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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### (Statement of the Problem)

The title of the present dissertation is '*Non-violent Society: A Quest*'. That is, violence is rejected from the very beginning of the quest; a society is to be established where violence has no place. But what is violence? Without explaining the meaning of "violence" we cannot have a clear conception of what kind of society we are searching for.

The basic meaning of violence comes from Latin word 'violentia', which means vehemence, passionate and uncontrolled force. Traditionally, the word meant "to prevent some object, natural or human, from its 'natural' course of development" and "to exceed some limit or norm". When people think about violence, they tend to think most often of a person being physically assaulted, raped or murdered. However, violence may be either personal or institutional, either overt or covert. Thus, personal overt violence may be physical assault. Personal covert violence could be psychological or emotional abuse of other persons. Institutional overt violence may take the form of war or revolution. Covert institutional violence may take the forms of repression, racism or the denial of human rights.

Violence in the sense of 'violation' may be a part of non-violent resistance. Even 'injury' in the sense of injury to what is entitled to respect, reverence or observance, as part of a revolutionary movement, need not necessarily be violent in the legal sense.

There are few phenomena more extensive today than violent acts and violent events, and few occurrences within the total period of recorded history so hardly ever understood or explained. In fact, the human condition is possibly most tellingly

manifested in persons' violations of themselves, their neighbours, and their environments. Whether or not we all agree with the judgment that violence is all-pervading depends upon our perceptions of certain acts and events. Surely in our lives we have all, in one form or the other, experienced a good deal of what we call violence; some have experienced this much more essentially and encompassing than others. But judgements about which acts and which events are the violent ones are judgments based upon the widest latitude of interpreted and misinterpretation of what constitutes violence.

Violence is one of the widespread phenomena of modern life. Nearly everyone would like to cast it out. But there is very little agreement of all in opinion on just what constitutes violence. People differ broadly in the examples of violence they single out for attention, and there is bitter controversy over what should be done to reduce violence, whether in the streets of our cities or in foreign countries in which we have diplomatic commitments. It has been rightly observed that "Violence at its root definition is any violation of the basic human rights of a person. These violations can be social, economic, moral and political."<sup>i</sup>

A similar notion is proposed by Newton Garver, who holds that "What is fundamental about violence is that a person is violated", and that "Violence is human affairs amount to violating persons", where the violation may be "personal or institutional", "overt or covert." However, "violence arises from ignorance or untruth, truth conversely arises out of non-violence".<sup>ii</sup>

From a philosophical standpoint, several definitions of violence are available. Holmes characterizes physical violence as "the intentional use of physical force to cause harm, injury or suffering or death to persons against their will". Holmes acknowledges the importance of a second kind of violence that is psychological in nature. Audi extends the realization of both, a physical and a psychological aspect of violence in his three part definition by adding violence directed toward property. From his perspective violence may be "the physical attack upon, or the vigorous physical abuse of, or vigorous physical struggle against, a person or animal; or the highly vigorous psychological abuse of, or the

sharp, caustic attack upon a person or animal; or the highly vigorous or incendiary, or malicious and vigorous, destruction or damaging of property or potential property”. Miller provides another philosophical perspective as he views violence as an action taken by a person that “(1) involves great force, (2) in itself capable of injuring, damaging, or destroying, and (3) is done with the intent of injuring, damaging or destroying... where the damage or destruction... [is] not done with the intention of doing something of value”.<sup>iii</sup>

One of the more comprehensive definitions of violence was developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) as “The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal development or deprivation”.<sup>iv</sup> WHO definition of violence does have a component of intentionality just as is the case for the concept of aggression. Krug et al. also point out that the WHO definition implicitly includes both public and private acts that could be reactive to provocations or proactive or instrumental. Violent acts can be physical, sexual, psychological, or involve deprivation or neglect.

Although, it is said that a philosophical search starts with a presupposition of the end, to be honest I have started my quest without any preconception of the consequence of my quest. My quest starts from my genuine feeling regarding the violent context in my time. To quote Gandhi: “In this age of the rule of brute force, it is almost impossible for anyone to believe that anyone else could possibly reject the law of final supremacy of brute force.”(M K Gandhi, *Essential Writings*, oxford, New Delhi, 2006, p-236), writes Gandhi in “The Doctrine of the Sword”, published in *Yong India* (11 August, 1920). I start with these words of Gandhi because I am also having the same feeling in passing through my time. Our society is proceeding towards such a distinction which is definitely being a future fall of uncertainty. And this is really not a good sign for our next generation, even for us. At present violence, genocide, murder, kidnaps etc. became the order of the day and day by day the situation is becoming bad to worse. Gandhi himself

believed that non-violence is definitely superior to violence; forgiveness is manlier than punishment. He imagined a peaceful society free from any sort of violence which is built on the principle of violence. Can we hope for the same?

Non-violence is defined in some modern discourses as a philosophy and strategy for social change that rejects the use of physical violence. As such, non-violence is an alternative to passive acceptance of oppression and armed struggle against it. Practitioners of non-violence may use diverse methods in their campaigns for social change, including critical forms of education and persuasion, aggressive civil disobedience and non-violent direct action and targeted manipulation of mass media.

For millions of years there has been life on this planet without there being determination of animal conduct by the moral distinction between right and wrong, violence and non-violence. In the ancient stages of human civilization in Egypt, Sumer and the Indus Valley, we found no evidence of ethical judgments sanctifying non-violence as a guiding canon.

