A Collection of Three Essays by Leo Tolstoy

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A Collection of Three Essays by Leo Tolstoy:

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The Law of Love
and The Law of Violence

by Leo Tolstoy

The following essay was originally included in the publication
The Law of Love and the Law of Violence (Chapter 8).

The true Christian doctrine consists only in the recognition of love as the supreme law of life, and consequently not allowing any exception. This means that the pretended Christian doctrine that does allow exceptions, such as the possibility of the use of violence in the enforcement of laws, is a contradiction as obvious as cold fire or warm ice.

It seems natural that if the possibility is once admitted that men may torture or kill their fellow beings in the name of humanity, others may claim the same right to torture and kill in the name of some ideal of the future. The admission of a single case contrary to the law of love destroys all its beneficial characteristics, although it is the basis of all religious or moral doctrines. This seems so self-evident that one hesitates to be obliged to prove it. Nevertheless, the believers or the nonbelievers of the Christian world (the latter acknowledge the moral law) look upon the doctrine of love condemning violence as fantastic and inapplicable to life.

This ought not to be the case for the mass of workers who employ violence on each other and who suffer from it so cruelly. The situation of the oppressed should not be compared to the constraint used directly by the stronger on the weaker, or by a greater number on a smaller number. Here, indeed, it is the minority that oppresses the majority, thanks to a lie established ages ago by clever people, in virtue of which men despoil each other, for insignificant profits, of much greater advantages—such as liberty—and are exposed to painful suffering.

The origin of this lie was uncovered four centuries ago by the French writer La Boétie, in his work, *The Politics of Obedience: The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude. He said:*

> *"It is not bands of horsemen, or companies of infantry, or weapons that defend the tyrant. Instead, it will not at first be believed, even as true as it is, there are always four or five who control the tyrant, four or five who hold the country in servitude for him. There are always five or six who have access to the tyrant, and who have offered themselves, or are called upon by him, to be accomplices of his cruelty, companions of his pleasures, panderers to his lust, and sharers in his pillage. These six train their chief so well that he must be wicked, not only as the result of his own brutality, but of theirs*

also. These six have six hundred who profit under them, and they act towards them as the six act towards the tyrant. These six hundred have under them six thousand whom they have raised in degree, and to whom they have given, even if indirectly, the government of provinces or the handling of taxes, so that they may control their avarice and cruelty. They perform their duties when it seems good to them, and also do so much evil that they could not exist except under protection, or be dispensed with except by means of law and punishment.

Great are the consequences that result from this. And anyone who looked closer into this net would be interested in seeing that not only the six thousand, but hundreds of thousands, even millions, hold the tyrant by this cord, helping themselves by means of it. In the same way, in Homer, Jupiter boasts that if he pulls a chain, he will draw all the gods to him. From this came the rise of the senate, the establishment of new states, and the election of offices—certainly not to reform justice, but to keep the tyrant in power.

To sum up, we owe our present condition to the favors, the gains, and the advantages that one acquires together with the tyrants, who find as many people to whom tyranny seems profitable, as those to whom liberty would be agreeable. If physicians say there is something the matter with one part of our body, although the rest is quite well, they come at once to the infected part. In the same way, as soon as a king is declared a tyrant, all the wicked and dregs of the kingdom (I do not say a lot of robbers and cheats who can do neither evil nor good in a republic, but those who are filled with ardent ambition and extraordinary avarice) gather around him and uphold him in order to share in the booty and to be petty tyrants under the great tyrant.

Thus act the great thieves and the famous corsairs: some discover countries, others rob travelers; some are in ambush, others lie in wait; some assassinate, others despoil; and even here there are degrees, and while some are only servants, others are the chiefs of the group, although one and all share in the booty or at least are in the search for it. They say that the Sicilian pirates assembled in such great numbers that Pompey the Great had to be sent against them. But they allied themselves with several splendid cities and towns, in whose harbors they could hide with great security when they returned from their raids, and for recompense they allowed these towns a certain percentage of their pillage.

Thus the tyrant enslaved his subjects, some by the help of others, and was protected by those from whom, if they were worth nothing, he should himself have been protected. But, as they say, to cut wood one must have wedges of the same kind of wood. There are the archers, there is the guard, and there are the halberdiers. Not that they do not suffer occasionally on his account, but these lost sheep, these people abandoned by God and

man, are content to endure evil in order to commit it in their turn, not on those who inflict it on them, but on those who suffer from it like themselves and who are unable to commit it."

It would seem that the workers, not gaining any advantage from the restraint that is exercised on them, should at last realize the lie in which they are living and free themselves in the simplest and easiest way: by abstaining from taking part in the violence that is only possible with their co-operation. It would be so simple and so natural to make the agricultural laborers, who are in the majority in Russia and other countries, understand that for centuries they have been suffering by their own fault and without any advantage; that the exclusive possession of the land is assured by those who do not work it themselves—guards, police agents, and soldiers; and that all the taxes are imposed by them, inasmuch as they are employed by the exchequer.

When they have at last understood, it would be natural to get them to say to those they consider as chiefs, "Leave us alone. If you emperors, generals, judges, bishops, professors and other learned men have need of armies, navies, universities, corps de ballet, ecclesiastic courts, conservatories of music, prisons, gallows, or guillotines, prepare them all yourselves. Tax yourselves, judge yourselves, imprison and execute each other, exterminate yourselves, and get yourselves killed in war. Leave us alone, for we have no need of all these things and we do not wish to participate in acts that are futile as far as we are concerned, and above all, so wicked."

Nothing should be more natural than that the working class should thus express itself. But most of them continue their existence as martyrs in the police service, in financial offices, and in the regiments. Others, the minority, try to free themselves from oppression by revolt and by committing violence in their turn on those who oppress them, or, in other words, try to quench fire with fire and thus increase the violence from which they are suffering.

Why do men act so irrationally? It is because the long duration of the lie has caused them to lose all notion of the bond that exists between their servitude and their participation in violence.

Why do they not see this bond? Because they no longer have faith, and without faith, men are guided only by interest. In fact, he who is guided by interest alone cannot do otherwise than deceive or be deceived.

