A Peace of Our Mind
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Eastern Europe's extraordinary events of the past few months have thrown into sharp relief some great truths about human history. Truth number one is that the urge for freedom cannot be contained for long, by any force or dogma, however brutal or potent - the corollary is that the human spirit is stronger than all the armies of the earth and will ultimately prevail. Truth number two: Number one applies to all dimensions, physical, intellectual, social and spiritual. Truth number three: Those who liberate the spirit within us are heroes, great and small; those who restrain it are villains, great and small. Mikhail Gorbachev is looking heroic right now, so much so that one exuberant reader called his work a "miracle" and the man an "avatar." I also nominate as a genuine hero the peace-loving sadhu who when beyonetted by a British solder in Calcutta in 1946 said simply and without malice, "But you are also That."

That same matter-of-fact courage was seen at Tiennamen Square when a lone Chinese student stood serenely in front of advancing tanks, multiply that pluck by 50 million and you will see how the people of East Germany, Bulgaria, Czeckoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Romania were liberated. Their spirit, having stirred so long, has exploded and the world has been changed irrevocably overnight, catalyzed by the USSR's own awakening to what Mikhail termed "the universal right of freedom of choice" and the repudiation of old thinking. It is a breathlessly swift change, amazingly broad and totally unanticipated by laymen and experts alike who can only watch with dizzy delight and dread. That it has happened relatively peacefully (except in Romania) is something to be thankful for.

As our long-time readers well know, we seldom speak of political matters in our journal. Others do that much better, and we are content to stick with our purpose, which is to report on dharma. So why mention all these world events? Because it

strikes us that these transformations are not so much political as they are spiritual. By this we do not mean they are Christian or Hindu or humanist, but they are an awakening and a liberating of the lives of so many millions that we cannot help but celebrate. Now that nations don't face each other quite so parlously, we may have time and resources enough to deal with the larger and suddenly more fundamental problems we all share.

As it happens, two other events this month (the up-coming Moscow forum on human survival and environments to which your publisher and editor have been invited and a call from the Institute for Peace in Honolulu asking for something on nonviolence in the Hindu tradition) persuaded us to produce a special four-page center section of ahimsa. We had already prepared an entirely different piece and the decision to trust the ahimsa project ahead of schedule was a difficult one. Propelled by the creative potential, the staff retooled the work load, huddled for hours to sketch out fresh design and illustrations, worked late and on days off and sent express packages filled with digitized art and type back and forth 2,700 miles away to our friends at San Francisco's Krishna Copy Center. As the deadline approached (made more demanding than usual by the annual holiday paralysis), we were compelled to make ever more drastic changes, setting aside some time-consuming stories which you will read next month so we could focus on the final editing process. Early on we had decided that our presentation of ahimsa would not discuss the life and thought of Mahatma Gandhi. Don't get us wrong, we love him and admire his remarkable life. This modern saint has become an icon whose work to be just another of the great man. After all, he got his deepest convictions and teachings from the sanatana dharma, so that seemed the appropriate mine for our explorations.

The main text took about seven days to prepare. We loved it, but it was long, way too long. Already the type was the smallest our guidelines allow, eight point, so we couldn't squeeze any more in by reducing the size. It had to be trimmed by the publisher and editors. Not once, but thrice, because each time we carved it back we found ourselves discovering and adding new areas that had not been discussed. Finally, somewhere around the 15th galley the type fit and the paste-up began in earnest on two versions - one for the February issue and another for the more color-rich reprint.

When it became clear that this was going to be an important statement of Hindu dharma and a useful insight into the complex process of world peace, our publisher met with the Hindu Businessmen's Association of Northern California. They decided immediately that many people who do not subscribe to the paper should have

access to this message, and they offered to sponsor a printing of 10,000 extra copies, to be sent to institutions and individuals around the world during 1990. With this news, the staff met again, deciding that the reprint should be more colorful than the version in the paper. New designs were laid out, color swatches riffled, color possibilities proposed, vetoed and finally agreed upon under the able guidance of our art director. Then three of us ran back to our Macintosh IIs to rework the art. Thus it was that the "Ahimsa" reprint you will find on pages 11-14 will be added to our growing collection of free public service literature which includes: "Truth is one, Paths are Many," "Six Schools of Saivism," "Visiting a Hindu Temple: A Beginner's Guide," "Lord Ganesha," "Monism and Dualism" and more.

We are off to Moscow and will have much to tell on our return. We leave you with the Surgeon General's latest warning, a prayer for peace, personal and global, and with a request to send us material, quotes and stories on ahimsa from your personal experience or spiritual tradition. We are making a collection of noninjury resources, and your contribution will be used to help the world to find a peace of mind. Aum, shanti, shanti, shanti, aum.

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