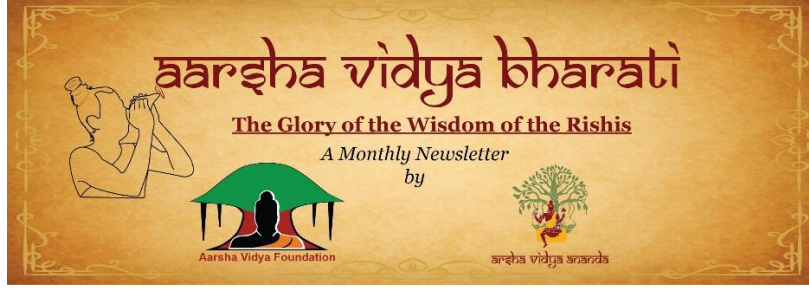


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# Aarsha Vidya Bharati - Sep 2021

A monthly newsletter that will bring you more happiness, more wisdom and more freedom



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## Value of Values

**Ahimsā (3/20)**

By Gunjan Sachdeva, Delhi

Chapter 13 of the *Bhagavad Gītā* includes a complete set of **twenty values** imperative to prepare the mind for Knowledge. The importance of these values is reflected by the fact that these have been given the status of 'Jñāna' or knowledge by *Bhagavān* Krishna.

The chapter starts with Arjuna wanting to know what is *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*, *kṣetra* - the field (body), and *kṣetrajñā*, knower of the field, *jñānam* - knowledge and *jñeyam* - what is to be known. To answer the question of *jñānam*, *Bhagavān* then presents the twenty Values. *Jñāna* here does not refer to the knowledge of the self but to these values or qualities required to prepare the mind for knowledge. Knowledge of the self is referred to as '*jñeyam*' here.



Each of these values: *amānitvam*, *adambhitvam*, *ahimsā*, *kṣāntiḥ* and so on are universal values and once imbibed, define a mind that is **not clouded by conflict** and is in harmony. A person with such a mind is ready to understand the most supreme knowledge - Self Knowledge.

The value of Ahimsa indicates a value of not hurting or non-harmfulness. It is easy to understand as most of us don't want to be hurt or harmed in any way either so reciprocating the same to our environment is common sense. It reflects our inherent desire to not be caused any hurt or pain or threat of any sort and to live free.

It represents the universal value of **non-violence** and not causing any harm by any means, neither by thoughts, *manasā*, nor by words, *vācā*, nor by deeds, *kāyena*. Even the Yoga sutras and the Dharma *śāstras* list this as a fundamental value that must be practiced. The more we practice this, the more spontaneous it becomes.

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The value of *Ahimsā* gets more and more rooted in me as I see the creation as Ishvara's creation of which I am a part too. As I see and appreciate Ishvara's order, I develop a **sense of compassion** for the *Sṛṣṭi* (creation) and hence an attitude of compassion and sensitivity towards all forms of life, sentient and insentient and that is the attitude of *ahimsā*.

I seek to not cause any hurt to anyone around me, don't harbor any ill feelings for anyone, have a heart full of compassion and forgiveness, don't inflict harm to anyone, even for personal gains as I see the importance of a life of non-hurting more than temporary gains caused by harming others. I see all human beings as part of Ishvara's creation and hence am sensitive to not hurt them physically or mentally. I seek to not hurt any feelings through my speech.

*Bhagavad Gītā*, Verse 17.5 further stresses the importance of speech:

अनुद्वेगकरं वाक्यं सत्यं प्रियहितं च यत् ।  
स्वाध्यायाभ्यसनं चैव वाङ्मयं तप उच्यते ॥17.5 ॥

*anudvegakaram vākyam satyam priyahitam ca yat  
svādhyāyābhyasanam caiva vānimayam tapa ucyate ॥17.5 ॥*

I am able to practice speech which does not cause agitation and is *satyam*, *priyam* and *hitam* – true, pleasing and beneficial.

The value of *ahimsā* goes beyond just other human beings to also encompass all flora and fauna. I don't seek to cause any injury or harm to animals around me or cut trees/plants.

Even **Vegetarianism** is an expression of *ahimsā*, the value being based on the Vedic mandate "*himsām na kuryāt*" - do not cause injury.

Various justifications are often given citing the fact that food cycle has to be balanced and that other species do feed on other life forms but I am able to see that I am blessed with a mind capable of making choices while other life forms just abide in their nature. Having the choice of deciding how to best feed myself, I choose to cause minimum harm and to not inflict harm to animals.

I thus live in harmony with the *Sṛṣṭi* and have a mind ready to hear and appreciate the truth of myself and make it my own.

At the same time, *ahimsā* is not an absolute value. *Himsā* or violence is equally important especially in war which is the last resort to uphold dharma.



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In my own journey through practicing *ahimsā*, I have felt that *ahimsā* includes all life forms including myself. Being over self-critical, I often succumb to guilt, anger, sadness which also cause immense hurt to myself. In addition to developing a sensitivity to my environment, I also develop **compassion for my own self**. I am able to forgive myself, accept myself completely and in time love myself and appreciate what I have as Ishvara's *vibhūti*.

In living a life thus which does not inflict harm or hurt anyone around me, I eventually develop a mind at peace and without conflict. I am able to relish in the goodness I am able to spread, little moments of spreading joy, happiness and a sense of comfort around me.

It's a journey where I am eventually able to see **that all that exists is Ishvara**.