The result is a surprising phenomenon: the masses of the working class, the great majority, not only continue to support violence, but even maintain it, contrary to common sense and contrary to their evident interest. They do this in spite of very frequent denunciations of the iniquity from which they are suffering, and in spite of revolutions for the purpose of suppressing violence by violence.

All these workers continue, by habit, either to profess the false Christian doctrine taught by the Church, or to deny all religion. They believe in the bottoms of their hearts in the ancient law of "a tooth for a tooth" and in submitting to the detested government, or else seek to destroy it by violence. Part of

them are powerless to change their situation because, believing in the necessity of the present social organization, they cannot refrain from participating in its violence. The rest, whose religion has been replaced by political doctrines, cannot free themselves from violence because they are forced to suppress it by violence of another sort.

Appendix to Chapter 8

When one speaks of the principal law of the Christian doctrine, nonresistance to evil by violence, men of the privileged classes, believers or unbelievers, to smile ironically, as if it were an absurdity so evident that one cannot even speak seriously about it.

Most of these people consider themselves to be moral and educated. They seriously discuss the questions of the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, and the Redemption of the Sacraments. Or else, they converse with you just as seriously as to which of the two principal political parties has the greatest chance of success, which grouping of the state is to be most desired, and what the most likely vision of the future state will be–that of the social democrats, or of the social revolutionists. But all are equally convinced that one cannot speak seriously of nonresistance to evil.

Why? Simply because it is impossible for men not to feel that the admission of nonresistance to evil ruins their lives as they now are, and exacts of them something new and unknown, which terrifies them.

That is why the questions about the Trinity, the Immaculate Conception, and Communion are capable of occupying serious people, and unbelievers can find amusement by discussing questions of syndicates, parties, socialism, and communism, while nonresistance to evil seems an insane idea. And the more senseless it seems to them, the higher their position.

In the same way, the force of the denial of the doctrine of nonresistance is in proportion to the degree of the power, wealth, and civilization of men. Those who occupy powerful positions—the very rich, and those who, like the learned, justify the position of these people—simply shrug their shoulders at every allusion to the law of nonresistance. Men less important, less rich, or less clever despise it equally. But all those whose lives are founded on violence judge with more or less disgust the possibility of the application of the law of nonresistance.

So it is certain that, if the admission of the Christian doctrine in its real sense depended upon people who enjoy privileged positions, the passing of the state founded on violence to the one having love for its principle would be nearer than it is today, above all in Russia, where more than two thirds of the population are not yet depraved by wealth, power, or by civilization.

As the majority of the Russian people have no motive and no advantage in depriving themselves of lives where love reigns, it must surely be they who will take initiative in replacing the present state by a new one that one's conscience, already clear on the subject, indicates.

A Letter To A Hindu

The Subjection of India—
Its Cause And Cure

by Leo Tolstoy

With an Introduction by M. K. GANDHI

Introduction

by M. K. GANDHI

The letter printed below is a translation of Tolstoy's letter written in Russian in reply to one from the Editor of Free Hindustan. After having passed from hand to hand, this letter at last came into my possession through a friend who asked me, as one much interested in Tolstoy's writings, whether I thought it worth publishing. I at once replied in the affirmative, and told him I should translate it myself into Gujarati and induce others' to translate and publish it in various Indian vernaculars.

The letter as received by me was a type-written copy. It was therefore referred to the author, who confirmed it as his and kindly granted me permission to print it.

To me, as a humble follower of that great teacher whom I have long looked upon as one of my guides, it is a matter of honour to be connected with the publication of his letter, such especially as the one which is now being given to the world.

It is a mere statement of fact to say that every Indian, whether he owns up to it or not, has national aspirations. But there are as many opinions as there are Indian nationalists as to the exact meaning of that aspiration, and more especially as to the methods to be used to attain the end.

One of the accepted and 'time-honoured' methods to attain the end is that of violence. The assassination of Sir Curzon Wylie was an illustration of that method in its worst and most detestable form. Tolstoy's life has been devoted to replacing the method of violence for removing tyranny or securing reform by the method of non-resistance to evil. He would meet hatred expressed in violence by love expressed in self-suffering. He admits of no exception to whittle down this great and divine law

of love. He applies it to all the problems that trouble mankind.

When a man like Tolstoy, one of the clearest thinkers in the western world, one of the greatest writers, one who as a soldier has known what violence is and what it can do, condemns Japan for having blindly followed the law of modern science, falsely so-called, and fears for that country 'the greatest calamities', it is for us to pause and consider whether, in our impatience of English rule, we do not want to replace one evil by another and a worse. India, which is the nursery of the great faiths of the world, will cease to be nationalist India, whatever else she may become, when she goes through the process of civilization in the shape of reproduction on that sacred soil of gun factories and the hateful industrialism which has reduced the people of Europe to a state of slavery, and all but stifled among them the best instincts which are the heritage of the human family.

If we do not want the English in India we must pay the price. Tolstoy indicates it. 'Do not resist evil, but also do not yourselves participate in evil—in the violent deeds of the administration of the law courts, the collection of taxes and, what is more important, of the soldiers, and no one in the world will enslave you', passionately declares the sage of Yasnaya Polyana. Who can question the truth of what he says in the following: 'A commercial company enslaved a nation comprising two hundred millions. Tell this to a man free from superstition and he will fail to grasp what these words mean. What does it mean that thirty thousand people, not athletes, but rather weak and ordinary people, have enslaved two hundred millions of vigorous, clever, capable, freedom-loving people? Do not the figures make it clear that not the English, but the Indians, have enslaved themselves?'

One need not accept all that Tolstoy says—some of his facts are not accurately stated—to realize the central truth of his indictment of the present system, which is to understand and act upon the irresistible power of the soul over the body, of love, which is an attribute of the soul, over the brute or body force generated by the stirring in us of evil passions.

There is no doubt that there is nothing new in what Tolstoy preaches. But his presentation of the old truth is refreshingly forceful. His logic is unassailable. And above all he endeavours to practise what he preaches. He preaches to convince. He is sincere and in earnest. He commands attention.

~ [19th November, 1909] M. K. GANDHI

A Letter To A Hindu

By Leo Tolstoy

All that exists is One. People only call this One by different names.
~ THE VEDAS.

God is love, and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him.
~ I JOHN iv. 16.

God is one whole; we are the parts.
~ EXPOSITION OF THE TEACHING OF THE VEDAS BY VIVEKANANDA.

