

Non-Violence

Essay No. 01

POINTS TO DEVELOP

1. Many great people have emphasised on the importance of non-violence.
2. Various interpretations of the term.
3. Non-violence, like other benevolent principles Cannot I be taken to the extreme.
4. Gandhi's Ahinsa.
5. Violence has increased in the world today.
6. Relevance of non-violence today.

“NON-VIOLENCE IS THE LAW OF SPECIES AS VIOLENCE IS THE LAW OF BRUTE”—

so spoke Mahatma Gandhi, celebrating the need and nature of the principle of non-violence for mankind. All wise men down the ages have preached the doctrine, of love and non-violence. Zoroaster, Buddha, Mahavira, Christ, Nanak primarily emphasised a moral code that gave due status to non-violence. Non-violence is a philosophy of life, a modus operandi which has been accepted as an article of faith in the East as well as the West. But what does the word 'non-violence' mean in simple terms? To what extent can and should non-violence be exercised in daily life? And is it not true that the world today is in dire need of nonviolence?

Non-violence has been variously interpreted by different people including philosophers and scholars. Generally, the term means 'non-injury' to others. It is a concept based on the fundamental goodness of man. In the fight for what is right and good-freedom, morality, justice and equality, violence must be avoided. All these are to be gained by avoiding use of physical force. One must avoid inflicting pain on others to win one's goal however true and justifiable it may be. Evil must be resisted in a calm manner and not through violence in thought or action. For almost always violence begets violence-and there will be no end to it. The path of non-violence calls for a great amount of fortitude on the part of the person practicing it to achieve the best of goals. It also calls for courage and a lot of self-sacrifice. Thus non-violence, as Gandhi said, is not the weapon of the coward but of the strong. But to what extreme can the principle of non-violence be extended?

Just like other benevolent principles, non-violence fails to make sense once you take it to an extreme. It is not possible for man to exist at all if he is to ensure that

he does not harm or injure a single animal, plant or micro-organism throughout his life. We breathe-and in the mere act of breathing we kill a number of germs and bacteria that cannot be seen by the naked eye. We walk-and the mere act of walking crushes innumerable small, microscopic organisms that abound on the soil. Moreover, injury by itself need not be solely physical in nature; it can be emotional and mental as well. There are no standard and practicable measures by which we can gauge the extent to which an act may cause mental and emotional harm.

Aggression between humans can be repulsed and checked by non-violence. But where the aggressor has no regard for the resulting destruction and bloodshed, total non-violence would only invite aggression. It must be remembered that even Gandhi, the modern profounder of the gospel of 'non-violence', allowed the use of violent weapons in the fight for right goals if there was a need.

Mahatma Gandhi is considered the apostle of non-violence. Truly, he expanded the concept so that nonviolence as a principle acquired a totally new meaning and dimension. For him, the path of ahimsa or non-violence was the only way to achieve freedom and truth which was the supreme reality for him. He explained how ahimsa was an active force and not simply a term passive in its meaning. The light through ahimsa was a legitimate struggle that demanded a lot of merit and virtue on the part of its followers. Ahimsa, for Gandhi, was not cowardice. Gandhi encouraged the use of ahimsa so that its practice on an individual level might finally enhance its significance for the nation as a whole-for only individuals constitute a nation! The effectiveness of the message of non-violence preached by Gandhi can be gauged from responses all over the globe-we have self-professed students of the Mahatma in leaders like Aung San Suu Kyi and Nelson Mandela.

In these modern times, it is violence that has emerged as one of the most common causes of human suffering. The pursuit of material benefits has resulted in growing conflicts between individuals, groups and nations. New forms of violence have thus emerged. Highly sophisticated and lethal chemical and nuclear weapons have opened up ways to inflict a maximum of destruction and damage. In truth, one ought to blame the modern ways of living for the violent tendencies that have taken strong roots in man. There is less of patience, perseverance, true courage, dedication and absolutely no sense of values at all. Man, today is lost; and wandering souls can be easily misled in the name of anything. Violence has grown to such an extent today that it has almost acquired some kind of legitimacy. One fears that the growing violent attitude will ultimately wipe out mankind as a whole!

The world is desperately in need of non-violence as a way of life, to spread the gospel of love, brotherhood and peace. Man must awaken and realise that the world of violence in which he is living can blow up on his face at any time. Before

time runs out, man must realise the folly of indulging in violence and give it up. Only the path of non-violence can truly provide mankind release from all ills and bring about harmony in the world. Only non-violence can restore sanity around us.

