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Non-Violence: A Prerequisite for Peace and Security

“The term non-violence signifies the total absence of both “direct” (physical) and “indirect” (structural) forms of violence” - (Manfred B. Steger: 2001).

The paper deals with the problem of violence in the society and explores how the spirit of non-violence can bring in peace and security in a world facing the threat of disintegrating into pieces. Ever since the dawn of creation humanity has been trying for peace and tranquillity. Some choose the path of morality, ethics and religion and others adopted the course of economic, politics and social sciences yet the problem is as unsolved as it had been from the onset. Violence is still prevailing in our society. In the ancient times efforts were made by various leaders (e.g. twenty-fourth Jain ‘Tirthankara’ Mahavira and Gautam Buddha) created peace through non-violence. Both the reformers adopted the path of non-violence and applied it in their own lives. In modern times Mahatma Gandhi adopted this ideal of non violence. Although he was not the first person who used this weapon but he was the first person who raised non violence to a level never achieved earlier according to Mark Shepard (Mark Shepard, 2002). Krishna Kriplani again asserts that ‘Gandhi was the first in human history to extend the principle of non violence’ (Krishna Kriplani, 1990). According to Gandhi non-violence is the new version of Sanskrit word of ‘Ahimsa’. Ahimsa implies avoidance of physical violence. Gandhi’s non-violence meant the search for truth. Gandhi strongly follow the path of non-violence. Gandhian philosophy of life is based on the concept of truth and non-violence. He believed in non-violence for social change and rejected the total use of violence. Generally Gandhi used the concept of non-violence for social reforms, civil disobedience and non violent direct action. In modern times non-violence is used as a powerful tool for social protest, revolution and political change. The term non-violence is used as a synonym for peace. According to Martin Luther violence can bring momentary victories, it can never bring permanent peace.

Key Words: Non-violence, morality, ethics, social change, civil disobedience, social protest and political change.

“Non-Violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means putting of one’s whole soul against the will of the tyrant” (M. K. Gandhi: 1920). India has diversity of culture and civilization and has many religions. Every religion promotes the idea of non-violence; still it is facing the problem of violence. Gautam Buddha and Mahavira have taken birth in India. Both supported the idea of non-violence. Non-violence has played a great role in India’s history in creating peace. With the passage of time non-violence attained great significance in our culture. India gave the slogan of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ to humanity. Gautama Buddha is significant in creating peace all the world over. Since independence India is dealing several problems such e.g. poverty, unemployment, illiteracy etc. These problems are causing violence. There is need to create awareness about non-violence and promote the idea of non-violence.

In modern times violence has become a part of society. It needs attention to resolve this issue. Non-violence is the only way to solve the crisis. United Nations has taken a great step to create awareness by declaring 2nd October (birthday of Gandhi) as the “International Day for Nonviolence”. Now a days there are various problems of communal riots, insurgency, naxalism, cross border terrorism, regional issues and water disputes etc. History bears testimony to the fact that non-violence has not resolved any problems. Satyabrata said that injustice gave rise to conflict and conflict is the reason for creating violence. The society needs nonviolent actions to face these conditions. In the ancient time Buddha played a very important role to create peace. Jesus sacrificed his life for the cause of justice, peace and love. Hazrat Mohammad (PBUH), founder of Islam, also preached for justice, peace and love (Satyabrata Chowdhary: 2003). According to Gandhi violence meant injury. The only way to combat violence is non-violence. Non-violence is the practice of being harmless to self and others under all conditions.

Gandhi is regarded as the pioneer of non-violence. He was deeply influenced by *Bhagavad Gita*, *Bible*, Tolstoy’s ‘*Kingdom of God is Within Us*’, Ruskin’s ‘*Unto This Last*’, Thoreau’s ‘*On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*’ and Plato’s dialogue of Socrates (B. N. Ray: 2008). Violence is increasing in everyday life. Trudy Gowersaid “violence requires the application of physical force” (Trudy Gower: 2008). On the other side nonviolent action requires peaceful means. Non-violent methods are better means to combat violence. Mahavira said that the non-violence is complete aloofness from violence. Buddha also emphasized on the use of non-violent actions. Nonviolent actions have been practiced by various people from time to time. The principle of “PanchSheel” by nations encourages non-violence in international politics.

Gandhi supported the idea of ahimsa to create secure environment. Gandhiji adopted the principles of Ahimsa, Truthfulness and Absorbing suffering and understanding the reason of conflict. Through non-violence he fought several struggles in South Africa, Champaran and Kheda Satyagraha, Non-cooperation movement, Salt Satyagraha and Quit India Movement. ‘By Satyagraha’ Gandhi literally ‘means holding truth. Truth is the soul and spirit. It is known as soul force’ (Young India: 1921). Gandhi regarded non-violence as the greatest soul force against hate will of the tyrant. He believed in achieving victory through non violent means over injustice. He effectively used non-violence in the political sphere as well as social sphere.

Non-violence is an umbrella term used for a wide range of methods for dealing with conflict which share the common principle i.e. physical violence. According to Gandhi, ahimsa is the greatest force available to humankind, “It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of a man” (M.K. Gandhi: 1935).