I

Do not seek quiet and rest in those earthly realms where delusions and desires are engendered, for if thou dost, thou wilt be dragged through the rough wilderness of life, which is far from Me.

Whenever thou feelest that thy feet are becoming entangled in the interlaced roots of life, know that thou has strayed from the path to which I beckon thee: for I have placed thee in broad, smooth paths, which are strewn with flowers. I have put a light before thee, which thou canst follow and thus run without stumbling. ~ KRISHNA.

I have received your letter and two numbers of your periodical, both of which interest me extremely. The oppression of a majority by a minority, and the demoralization inevitably resulting from it, is a phenomenon that has always occupied me and has done so most particularly of late. I will try to explain to you what I think about that subject in general, and particularly about the cause from which the dreadful evils of which you write in your letter, and in the Hindu periodical you have sent me, have arisen and continue to arise.

The reason for the astonishing fact that a majority of working people submit to a handful of idlers who control their labour and their very lives is always and everywhere the same—whether the oppressors and oppressed are of one race or whether, as in India and elsewhere, the oppressors are of a different nation.

This phenomenon seems particularly strange in India, for there more than two hundred million people, highly gifted both physically and mentally, find themselves in the power of a small group of people quite alien to them in thought, and immeasurably inferior to them in religious morality.

From your letter and the articles in *Free Hindustan* as well as from the very interesting writings of the Hindu Swami Vivekananda and others, it appears that, as is the case in our time with the ills of all

nations, the reason lies in the lack of a reasonable religious teaching which by explaining the meaning of life would supply a supreme law for the guidance of conduct and would replace the more than dubious precepts of pseudo-religion and pseudo-science with the immoral conclusions deduced from them and commonly called 'civilization'.

Your letter, as well as the articles in *Free Hindustan* and Indian political literature generally, shows that most of the leaders of public opinion among your people no longer attach any significance to the religious teachings that were and are professed by the peoples of India, and recognize no possibility of freeing the people from the oppression they endure except by adopting the irreligious and profoundly immoral social arrangements under which the English and other pseudo-Christian nations live to-day.

And yet the chief if not the sole cause of the enslavement of the Indian peoples by the English lies in this very absence of a religious consciousness and of the guidance for conduct which should flow from it—a lack common in our day to all nations East and West, from Japan to England and America alike.

II

O ye, who see perplexities over your heads, beneath your feet, and to the right and left of you; you will be an eternal enigma unto yourselves until ye become humble and joyful as children. Then will ye find Me, and having found Me in yourselves, you will rule over worlds, and looking out from the great world within to the little world without, you will bless everything that is, and find all is well with time and with you. ~ KRISHNA.

To make my thoughts clear to you I must go farther back. We do not, cannot, and I venture to say need not, know how men lived millions of years ago or even ten thousand years ago, but we do know positively that, as far back as we have any knowledge of mankind, it has always lived in special groups of families, tribes, and nations in which the majority, in the conviction that it must be so, submissively and willingly bowed to the rule of one or more persons—that is to a very small minority. Despite all varieties of circumstances and personalities these relations manifested themselves among the various peoples of whose origin we have any knowledge; and the farther back we go the more absolutely necessary did this arrangement appear, both to the rulers and the ruled, to make it possible for people to live peacefully together.

So it was everywhere. But though this external form of life existed for centuries and still exists, very early—thousands of years before our time—amid this life based on coercion, one and the same thought constantly emerged among different nations, namely, that in every individual a spiritual element is manifested that gives life to all that exists, and that this spiritual element strives to unite with everything of a like nature to itself, and attains this aim through love. This thought appeared in most various forms at different times and places, with varying completeness and clarity. It found expression

in Brahmanism, Judaism, Mazdaism (the teachings of Zoroaster), in Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and in the writings of the Greek and Roman sages, as well as in Christianity and Mohammedanism. The mere fact that this thought has sprung up among different nations and at different times indicates that it is inherent in human nature and contains the truth. But this truth was made known to people who considered that a community could only be kept together if some of them restrained others, and so it appeared quite irreconcilable with the existing order of society. Moreover it was at first expressed only fragmentarily, and so obscurely that though people admitted its theoretic truth they could not entirely accept it as guidance for their conduct. Then, too, the dissemination of the truth in a society based on coercion was always hindered in one and the same manner, namely, those in power, feeling that the recognition of this truth would undermine their position, consciously or sometimes unconsciously perverted it by explanations and additions quite foreign to it, and also opposed it by open violence. Thus the truth—that his life should be directed by the spiritual element which is its basis, which manifests itself as love, and which is so natural to man—this truth, in order to force a way to man's consciousness, had to struggle not merely against the obscurity with which it was expressed and the intentional and unintentional distortions surrounding it, but also against deliberate violence, which by means of persecutions and punishments sought to compel men to accept religious laws authorized by the rulers and conflicting with the truth. Such a hindrance and misrepresentation of the truth—which had not yet achieved complete clarity—occurred everywhere: in Confucianism and Taoism, in Buddhism and in Christianity, in Mohammedanism and in your Brahmanism.

III

My hand has sowed love everywhere, giving unto all that will receive. Blessings are offered unto all My children, but many times in their blindness they fail to see them. How few there are who gather the gifts which lie in profusion at their feet: how many there are, who, in wilful waywardness, turn their eyes away from them and complain with a wail that they have not that which I have given them; many of them defiantly repudiate not only My gifts, but Me also, Me, the Source of all blessings and the Author of their being. ~ KRISHNA.

I tarry awhile from the turmoil and strife of the world. I will beautify and quicken thy life with love and with joy, for the light of the soul is Love. Where Love is, there is contentment and peace, and where there is contentment and peace, there am I, also, in their midst. ~ KRISHNA.

The aim of the sinless One consists in acting without causing sorrow to others, although he could attain to great power by ignoring their feelings.

The aim of the sinless One lies in not doing evil unto those who have done evil unto him.

If a man causes suffering even to those who hate him without any reason, he will ultimately have grief not to be overcome.

The punishment of evil doers consists in making them feel ashamed of themselves by doing them a great kindness.

Of what use is superior knowledge in the one, if he does not endeavour to relieve his neighbour's want as much as his own?

If, in the morning, a man wishes to do evil unto another, in the evening the evil will return to him.