Essay No. 02

Non-Violence

Non-violence as a doctrine has been preached by all wise men from time immemorial. The saints and sages all over the world have preached the gospel of love and understanding. All differences among people can be solved through love without resorting to violent means. Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest champion of non-violence, defined it as Ahimsa, that is showing goodwill and love to an antagonist while protesting in spirit against his unjust act. It is fundamentally based on the spirituality of man. It is synonymous with moral courage. It is not mere passive courage, but is the driving force of a spirit which seeks redress of moral grievances. In today's world, non-violence has to be practised if mankind is to survive. Non-violence can prove a panacea for all the ill of the present-day world.

All wise men down the ages have preached the doctrine of non-violence and love. The chief principles -enshrined in the teachings of Buddha Mahavira, Christ, Nanak, Zoroaster primarily lay emphasis on a moral code in which there is no place for violence to others for one's personal gains. Non-violence is a philosophy of life. It has been accepted in the East as well as in the West as an article of faith.

Mahatma Gandhi was the greatest apostle of peace, and non-violence in this century. He defined his principle as Ahimsa, that is showing goodwill and love to an antagonists while protesting in spirit against injustice and violence. It was in South Africa that he for the first time experimented with this technique of peaceful protest. He was pained to see the second class treatment meted out to Indians by the British. There was a terrible colour prejudice which made the life of the Indians miserable. He was deeply hurt to see the sorry plight of Indians and their working and living conditions. He became preoccupied with the question of how to change these conditions. He decided to adopt the path of peaceful agitation and persuaded Indians to join him in his struggle for the restoration of their

rights. His success in his crusade only strengthened his belief in non-violence.

The first article of non-violence is avoidance of physical force and pain on others. The other aspect lays emphasis on the moral courage and attitude towards life of an individual. It implies that everyone, who is a seeker of truth must be ready to undergo any trial of hardship in pursuit of his inquiry. In this sense, non-violence implies that man must face or resist the evil in his adversaries in a calm manner and not resort to violence in thought or action at any time. It requires rigorous training both of mind and body. Obviously, non-violence is based on the fundamental goodness of man and is deeply grounded in the belief that given suitable opportunity the conscience of man which is basically good is likely to prevail over evil.

In his Experiments With Truth, Mahatma Gandhi was convinced that non-violence was not the religion of the coward but of the strong and morally determined. He certainly did not advocate, as is often misunderstood by his critics, cowardly self-surrender. On the contrary he advised people to resist evil with determination in self-defence. He once said, non-violence does not imply running away from danger, leaving near and dear ones unprotected. In fact, given a choice between cowardice and violence, he chose Violence any way. It is only the truly brave who can defy the others without inflicting injury on them. A non-violent person gives patient hearing to his opponent; reasons with him respectfully and if need be, expresses his opinion on the subject and firmly refuses to compromise on his principles. He adopts the technique of non-violence and non-cooperation to fight injustice of any kind.

Today, when the world is almost on the verge of a nuclear holocaust, non-violence as a means of solving differences among civilized people is extremely relevant. Pandit Nehru, one of the greatest disciples of Gandhi, had admitted that he was convinced about the futility of violence in the aftermath of war and partition of the country on the eve of independence. The human agony and suffering that the world had been witness to after the partition of India seem meaningless today. The communal passions which were aroused in the hearts of the people still have not been resolved.

They continue to raise their ugly heads and lead to countless deaths without resolving the issues at all. Violence, therefore, cannot yield any positive

result. It never has Sooner the mankind realises it, better it is for its own preservation.

Super powers boast possessing weapons which can destroy the entire continents at one stroke. One constantly lives under the feat. of .a third world war .breaking out, which many strike the death toll for the entire human race. The amount of money that. is spent on developing military Weapons and acquiring most, sophisticated aunts by almost all the countries

all over the world is simply outrageous. If only one were to consider the use this colossal wealth of the world could be put to for the benefit of the mankind! It is never too late to learn from the lessons of history.

Aggression and violence have never brought about any permanent solution to issues. They only end up in causing misery and suffering. So far violence has been the history of man. It cannot be allowed to continue. The vain, power-hungry people Who indulge in wars simply for the satisfaction of their ambitions and greed must be curbed.

The world is desperately in need of a Messiah of peace, who can once again preach the gospel of love, understanding and universal brotherhood. Man must awaken from his slumbet and take stock of the explosive situation he is living in. Before the time runs out, man must come to his senses and realise the folly of indulging in wars and violence. Ultimately, non-violence alone can provide freedom from all the ills of the society and bring about harmony in the life of the people. It is the only means of restoring sanity in the world.