Gandhi on Fearlessness

Fearlessness connotes freedom from all external fear-fear of disease, bodily injury and death, of dispossession, of losing one’s nearest and dearest, of losing reputation or giving offence, and so on. –YM, 4I.

We must give up all external fears. But the internal foes we must always fear. We are rightly afraid of animal passion, anger, and the like. External fears cease of their own accord, when once we have conquered these traitors within the camp. All such fears revolve round the body as the centre, and will, therefore, disappear as soon as one gets rid of attachment for the body. ‘We thus find that all external fear is the baseless fabric of our own vision. Fear has no place in our hearts, when we have shaken off the attachment for wealth, for family and for the body. Nothing whatever in the world is ours. Even we ourselves are His. When we cease to be masters, and reduce ourselves to the rank of servants, humbler than the very dust under our feet, all fears will roll away like must; we shall attain ineffable peace, and see Satyanarayana (the God of Truth) face to face. –YM, 43.

The pursuit of Truth is true bhakti (devotion). It is the path that leads to God, and, therefore, there is no place in it for cowardice, no place for defeat. It is the talisman by which death itself becomes the portal to life eternal.

Just as one must learn the art of killing in the training for violence, so one must learn the art of dying in the training for nonviolence. Violence does not mean emancipation from fear, but discovering the means of combating the cause of fear. Nonviolence, on the other hand, has no cause for fear. The votary of nonviolence has to cultivate the capacity for sacrifice of the highest type in order to be free from fear. He recks not if he should lose his land, his wealth, his life. He who has not overcome all fear cannot practice ahimsa to perfection. The votary of ahimsa has only one fear, that is of God. He who seeks refuge in God ought to have a glimpse of the Atman that transcends the body; and the moment one has a glimpse of the Imperishable Atman one sheds the love of the perishable body. Training in nonviolence is thus diametrically opposed to training in violence. Violence is needed for the protection of things external, nonviolence is needed for the protection of the Atman, for the protection of one’s honour.—H, I-9-40, 268.