~ THE HINDU KURAL.

Thus it went on everywhere. The recognition that love represents the highest morality was nowhere denied or contradicted, but this truth was so interwoven everywhere with all kinds of falsehoods which distorted it, that finally nothing of it remained but words. It was taught that this highest morality was only applicable to private life—for home use, as it were—but that in public life all forms of violence—such as imprisonment, executions, and wars—might be used for the protection of the majority against a minority of evildoers, though such means were diametrically opposed to any vestige of love. And though common sense indicated that if some men claim to decide who is to be subjected to violence of all kinds for the benefit of others, these men to whom violence is applied may, in turn, arrive at a similar conclusion with regard to those who have employed violence to them, and though the great religious teachers of Brahmanism, Buddhism, and above all of Christianity, foreseeing such a perversion of the law of love, have constantly drawn attention to the one invariable condition of love (namely, the enduring of injuries, insults, and violence of all kinds without resisting evil by evil) people continued—regardless of all that leads man forward—to try to unite the incompatibles: the virtue of love, and what is opposed to love, namely, the restraining of evil by violence. And such a teaching, despite its inner contradiction, was so firmly established that the very people who recognize love as a virtue accept as lawful at the same time an order of life based on violence and allowing men not merely to torture but even to kill one another.

For a long time people lived in this obvious contradiction without noticing it. But a time arrived when this contradiction became more and more evident to thinkers of various nations. And the old and simple truth that it is natural for men to help and to love one another, but not to torture and to kill one another, became ever clearer, so that fewer and fewer people were able to believe the sophistries by which the distortion of the truth had been made so plausible.

In former times the chief method of justifying the use of violence and thereby infringing the law of love was by claiming a divine right for the rulers: the Tsars, Sultans, Rajahs, Shahs, and other heads of states. But the longer humanity lived the weaker grew the belief in this peculiar, God—given right of the ruler. That belief withered in the same way and almost simultaneously in the Christian and the Brahman world, as well as in Buddhist and Confucian spheres, and in recent times it has so faded away

as to prevail no longer against man's reasonable understanding and the true religious feeling. People saw more and more clearly, and now the majority see quite clearly, the senselessness and immorality of subordinating their wills to those of other people just like themselves, when they are bidden to do what is contrary not only to their interests but also to their moral sense. And so one might suppose that having lost confidence in any religious authority for a belief in the divinity of potentates of various kinds, people would try to free themselves from subjection to it. But unfortunately not only were the rulers, who were considered supernatural beings, benefited by having the peoples in subjection, but as a result of the belief in, and during the rule of, these pseudodivine beings, ever larger and larger circles of people grouped and established themselves around them, and under an appearance of governing took advantage of the people. And when the old deception of a supernatural and God-appointed authority had dwindled away these men were only concerned to devise a new one which like its predecessor should make it possible to hold the people in bondage to a limited number of rulers.

IV

Children, do you want to know by what your hearts should be guided? Throw aside your longings and strivings after that which is null and void; get rid of your erroneous thoughts about happiness and wisdom, and your empty and insincere desires. Dispense with these and you will know Love.

~ KRISHNA.

Be not the destroyers of yourselves. Arise to your true Being, and then you will have nothing to fear.

~ KRISHNA.

New justifications have now appeared in place of the antiquated, obsolete, religious ones. These new justifications are just as inadequate as the old ones, but as they are new their futility cannot immediately be recognized by the majority of men. Besides this, those who enjoy power propagate these new sophistries and support them so skilfully that they seem irrefutable even to many of those who suffer from the oppression these theories seek to justify. These new justifications are termed 'scientific'. But by the term 'scientific' is understood just what was formerly understood by the term 'religious': just as formerly everything called 'religious' was held to be unquestionable simply because it was called religious, so now all that is called 'scientific' is held to be unquestionable. In the present case the obsolete religious justification of violence which consisted in the recognition of the supernatural personality of the God-ordained ruler ('there is no power but of God') has been superseded by the 'scientific' justification which puts forward, first, the assertion that because the coercion of man by man has existed in all ages, it follows that such coercion must continue to exist. This assertion that people should continue to live as they have done throughout past ages rather than as

their reason and conscience indicate, is what 'science' calls 'the historic law'. A further 'scientific' justification lies in the statement that as among plants and wild beasts there is a constant struggle for existence which always results in the survival of the fittest, a similar struggle should be carried on among human beings—beings, that is, who are gifted with intelligence and love; faculties lacking in the creatures subject to the struggle for existence and survival of the fittest. Such is the second 'scientific' justification.

The third, most important, and unfortunately most widespread justification is, at bottom, the age-old religious one just a little altered: that in public life the suppression of some for the protection of the majority cannot be avoided—so that coercion is unavoidable however desirable reliance on love alone might be in human intercourse. The only difference in this justification by pseudo-science consists in the fact that, to the question why such and such people and not others have the right to decide against whom violence may and must be used, pseudo-science now gives a different reply to that given by religion—which declared that the right to decide was valid because it was pronounced by persons possessed of divine power. 'Science' says that these decisions represent the will of the people, which under a constitutional form of government is supposed to find expression in all the decisions and actions of those who are at the helm at the moment.

Such are the scientific justifications of the principle of coercion. They are not merely weak but absolutely invalid, yet they are so much needed by those who occupy privileged positions that they believe in them as blindly as they formerly believed in the immaculate conception, and propagate them just as confidently. And the unfortunate majority of men bound to toil is so dazzled by the pomp with which these 'scientific truths' are presented, that under this new influence it accepts these scientific stupidities for holy truth, just as it formerly accepted the pseudo-religious justifications; and it continues to submit to the present holders of power who are just as hard-hearted but rather more numerous than before.

V

Who am I? I am that which thou hast searched for since thy baby eyes gazed wonderingly upon the world, whose horizon hides this real life from thee. I am that which in thy heart thou hast prayed for, demanded as thy birthright, although thou hast not known what it was. I am that which has lain in thy soul for hundreds and thousands of years. Sometimes I lay in thee grieving because thou didst not recognize me; sometimes I raised my head, opened my eyes, and extended my arms calling thee either tenderly and quietly, or strenuously, demanding that thou shouldst rebel against the iron chains which bound thee to the earth. ~ KRISHNA.

