jungian psychology uses the term Ego as largely synonymous with the term personality as used by the esotericist. The Self of Jungian psychology can be regarded as the equivalent of the Soul on its own plane. For ease of reference, I shall use the terminology of the esotericist, and not of the Jungians.

The shadow, called also the “inferior function,” contains all those elements of the personal psyche of which we are ashamed or

**Treatise on White Magic, pp. 101-103.**
unconscious and which cause us conflict, whether this cause is realised or not. Just as the shadow cast by light falls on exterior objects, so do our psychological shadows become projected on to our surroundings, unaware that the real conflict lies within, we “externalise” it, and attribute the cause to some person or circumstance in our environment, on whom the shadow has fallen. The esotericist knows that those elements, conditions, and circumstances in his environment to which he reacts and which he fights, contain “elements of himself.” It is “like reacting to like,” and the first step is to become aware of the mechanism of projection and the fact that the conflict is essentially an inner one.

Jung says: “When the individual remains undivided and does not become conscious of his inner contradictions, the world must perforce act out the conflict and be torn into opposite halves.” This truth can be seen operating today at individual, group, and national levels. Indeed the recent behaviour of Russia is typical of a person or group that is largely unaware of its own inner contradictions.

The Soul in Action

The Soul casts no shadow, for the nature of the soul is light. If one pours light through light, the energy of spirit empowering the soul, one does not get a shadow but an intensification of light. But if one strengthens the power of the light on the personality, one not only gets shadow, but its darkness increases and the nature and clarity of outline are more sharply revealed. Initially the conflict is intensified, but through this means the man comes to know “the enemy,” which is his own shadow, his “externalised inferior function.” Then he can deal with it.

Radhakrishnan states that: “Opposing factors are mutually complementary elements based on one identity.” This “identity” is the soul, and the final resolution of conflict only comes when the personality is finally redeemed by absorption in the soul at the third initiation. At this point transfiguration occurs, which is another way of saying that the personality’s capacity to cast shadows is finally ended.

It is interesting to note that the unredeemed personality only casts no shadow when the sun is overhead, symbolic of a perfect alignment with the soul.

Conflict therefore, and its resolution through the application of the Law of Harmony and through the principle of harmlessness is built into the very constitution and nature of man. Harmlessness is the soul in action, stimulating the principle of the spiritual self, revealing our shadows so that they may be dealt with, and leading men through conflict to understanding and harmony.

Thus, as we think about harmlessness, we realise it as a positive forward moving beneficent force. It is a quality of the soul and an aspect of love. It is an attractive energy, and the magnetic aspect of radiation. It requires identification with the whole and a completed point of view. It is Christ turning the other cheek, and chasing the money lenders out of the Temple. It is the noble middle way. It is the Soul or Self in action.

Definition of Harmlessness

Perfect poise, a completed point of view and divine understanding.