

[Revenge Is a Terrible Negative Force](#)

Category : [July/August/September 2002](#)

Published by Anonymous on Jul. 02, 2002

COMMENTARY

Revenge Is a Terrible Negative Force

The karma of retaliation returns to the perpetrators with three times the force

SATGURU SIVAYA SUBRAMUNIASWAMI

If we act wrongly toward others, people will act wrongly toward us. Then, if we are of a lower nature, we resent it and retaliate. This is a quality of the instinctive mind: "You strike me once, I'll strike you back twice." This is retaliation—a terrible negative force. When we use our willpower to retaliate against others, we do build up a bank account of willpower, to be sure, because we do have to put out extra effort. But we also build up a bank account of negative karma that will come back on us full force when we least expect it. When it does, if we remain locked in ignorance, we will resent that and retaliate against the person who plays our karma back to us, and the cycle will repeat itself again and again and again.

Those living in the higher nature know better. Belief in karma and reincarnation are strong forces in a Hindu. South India's Saint Tiruvalluvar said it so simply, "Worthless are those who injure others vengefully, while those who stoically endure are like stored gold. Just as the Earth bears those who dig into her,

it is best to bear with those who despise us" (Tirukural 155, 151).

Nevertheless, we see society tearing itself apart through retaliation. Countries divide and retaliate. Political parties retaliate. Vindictive law cases are professionally handled retaliation. To retaliate means to pay back injury with injury, to return like for like, evil for evil, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. It seems to be a part of humankind, though it is a negative part of humankind. It does not have to prevail. It is not spiritual. We would say it is demonic. We would say it is asuric. We would say it is unnecessary behavior, unacceptable behavior, a wrong use of willpower. People who have a lot of will can, if they wish, retaliate very, very well. They can ruin another person. But remember, the force will come back on them three times stronger than they gave it out, because their strong willpower will bring it back with vigor. This is the law.

The wise person chooses his actions according to dharma, which is quite specific as to how we must behave. Those who connive to retaliate after a misunderstanding comes up should know they are carving a destiny of unhappiness for themselves by digging a pit of remorse, self-condemnation and depression. They will fall into it in the far-off future.

Some might ask, "Does nonretaliation mean that one should not protect himself, his family, his community?" We are talking about revenge, not self-defense. To oppose the actions of an intruder to one's home or community at the time of the intrusion is very different from tracking him down later and vandalizing his home in retaliation. We cannot hurt another

without getting hurt back in the future through some other way, generally through other people not even associated with the person we hurt. Those who offend us or commit crimes against us, we can be sure, will receive justice in an unerring manner through the law of karma. If the matter is a serious one, we can seek reconciliation through the laws of the land. It is not wise to take matters into our own hands and be the instrument of punishment, for by doing so we reap the same negative karma as the offender. Retaliation on a wide scale can be seen in cases of mob violence, terrorism and guerrilla warfare.

Therefore, it is wise to cultivate the powerful force of compassion, of righteous response, forgiveness, of admitting our own mistakes, of not lying our way out of a situation just to make ourself look good or putting others down so we can stand taller, so that we can save face. That is a face you would not want to save. It is a face not worth saving.

Speaking of nonretaliation, the peace-loving Dalai Lama, exiled leader of Tibetan Buddhism, is setting an extraordinary example of not striking back at antagonists. He has campaigned relentlessly for political assistance for his people's cause since 1959, when at age fifteen he fled across the Himalayas and into India for help. Even today he approaches the Chinese with care and respect, though he never forgets China's armed takeover of his nation in 1957 and the extermination of 1.2 million Tibetans by 1972. This humble being has never failed to exemplify the dharma of compassion, advocating "the kind of love you can have even for those who have done you harm." He once wrote: "My enemy is my best friend and my best teacher, because he gives me the

opportunity to learn from adversity."

If there were anyone who could justifiably lash out in a vindictive way, it would be the Dalai Lama; but he has chosen a higher path. We listened to him appeal for Tibetan autonomy over the years at international conferences in Oxford, Moscow, Rio de Janeiro and Chicago, where he never deviated from his posture of love, trust and compassion, with full confidence that the divine law will finally manifest a righteous outcome, an agreeable solution. He also acknowledged that this persecution is a karma that his own people set in motion in the past. He is setting a noble pattern in the international arena, where spiritual people can forge, and are forging, new principles for a global dharma.

Belief in karma, reincarnation and the existence of an all-pervasive Divinity throughout the universe creates an attitude of reverence, benevolence and compassion for all beings. The Hindu or Buddhist who is consciously aware within his soul knows that he is the time traveller and may incarnate, take a body of flesh, in the society he most opposed in order to equalize his hates and fears into a greater understanding which would result in the release of ignorance. The knowledgeable Hindu is well aware of all these possibilities. The mystery is no mystery to the mystic. Ahimsa is certainly not cowardice; it is wisdom. And wisdom is the cumulative knowledge of the existing divine laws of reincarnation, karma, dharma and the all-pervasiveness and sacredness of things, blended together within the psyche, the very soul, of the Hindu.

The above article is excerpted from *Merging with Siva*, by Satguru

Sivaya Subramuniaswami.