So matters went on, and still go on, in the Christian world. But we might have hope that in the

immense Brahman, Buddhist, and Confucian worlds this new scientific superstition would not establish itself, and that the Chinese, Japanese, and Hindus, once their eyes were opened to the religious fraud justifying violence, would advance directly to a recognition of the law of love inherent in humanity, and which had been so forcibly enunciated by the great Eastern teachers. But what has happened is that the scientific superstition replacing the religious one has been accepted and secured a stronger and stronger hold in the East.

In your periodical you set out as the basic principle which should guide the actions of your people the maxim that: 'Resistance to aggression is not simply justifiable but imperative, nonresistance hurts both Altruism and Egotism.'

Love is the only way to rescue humanity from all ills, and in it you too have the only method of saving your people from enslavement. In very ancient times love was proclaimed with special strength and clearness among your people to be the religious basis of human life. Love, and forcible resistance to evil-doers, involve such a mutual contradiction as to destroy utterly the whole sense and meaning of the conception of love. And what follows? With a light heart and in the twentieth century you, an adherent of a religious people, deny their law, feeling convinced of your scientific enlightenment and your right to do so, and you repeat (do not take this amiss) the amazing stupidity indoctrinated in you by the advocates of the use of violence—the enemies of truth, the servants first of theology and then of science—your European teachers.

You say that the English have enslaved your people and hold them in subjection because the latter have not resisted resolutely enough and have not met force by force.

But the case is just the opposite. If the English have enslaved the people of India it is just because the latter recognized, and still recognize, force as the fundamental principle of the social order. In accord with that principle they submitted to their little rajahs, and on their behalf struggled against one another, fought the Europeans, the English, and are now trying to fight with them again.

A commercial company enslaved a nation comprising two hundred millions. Tell this to a man free from superstition and he will fail to grasp what these words mean. What does it mean that thirty thousand men, not athletes but rather weak and ordinary people, have subdued two hundred million vigorous, clever, capable, and freedom-loving people? Do not the figures make it clear that it is not the English who have enslaved the Indians, but the Indians who have enslaved themselves?

When the Indians complain that the English have enslaved them it is as if drunkards complained that the spirit-dealers who have settled among them have enslaved them. You tell them that they might give up drinking, but they reply that they are so accustomed to it that they cannot abstain, and that they must have alcohol to keep up their energy. Is it not the same thing with the millions of people who submit to thousands' or even to hundreds, of others—of their own or other nations?

If the people of India are enslaved by violence it is only because they themselves live and have lived by violence, and do not recognize the eternal law of love inherent in humanity.

Pitiful and foolish is the man who seeks what he already has, and does not know that he has it. Yes, Pitiful and foolish is he who does not know the bliss of love which surrounds him and which I have given him. ~ KRISHNA.

As soon as men live entirely in accord with the law of love natural to their hearts and now revealed to them, which excludes all resistance by violence, and therefore hold aloof from all participation in violence—as soon as this happens, not only will hundreds be unable to enslave millions, but not even millions will be able to enslave a single individual. Do not resist the evil-doer and take no part in doing so, either in the violent deeds of the administration, in the law courts, the collection of taxes, or above all in soldiering, and no one in the world will be able to enslave you.

VI

O ye who sit in bondage and continually seek and pant for freedom, seek only for love. Love is peace in itself and peace which gives complete satisfaction. I am the key that opens the portal to the rarely discovered land where contentment alone is found. ~ KRISHNA.

What is now happening to the people of the East as of the West is like what happens to every individual when he passes from childhood to adolescence and from youth to manhood. He loses what had hitherto guided his life and lives without direction, not having found a new standard suitable to his age, and so he invents all sorts of occupations, cares, distractions, and stupefactions to divert his attention from the misery and senselessness of his life. Such a condition may last a long time.

When an individual passes from one period of life to another a time comes when he cannot go on in senseless activity and excitement as before, but has to understand that although he has outgrown what before used to direct him, this does not mean that he must live without any reasonable guidance, but rather that he must formulate for himself an understanding of life corresponding to his age, and having elucidated it must be guided by it. And in the same way a similar time must come in the growth and development of humanity. I believe that such a time has now arrived—not in the sense that it has come in the year 1908, but that the inherent contradiction of human life has now reached an extreme degree of tension: on the one side there is the consciousness of the beneficence of the law of love, and on the other the existing order of life which has for centuries occasioned an empty, anxious, restless, and troubled mode of life, conflicting as it does with the law of love and built on the use of violence. This contradiction must be faced, and the solution will evidently not be favourable to the outlived law of violence, but to the truth which has dwelt in the hearts of men from remote antiquity: the truth that the law of love is in accord with the nature of man.

But men can only recognize this truth to its full extent when they have completely freed themselves from all religious and scientific superstitions and from all the consequent misrepresentations and sophistical distortions by which its recognition has been hindered for centuries.

To save a sinking ship it is necessary to throw overboard the ballast, which though it may once have been needed would now cause the ship to sink. And so it is with the scientific superstition which hides the truth of their welfare from mankind. In order that men should embrace the truth—not in the vague way they did in childhood, nor in the one-sided and perverted way presented to them by their religious and scientific teachers, but embrace it as their highest law—the complete liberation of this truth from all and every superstition (both pseudo-religious and pseudo-scientific) by which it is still obscured is essential: not a partial, timid attempt, reckoning with traditions sanctified by age and with the habits of the people—not such as was effected in the religious sphere by Guru-Nanak, the founder of the sect of the Sikhs, and in the Christian world by Luther, and by similar reformers in other religions—but a fundamental cleansing of religious consciousness from all ancient religious and modern scientific superstitions.

If only people freed themselves from their beliefs in all kinds of Ormuzds, Brahmas, Sabbaoths, and their incarnation as Krishnas and Christs, from beliefs in Paradises and Hells, in reincarnations and resurrections, from belief in the interference of the Gods in the external affairs of the universe, and above all, if they freed themselves from belief in the infallibility of all the various Vedas, Bibles, Gospels, Tripitakas, Korans, and the like, and also freed themselves from blind belief in a variety of scientific teachings about infinitely small atoms and molecules and in all the infinitely great and infinitely remote worlds, their movements and origin, as well as from faith in the infallibility of the scientific law to which humanity is at present subjected: the historic law, the economic laws, the law of struggle and survival, and so on—if people only freed themselves from this terrible accumulation of futile exercises of our lower capacities of mind and memory called the 'Sciences', and from the innumerable divisions of all sorts of histories, anthropologies, homiletics, bacteriologics, jurisprudences, cosmographies, strategies—their name is legion—and freed themselves from all this harmful, stupifying ballast—the simple law of love, natural to man, accessible to all and solving all questions and perplexities, would of itself become clear and obligatory.