According to Martin Luther non-violence is the way of life for courageous people. It seeks to win friendship and understanding. It defeats injustice. Non-violence holds voluntary suffering can educate and transform. Non-violence chooses love instead of hate. Non-violence believes that universe is on the side of justice. He believed that every violence can be solved through peaceful means and peaceful actions. At the centre of non-violence is the principle of love (Martin Luther).

Another Political Scientist and best known writer on non violent action Gene Sharp defined ‘three broad categories of nonviolent action protest, non-cooperation, and intervention. Protest includes such means as demonstrations, marches, and vigils. Non-cooperation involves strikes and boycotts, which may be social, economic, or political in their impact. Intervention includes fasts, nonviolent occupations, and the operation of a parallel government’ (Gene Sharp: 1970). Gene Sharp in his book ‘*Waging Nonviolent Struggle*’ describes 198 methods of non violent action.

There is need to secure the society from violence. Peace security is very important to combat violence. Mahatma Gandhi is considered the founder of non-violence movement. Gandhi challenged the violence of colonialism and other forms of oppression. There are various examples of movements that used non violent methods. Mahatma Gandhi’s movement against the imperial regime of British India, Martin Luther King’s and James Bevel’s adoption of Gandhian methods in their campaign to win civil rights of African Americans, Cesar Chavez’s campaign of non-violence in the 1960s to protest the treatment of farm workers in California and ‘*Velvet Revolution*’ in Czechoslovakia against the communist government. Ackerman and Duvall said that “a mass movement can force a favourable outcome in one of three ways: by coercing a ruler to surrender power or leave; by inducing a regime to compromise and make concessions; or by converting regime’s views of the conflict, so that it believes it should no longer dictate the results” (Ackerman and Duvall:p501).

Another study highlights that Gandhian views on non-violence emphasised on the practical wisdom that can be used and applied by peace activists. He provided a model of political power i.e. based on fearlessness and ahimsa (Manfred B.Steger: 2001,). Gandhi effectively used the power of non-violence. Non-violence is the tool against the injustice and violence prevailing in the society. National Foundation for Communal Harmony (2012) is contributing to create an atmosphere for non-violence. It promotes the principle of non-violence in resolving disputes between religion and other groups. It promotes Gandhian principle of non-violence. “Naxalism may have relative socio-economic and political deprivation as a genuine causal factor. But promoting and popularising the significance of non-violence can help concentrate on finding solutions to the very cause behind conflict” (National Foundation for Communal Harmony: 2012).

In present time media plays a very important role in promoting the idea of non-violence. It also creates awareness about consequences of the violence. It helps to create religious harmony among people. There are also great personalities who has done great task in the field of non-violence such as Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Teresa in India, Martin Luther King Jr. in America, Nelson Mandel in South Africa, and Aung San Suu Kyi in Myanmar. These are the people who followed the path of non-violence.

According to Gandhi means are as important as ends. It is correct to say about him “Moral values like truth, non-violence, renunciation of the pleasures of life etc., political ideas such as freedom, democracy, peace etc., social objectives such as abolition of castes distinctions, emancipation of women, unity of all religious groups and communities etc.- these were indivisible parts of his life and teachings”(S. Ghosh: p172). Gandhi deeply emphasised on the non-violence as he said “A non-violent resolution is not a programme of ‘seizure of power’. It is a programme of transformation of relations ending in a peaceful transfer of power”(M.K Gandhi: 1946). Martin Luther also clearly said that “The non-violent resister not only refuses to shoot his opponent but also refuses to hate him. At the centre of non-violence stands the principle of love”(Martin Luther King Jr.:1959). Non-violence has become an instrument to fight against injustice. Gandhi effectively used non-violence in politics as he said, “Some friends have told me that truth and non-violence have no place in politics and worldly affairs. I do not agree. I have no use for them as a means of individual salvation. Their introduction and application in everyday life has been my experiment all along” (B.N. Ray: 2008).

According to Nathan“Governmental Organisations and Non Governmental Organisations are necessary to create the framework of non-violence and peace. Non-violence can also be created through communication, negotiations and strong will power” (Nathan C. Funk: 2002). Media also promotes the idea of peace through their programmes.

Conclusion

In modern times non-violence is used as a powerful tool for social protest, revolution and political change. Now the world is facing nuclear problem, terrorism and also other problems. There should be a peaceful environment and secure non-violent actions. According to the nonviolence paradigm, genuine power derives from willpower and human solidarity rather than from violence, which undermines community and sows the seeds of its own destruction. Nonviolence offers an approach to peacemaking that has been used not only to counteract forms of social discrimination and political repression but also to resist foreign imperialism or occupation. "If you want peace," assert nonviolentactivities, "work for justice – justly” (Nathan C. Funk:2002).

In the present time Public Interest Litigation is used as a strong weapon against violence. Gandhi said that an eye make the whole world blind for example Palestine-Israel conflict has resulted in blood, despair, death and helplessness.Finally we can conclude that non-violence can fight with any kind of problem. Religion, education, media and

communication play a very important role to create awareness about non-violence. Since independence India is facing several problems that can be solved by the effective use of non-violence.

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