With the rise of systematic philosophy and religious concept, the concept of non-violence gradually came into existence. The central tenets of non-violent philosophy exist in each of the major Abrahamic traditions (Islam, Judaism, and Christianity) as well as in the major Dharmic religious traditions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism). It is also found in many pagan religious traditions. Non-violent movements, leaders and advocates have at times referred to, drawn from and utilized many diverse religious bases for non-violence within their respective struggle. However the concept of non-violence is not same in all its sources. For example, the Buddhist theory of non-violence is not categorical as its counterpart in Jainism. The present notion of non-violence is closely associated with the great Indian, political, social activist and thinker M K Gandhi. For his theory, Gandhi acknowledged his debt to Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Thoreau, Tolstoy and many other sources. Neither was he the first activist who practiced non-violence. In the 1830s a 'Non-Resistance Society' was founded by William Lloyd Garrison and his friends to fight slavery by non-violent means in Boston. But Gandhi was

the inventor of a radically new form of non-violent struggle which is to be distinguished from 'passive resistance'. The notion of *Satya* or truth is central to Gandhian concept of non-violence and to signal the difference from other notion of non-violence, he forged the term *Satyagraha* which is the logical outcome of his own theory of non-violence. The clarification and explanation of all the above are of course come into the purview of my proposed thesis but our main concern is how to realize a non-violent society.

Non-violent action generally comprises three categories, The first, Acts of Protest and Persuasion, which include protest marches, vigils, public-meetings and tools such a banners, placards, candles, flowers and the like; secondly, Non-cooperation, the deliberate and strategic refusal to co-operate with an injustice; and thirdly, Non-violent Intervention, the deliberate and often physical intervention into a perceived unjust event, such as blockades, occupations, sit-ins, tree sittings, truck cavalcades to name a few.

Hunger strikes, pickets, candlelight vigils, petitions, sit-ins, tax-refusal, go slows, blockades, draft refusal and public demonstrations are some of the specific techniques that have been deployed by non-violent movements. Throughout history, these are some of the means used by ordinary people to counter injustice or reveal oppression or bring about progressive change.

India is unique in its religious, linguistic and cultural diversity. It is really difficult to produce unity and harmony in such a country by non-violent means where the inherent tendency of groups is to dominate over the other (there may be some exceptions). Moreover, complete non-violence cannot be realized until and unless a harmony in the world as a whole is produced. My difficult task is to see whether and how such a non-violent society can be established. Nevertheless, I start my quest with the conviction that it is fundamentally irrational to use violence to achieve a peaceful society. A non-violent society cannot be brought into existence by violent means.

Even though, I do not presuppose in advance that it is possible to establish a non-violent society, I have no doubt that for the sake of human survival we should do so. For

my purpose, my primary task would be then to look back into the history. And in doing so, my spirit is of a pacifist.

In my dissertation, I have mentioned some historical outlook, specifically in the chapter of '*Non-violence: The Demand of Society*' and '*Non-violence in a Classical Indian Thought*'. My primary aim is not just the history but to focus some positive approach and so that I can find some way out.

A few major political and social changes have occurred on the basis of non-violent method. Martin Luther King (Jr.) a disciple of Gandhi has considerably influenced the history of America and the world by his activities. In 1986, in the Phippines a non-violent struggle over threw the Marcos dictatorship. King Asoka is one of the greatest examples of our historical outlook. In recent times, Rajkumar Hirani's film "*Lage Raho Munna Bhai*" upholds the Gandhian philosophy and the impact of this film on the society at large is not negligible. Thus, as there are elements of both despair and hope in the society, there still remains scope for research and activity in the field of non-violence. It is not possible for a single person to change the whole society to a non-violent one. And as everything is subject to change, a non-violent society could never retain its form without effort. A votary of non-violence can never take rest; he or she has to work continuously both in the theoretical and practical field in order to see people are living in peace. If my proposed theoretical endeavour could bring a positive change even in a small section of the society in which I live and even for a small range of time, we will consider my effort successful.

Now the question is why I undertook this very topic for my research work? What relevance does the topic have in the present day context? My dissertation is divided into five chapters including the very introduction in the first chapter.

In the second chapter, we will see that non-violence is the very demand of society. In order to combat violence against human kind, it was necessary for men to give up violence among themselves and unite. The time has come to realize that it is also the demand of the nature that violence not be done to it by the rational race. In this chapter I

shall try to establish that for the very formation of society non-violence plays an important role, though violence is one of the constituent elements of human nature. In the third chapter we will do some historical study like the second chapter. Such study will set us in the right direction of our quest. In this chapter, we will explore some relevant schools of Indian philosophy like Jainism, Buddhism and Yoga regarding the concept of non-violence as well as violence. In the fourth chapter, we would like to discuss the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence, for his theory is a perfect blend of eastern and western thought regarding this. In this chapter, we will also focus how Gandhi's non-violence is related to his other concepts like truth, love, God and satyagraha. On the basis of above discussions and findings, in the last chapter, i.e. *Possibility of a Non-violent Society*, our task would be to see how far it is possible to establish a non-violent society in the changed situation of 21<sup>st</sup> century world. All philosophers and leaders think from within their context. The possibility of establishing a nonviolent society must have to be considered with respect to the socio-political and cultural context of our time. In fact, we would look for the probability and not mere possibility of establishing our desired society.

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<sup>i</sup> Dr. Manish Sharma, *Non-violence in the 21st Century: Application and Efficacy*, Deep and Deep Publications, Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi, 2006, p 5, as it is found Riga, Peter D., "Violence: A Christian Perspective", *Philosophy of East and West*, p 145

<sup>ii</sup> Daniel M. Mayton II, *Non-violence and Peace Psychology*, Springer, New York, 2009, p 5

<sup>iii</sup> *Non-violence and Peace Psychology*, p 3

<sup>iv</sup> *Non-violence and Peace Psychology*, p 3-4