VII

Children, look at the flowers at your feet; do not trample upon them. Look at the love in your midst and do not repudiate it. ~ KRISHNA.

There is a higher reason which transcends all human minds. It is far and near. It permeates all the worlds and at the same time is infinitely higher than they.

A man who sees that all things are contained in the higher spirit cannot treat any being with

contempt. For him to whom all spiritual beings are equal to the highest there can be no room for deception or grief.

Those who are ignorant and are devoted to the religious rites only, are in a deep gloom, but those who are given up to fruitless meditations are in a still greater darkness.

~ UPANISHADS, FROM VEDAS.

Yes, in our time all these things must be cleared away in order that mankind may escape from self-inflicted calamities that have reached an extreme intensity. Whether an Indian seeks liberation from subjection to the English, or anyone else struggles with an oppressor either of his own nationality or of another—whether it be a Negro defending himself against the North Americans; or Persians, Russians, or Turks against the Persian, Russian, or Turkish governments, or any man seeking the greatest welfare for himself and for everybody else—they do not need explanations and justifications of old religious superstitions such as have been formulated by your Vivekanandas, Baba Bharatis, and others, or in the Christian world by a number of similar interpreters and exponents of things that nobody needs; nor the innumerable scientific theories about matters not only unnecessary but for the most part harmful. (In the spiritual realm nothing is indifferent: what is not useful is harmful.) What are wanted for the Indian as for the Englishman, the Frenchman, the German, and the Russian, are not Constitutions and Revolutions, nor all sorts of Conferences and Congresses, nor the many ingenious devices for submarine navigation and aerial navigation, nor powerful explosives, nor all sorts of conveniences to add to the enjoyment of the rich, ruling classes; nor new schools and universities with innumerable faculties of science, nor an augmentation of papers and books, nor gramophones and cinematographs, nor those childish and for the most part corrupt stupidities termed art—but one thing only is needful: the knowledge of the simple and clear truth which finds place in every soul that is not stupefied by religious and scientific superstitions—the truth that for our life one law is valid—the law of love, which brings the highest happiness to every individual as well as to all mankind. Free your minds from those overgrown, mountainous imbecilities which hinder your recognition of it, and at once the truth will emerge from amid the pseudo-religious nonsense that has been smothering it: the indubitable, eternal truth inherent in man, which is one and the same in all the great religions of the world. It will in due time emerge and make its way to general recognition, and the nonsense that has obscured it will disappear of itself, and with it will go the evil from which humanity now suffers.

Children, look upwards with your beclouded eyes, and a world full of joy and love will disclose itself to you, a rational world made by My wisdom, the only real world. Then you will know what love has done with you, what love has bestowed upon you, what love demands from you. ~ KRISHNA.

~ YASNAYA POLYANA [House of Tolstoy], December 14th, 1908

The First Step, or The Morals of Diet

by Leo Tolstoy

Fasting is an indispensable condition of a good life; but in fasting, as in self-control in general, the question arises, with what shall we begin—how to fast, how often to eat, what to eat, what to avoid eating? And as we can do no work seriously without regarding the necessary order of sequence, so also we cannot fast without knowing where to begin—with what to commence self-control in food.

Fasting! And even an analysis of how to fast, and where to begin! The notion seems ridiculous and wild to the majority of men.

I remember how, with pride at his originality, an Evangelical preacher, who was attacking monastic asceticism, once said to me "Ours is not a Christianity of fasting and privations, but of beefsteaks."

Christianity, or virtue in general—and beefsteaks!

During a long period of darkness and lack of all guidance, Pagan or Christian, so many wild, immoral ideas have made their way into our life (especially into that lower region of the first steps toward a good life—our relation to food, to which no one paid any attention), that it is difficult for us even to understand the audacity and senselessness of upholding, in our days, Christianity or virtue with beefsteaks.

We are not horrified by this association, solely because a strange thing has befallen us. We look and see not: listen and hear not. There is no bad odor, no sound, no monstrosity, to which man cannot become so accustomed that he ceases to remark what would strike a man unaccustomed to it. Precisely so it is in the moral region. Christianity and morality with beefsteaks!

A few days ago I visited the slaughter house in our town of Toula. It is built on the new and improved system practiced in large towns, with a view to causing the animals as little suffering as possible. It was on a Friday, two days before Trinity Sunday. There were many cattle there.

Long before this, when reading that excellent book *The Ethics of Diet*, I had wished to visit a slaughter-house, in order to see with my own eyes the reality of the question raised when vegetarianism is discussed. But at first I felt ashamed to do so, as one is always ashamed of going to look at suffering which one knows is about to take place, but which one cannot avert, and so I kept putting off my visit.

But a little while ago I met on the road a butcher returning to Toula after a visit to his home. He is not yet an experienced butcher, and his duty is to stab with a knife. I asked him whether he did not feel sorry for the animals that he killed. He gave me the usual answer: "Why should I feel sorry? It is necessary." But when I told him that eating flesh is not necessary, but is only a luxury, he agreed; and then he admitted that he was sorry for the animals.

"But what can I do? I must earn my bread," he said. "At first I was afraid to kill. My father, he never even killed a chicken in all his life." The majority of Russians cannot kill; they feel pity, and express the feeling by the word "fear." This man had also been "afraid," but he was so no longer. He told me that most of the work was done on Fridays, when it continues until the evening.

Not long ago I also had a talk with a retired soldier, a butcher, and he, too, was surprised at my

assertion that it was a pity to kill, and said the usual things about its being ordained; but afterwards he agreed with me: "Especially when they are quiet, tame cattle. They come, poor things, trusting you. It is very pitiful."

