



Thoughts from Linda:

Peace Is the Way

Deepak Chopra
2005

“The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. We know more about killing than we do about living in peace.” (General Omar Bradley, shortly after WWII)

This book is designed to teach us about peace.

This book, written after 9/11, includes many references to the resulting age of ‘the war on terrorism’ that emerged. It seems quite prescient today as the writing of this report when we see the world again dealing with war, this time in Ukraine. As of April of 2022, this war has created, after only one month, over ten million displaced Ukrainians, including some two million refugees now in Poland. Death totals are ambiguous at the moment, but it appears that at least 16,000 people have lost their lives, including hundreds of children.

We see the reality of war in real-time with all its brutality on our televisions and our other electronic devices. The entire concept seems impossible to imagine in so many ways. It seems a perfect time to review this book *Peace Is the Way* and contemplate other possibilities for how we might live together on our planet.

As Chopra notes, “In a world where every path to peace has proved futile, the one strategy that hasn’t been tried is the way of peace itself. We must not bring one war to an end, or thirty, but the idea of war itself.”

Deepak Chopra was born in India and studied medicine there before emigrating to America in 1970, where he completed his residency in internal medicine and received a fellowship in endocrinology. As a licensed physician, in 1980, he became the chief of staff at New England Memorial Hospital. Over time, Chopra migrated into alternative,

Eastern-oriented medicine, Transcendental Meditation, and is the author of over 90 books. He gained popularity after appearing on The Oprah Winfrey Show in 1993 and has since built a business that includes health centers, including the Chopra Center for Wellbeing. He runs a robust website and is featured on numerous podcasts and Ted Talks.

Inspired by the saying from Mahatma Gandhi: "There is no way to peace. Peace is the way," Chopra wrote this ambitious book to show a path to a different world. He calls on the reader to imagine a different paradigm itself. As he notes, war has become a habit for the planet and in the US, the last time we were not on a war-footing was just prior to Pearl Harbor, in December of 1941. Since then, we in America have accepted the need for a massive standing army and support the military-industrial complex with 55% of our entire federal discretionary budget. It is almost unfathomable for most of us to contemplate a different way to run the planet.

This book invites us to use our imagination. Chopra unpacks the entire paradigm of war itself and suggests that to break this habit, we need to understand what everyone has benefitted from the habit and then find other ways to derive even more significant benefits. For example, he notes the advantages of war's "gifts" as:

- War provides an outlet for national vengeance.
- It satisfies the demands of fear.
- It brings power to the victor.
- It provides security to the homeland.
- It opens an avenue for getting what you want by force.

He asks us to imagine, by contrast, living in a state of peace, where one could breathe easily. There would be space to allow for connections with other people. Arguments could proceed with mutual respect for either side. We would alleviate suffering and oppression by using ways of peaceful reconciliation such as bearing witness to wrongs and by allowing sympathy and common humanity to do their patient work. It is indeed a different vision than the current world in which we live.

How does he imagine this ever coming to pass? He relates that "the way of peace isn't based on religion or morality. It doesn't ask us to become saints overnight, or to renounce our feelings of anger or our thirst for revenge." What it asks for is something new: what he calls *conscious evolution*.

He goes on to illustrate the power of each individual taking a new personal stance for peace on the planet. He spends good time in the book illustrating how other big paradigms have changed over our collective history, such as Newton's formula for gravity and how it meant that human beings were finally on the road to a new science. He gives key examples of how many attitudes have already changed, one person at a

time, explaining what he calls *Trends of a new Humanity* or a vision that already unites us as he asks:

- Do you believe the world needs to unite around global warming?
- Do you want to see the oceans free of pollution?
- Do you think America should lead the Third World to achieve sustainable economies?
- Do you defend freedom of religion and an end to religious fanaticism in all its forms?
- Do you want to see an end to all nuclear stockpiles?
- Do you want to see alternatives to fossil fuels being developed as quickly as possible?
- Do you believe in the equality of women in every society?

Chopra explains that all these ideas already constitute accepted beliefs, even though it may take decades to realize these goals. In this way, he argues that most people are already so repulsed by the idea of war itself that it is an idea waiting to emerge. I liked his imagery when he noted, "So the trend may be starting already. You and I, in our anguish to end war, may be catching tremors from the future."

The book includes twelve chapters with names such as "War Ends Today," "The Way of Peace," "Beyond Toxic Nationalism," "The Myth of Security," "Diabolical Creativity," "Why Does God Want War," and "Our Best Hope."

I particularly appreciate his practical suggestion for those of us who want to practice peace. In Chapter Two, "The Way of Peace," he offers a different practice for each day of the week. He powerfully notes, "The old order is extensive and powerful; it has materialism on its side. Let that be as it may. The livelier part of awareness is always the leading edge, the part that wants to evolve. It takes time for the leading edge to convince the rest of the self to give up its old outworn habits, but the evolutionary impulse is irresistible." The daily suggestions are:

Sunday—Being for Peace

Monday—Thinking for Peace

Tuesday—Feeling for Peace

Wednesday—Speaking for Peace

Thursday—Acting for Peace

Friday—Creating for Peace

Saturday—Sharing for Peace

Each day includes specific actions and guidelines for your practice.

He notes that the best thing you can do for peace today is to encourage the evolutionary impulse in yourself. Developing peace consciousness is a practical project, and as he says,

“The more who engage in it every day, the more momentum we add to the future. The future doesn’t exist in time; it isn’t a place over the horizon of tomorrow. The future is the next shape that consciousness takes. A flower is the future of a seed. It takes time for the seed to turn into a flower, but in truth the pattern mapped out in the plant’s genes controls time. It uses it to bring about a reality already deeply imprinted. Peace consciousness, once imprinted in our minds, can use time in exactly the same way, as the stage for an unfolding that was fully shaped in advance.”

He calls for us to take up these practices and change the world by first changing ourselves. It seems to me that in this way, we can reverse the words of the great General Bradley to read: *the world has achieved brilliance with wisdom and power with a conscience*. That is a vision for us all.

A good first step is to read this book. And pray for the people engaged in wars on the planet today.