This is dreadful! Not the suffering and death of the animals, but that man suppresses in himself, unnecessarily, the highest spiritual capacity—that of sympathy and pity toward living creatures like himself—and by violating his own feelings becomes cruel. And how deeply seated in the human heart is the injunction not to take life!

Once, when walking from Moscow, I was offered a lift by some carters who were going from Serpouhof to a neighboring forest to fetch wood. It was the Thursday before Easter. I was seated in the first cart, with a strong, red, coarse carman, who evidently drank. On entering a village we saw a well-fed, naked, pink pig being dragged out of the first yard to be slaughtered. It squealed in a dreadful voice, resembling the shriek of a man. Just as we were passing they began to kill it. A man gashed its throat with a knife. The pig squealed still more loudly and piercingly, broke away from the men, and ran off covered with blood. Being near-sighted I did not see all the details. I saw only the human-looking pink body of the pig and heard its desperate squeal; but the carter saw all the details and watched closely. They caught the pig, knocked it down, and finished cutting its throat. When its squeals ceased the carter sighed heavily. "Do men really not have to answer for such things?" he said.

So strong is man's aversion to all killing. But by example, by encouraging greediness, by the assertion that God has allowed it, and, above all, by habit, people entirely lose this natural feeling.

On Friday I decided to go to Toula, and, meeting a meek, kind acquaintance of mine, I invited him to accompany me.

"Yes, I have heard that the arrangements are good, and have been wishing to go and see it; but if they are slaughtering I will not go in."

"Why not? That's just what I want to see! If we eat flesh it must be killed."

"No, no, I cannot!"

It is worth remarking that this man is a sportsman and himself kills animals and birds.

So we went to the slaughter house. Even at the entrance one noticed the heavy, disgusting, fetid smell, as of carpenter's glue, or paint on glue. The nearer we approached, the stronger became the smell. The building is of red brick, very large, with vaults and high chimneys. We entered the gates. To the right was a spacious enclosed yard, three-quarters of an acre in extent—twice a week cattle are driven in here for sale—and adjoining this enclosure was the porter's lodge. To the left were the chambers, as they are called—i.e., rooms with arched entrances, sloping asphalt floors, and contrivances for moving and hanging up the carcasses. On a bench against the wall of the porter's lodge were seated half a dozen butchers, in aprons covered with blood, their tucked-up sleeves disclosing their muscular arms also besmeared with blood. They had finished their work half an hour before, so that day we could only see the empty chambers. Though these chambers were open on both sides, there was an oppressive smell of warm blood; the floor was brown and shining, with congealed black blood in the cavities.

One of the butchers described the process of slaughtering, and showed us the place where it was done. I did not quite understand him, and formed a wrong, but very horrible, idea of the way the

animals are slaughtered; and I fancied that, as is often the case, the reality would very likely produce upon me a weaker impression than the imagination. But in this I was mistaken.

The next time I visited the slaughter house I went in good time. It was the Friday before Trinity—a warm day in June. The smell of glue and blood was even stronger and more penetrating than on my first visit. The work was at its height. The duty yard was full of cattle, and animals had been driven into all the enclosures beside the chambers.

In the street, before the entrance, stood carts to which oxen, calves, and cows were tied. Other carts drawn by good horses and filled with live calves, whose heads hung down and swayed about, drew up and were unloaded; and similar carts containing the carcasses of oxen, with trembling legs sticking out, with heads and bright red lungs and brown livers, drove away from the slaughter house. The dealers themselves, in their long coats, with their whips and knouts in their hands, were walking about the yard, either marking with tar cattle belonging to the same owner, or bargaining, or else guiding oxen and bulls from the great yard into the enclosures which lead into the chambers. These men were evidently all preoccupied with money matters and calculations, and any thought as to whether it was right or wrong to kill these animals was as far from their minds as were questions about the chemical composition of the blood that covered the floor of the chambers.

No butchers were to be seen in the yard; they were all in the chambers at work. That day about a hundred head of cattle were slaughtered. I was on the point of entering one of the chambers, but stopped short at the door. I stopped both because the chamber was crowded with carcasses which were being moved about, and also because blood was flowing on the floor and dripping from above. All the butchers present were besmeared with blood, and had I entered I, too, should certainly have been covered with it. One suspended carcass was being taken down, another was being moved toward the door, a third, a slaughtered ox, was lying with its white legs raised, while a butcher with strong hand was ripping up its tight-stretched hide.

Through the door opposite the one at which I was standing, a big, red, well-fed ox was led in. Two men were dragging it, and hardly had it entered when I saw a butcher raise a knife above its neck and stab it. The ox, as if all four legs had suddenly given way, fell heavily upon its belly, immediately turned over on one side, and began to work its legs and all its hind-quarters. Another butcher at once threw himself upon the ox from the side opposite to the twitching legs, caught its horns and twisted its head down to the ground, while another butcher cut its throat with a knife. From beneath the head there flowed a stream of blackish-red blood, which a besmeared boy caught in a tin basin. All the time this was going on the ox kept incessantly twitching its head as if trying to get up, and waved its four legs in the air. The basin was quickly filling, but the ox still lived, and, its stomach heaving heavily, both hind and fore legs worked so violently that the butchers held aloof. When one basin was full, the boy carried it away on his head to the albumen factory, while another boy placed a fresh basin, which also soon began to fill up. But still the ox heaved its body and worked its hind legs.

When the blood ceased to flow the butcher raised the animal's head and began to skin it. The ox continued to writhe. The head, stripped of its skin, showed red with white veins, and kept the position given it by the butcher; on both sides hung the skin. Still the animal did not cease to writhe. Than another butcher caught hold of one of the legs, broke it, and cut it off. In the remaining legs and the

stomach the convulsions still continued. The other legs were cut off and thrown aside, together with those of other oxen belonging to the same owner. Then the carcass was dragged to the hoist and hung up, and the convulsions were over.

Thus I looked on from the door at the second, third, fourth ox. It was the same with each: the same cutting off of the head with bitten tongue, and the same convulsed members. The only difference was that the butcher did not always strike at once so as to cause the animal's fall. Sometimes he missed his aim, whereupon the ox leaped up, bellowed, and, covered with blood, tried to escape. But then his head was pulled under a bar, struck a second time, and he fell.

I afterwards entered by the door at which the oxen were led in. Here I saw the same thing, only nearer, and therefore more plainly. But chiefly I saw here, what I had not seen before, how the oxen were forced to enter this door. Each time an ox was seized in the enclosure and pulled forward by a rope tied to its horns, the animal, smelling blood, refused to advance, and sometimes bellowed and drew back. It would have been beyond the strength of two men to drag it in by force, so one of the butchers went round each time, grasped the animal's tail and twisted it so violently that the gristle crackled, and the ox advanced.

When they had finished with the cattle of one owner, they brought in those of another. The first animal of his next lot was not an ox, but a bull —a fine, well-bred creature, black, with white spots on its legs, young, muscular, full of energy. He was dragged forward, but he lowered his head and resisted sturdily. Then the butcher who followed behind seized the tail, like an engine-driver grasping the handle of a whistle, twisted it, the gristle crackled, and the bull rushed forward, upsetting the men who held the rope. Then it stopped, looking sideways with its black eyes, the whites of which had filled with blood. But again the tail crackled, and the bull sprang forward and reached the required spot. The striker approached, took aim, and struck. But the blow missed the mark. The bull leaped up, shook his head, bellowed, and, covered with blood, broke free and rushed back. The men at the doorway all sprang aside: but the experienced butchers, with the dash of men inured to danger, quickly caught the rope; again the tail operation was repeated, and again the bull was in the chamber, where he was dragged under the bar, from which he did not again escape. The striker quickly took aim at the spot where the hair divides like a star, and, notwithstanding the blood, found it, struck, and the fine animal, full of life, collapsed, its head and legs writhing while it was bled and the head skinned.

"There, the cursed devil hasn't even fallen the right way!" grumbled the butcher as he cut the skin from the head.

Five minutes later the head was stuck up, red instead of black, without skin; the eyes, that had shone with such splendid color five minutes before, fixed and glassy.

Afterwards I went into the compartment where small animals are slaughtered—a very large chamber with asphalt floor, and tables with backs, on which sheep and calves are killed. Here the work was already finished; in the long room, impregnated with the smell of blood, were only two butchers. One was blowing into the leg of a dead lamb and patting the swollen stomach with his hand; the other, a young fellow in an apron besmeared with blood, was smoking a bent cigarette. There was no one else in the long, dark chamber, filled with a heavy smell. After me there entered a man, apparently an ex-soldier, bringing in a young yearling ram, black with a white mark on its neck, and its legs tied. This

animal he placed upon one of the tables, as if upon a bed. The old soldier greeted the butchers, with whom he was evidently acquainted, and began to ask when their master allowed them leave. The fellow with the cigarette approached with a knife, sharpened it on the edge of the table, and answered that they were free on holidays. The live ram was lying as quietly as the dead inflated one, except that it was briskly wagging its short little tail and its sides were heaving more quickly than usual. The soldier pressed down its uplifted head gently, without effort; the butcher, still continuing the conversation, grasped with his left hand the head of the ram and cut its throat. The ram quivered, and the little tail stiffened and ceased to wave. The fellow, while waiting for the blood to flow, began to relight his cigarette, which had gone out. The blood flowed and the ram began to writhe. The conversation continued without the slightest interruption. It was horribly revolting.

And how about those hens and chickens which daily, in thousands of kitchens, with heads cut off and streaming with blood, comically, dreadfully, flop about, jerking their wings? And see, a kind, refined lady will devour the carcasses of these animals with full assurance that she is doing right, at the same time asserting two contradictory propositions:

First, that she is, as her doctor assures her, so delicate that she cannot be sustained by vegetable food alone, and that for her feeble organism flesh is indispensable; and, secondly, that she is so sensitive that she is unable, not only herself to inflict suffering on animals, but even to bear the sight of suffering.

Whereas the poor lady is weak precisely because she has been taught to live upon food unnatural to man; and she cannot avoid causing suffering to animals — for she eats them.

I only wish to say that for a good life a certain order of good actions is indispensable; that if a man's aspirations toward right living be serious they will inevitably follow one definite sequence, and in this sequence the first thing will be self-control in food — fasting.

And in fasting, if he be really and seriously seeking to live a good life, the first thing from which he will abstain will always be the use of animal food, because, to say nothing of the excitation of the passions caused by such food, its use is simply immoral, as it involves the performance of an act which is contrary to the moral feeling — killing;

We cannot pretend that we do not know this. We are not ostriches, and cannot believe that if we refuse to look at what we do not wish to see, it will not exist. This is especially the case when what we do not wish to see is what we wish to eat. If it were really indispensable, or, if not indispensable, at least in some way useful! But it is quite unnecessary, and only serves to develop animal feelings, to excite desire, and to promote fornication and drunkenness. And this is continually being confirmed by the fact that young, kind, undepraved people — especially women and girls — without knowing how it logically follows, feel that virtue is incompatible with beefsteaks, and, as soon as they wish to be good, give up eating flesh.

"But why, if the wrongfulness of animal food was known to humanity so long ago, have people not yet come to acknowledge this law?" will be asked by those who are accustomed to be led by public opinion rather by reason. The answer to this question is that the moral progress of humanity—which is the foundation of every other kind of progress—is always slow; but that the sign of true, not casual, progress is its uninterruptedness and its continual acceleration.

And the progress of vegetarianism is of this kind. That progress is expressed in the actual life of

mankind, which from many causes is involuntarily passing more and more from carnivorous habits to vegetable food, and is also deliberately following the same path in a movement which shows evident strength, and which is growing larger and larger—viz. vegetarianism. That movement has during the last ten years advanced more and more rapidly. More and more books and periodicals on this subject appear every year; one meets more and more people who have given up meat; and abroad, especially Germany, England, and America, the number of vegetarian hotels and restaurants increases year by year.

This movement should cause special joy to those whose life lies in the effort to bring about the kingdom of God on earth, not because vegetarianism is in itself an important step towards that kingdom (all true steps are both important and unimportant), but because it is a sign that the aspiration of mankind towards moral perfection is serious and sincere, for it has taken the one unalterable order of succession natural to it, beginning with the first step.

One cannot fail to rejoice at this, as people could not fail to rejoice who, after striving to reach the upper story of a house by trying vainly and at random to climb the walls from different points, should at last assemble at the first step of the staircase and crowd towards it, convinced that there can be no way up except by mounting this first step of stairs.

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