

A Challenge to Violence



A.K. THARIEN

**Agape -
A Challenge to Violence**

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Dr. A.K. THARIEN, B.Sc., MBBS, DLO, DOMS, FICS, MAMS (Vienna)
is a currently the President of Fellowship of Reconciliation and
Vice-president of the International Christian Medical and Den-
tal Association.

Other books by the same author

- 1) Witness of Ashrams in India today
- 2) A grain of seed
- 3) Is Modern Medical Technology a Challenge to
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The Rev. A. George Karunakaran,
General Secretary,
Fellowship of Reconciliation - India.
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Foreword

I am delighted to write this foreword for the book
on Non violence. I have known the author and his
commitment to the cause of non violence through
the Fellowship of Reconciliation India.

To quote Gandhi, "Non Violence is the most active
force in the world. It is a tool not for cowards, but for
the strongest and bravest. The true man of God is
strong enough to use the sword but does not do so
recognizing that every man is made in the image of
God".

The treatment of the subject is plain and thought-
provoking.

I recommend it for widespread reading. May we
live to see a day, when non violence springing from
true love will be a way of life.

Sd/- A. George Karunakaran

It was a village. A beautiful Sunday morning. Suddenly, two lorry brokers started to fight. They hit each other. They bled. They cursed each other. On enquiring, it was discovered that the dispute was over a mere Rs.5 only. Several thousand able bodied young men are killed each year due to violence ranging from major war to a minor scuffle. What troubles one's mind is the mindless involvement of many an established government in covert activities. They organise violence to pursue their perverted interests.

People do not recognize the dictum that "He that rises by the sword shall perish by the sword".

The spirit of this age seems to be 'Violence'. Anything that causes indignity is violence.

Extracts of this book was earlier presented at the World Peace Academy - New Delhi.

Bloodshed has become a way of life. The whole atmosphere is charged with fear and anxiety. The fabric of human life is held to a ransom by man inciting violence. Punjab and Srilanka are two immediate examples.

Peter Rige has defined violence as the violation of basic human rights of the person. It can be social, economic, moral, political and or spiritual. Violence is the exercise of force to inflict injury or damage to persons or property. It is essentially destructive and intrinsically evil when applied against persons. Violence causes chaos. It is the antithesis of wholeness-Shalom. It impairs a person's dignity and integrity.

Causes of Violence

Psychologists tell us that aggressive tendencies are obstacle removing activities. They can cause injury though there may not be any hostile intentions. This is a part of the growing process.

A study among the underprivileged children reveals the following. A particular behaviour is promoted by reward. This is more so when parents approve, actively or by silence, the aggressive behaviour of their children. It is equally true that excessive punishment does the same harm. The quick results violence brings induces others into that way.

Frustration is yet another cause of violence. For example, the man who is scolded by the boss, comes home and takes it on the wife or child.

Misdirection of the aggressive impulses produces violence. It is one form of projection. We project upon others the evil thought that is in us. Then, we direct hatred against them which is a kind of self hatred. When two groups take this attitude reciprocally, the seeds of conflict are sown.

There is a psychological law of conservation of emotional energy and unfulfilled desires. Like

a wound up internal watch spring, it can seek release in the form of violence.

Fear, anxiety or insecurity also turns one to violence. This operates in the realm of animals. Recently, I spent three days in the famous Kruger National Park in South Africa. It is an extensive area of 200 miles which is a sanctuary for wild animals. The wild animals came close to the cars we were in and watched us. It was a surprise to us. Where there is no fear there is no aggression.

The inherent nature in human beings to dominate others is yet another cause for violence. This is evident in all the human relationships be it at personal levels or that of social groups. Narrow nationalistic interests cause inescapable clash of ideals resulting in violence.

Injustice is another basic cause of violence. A good majority of the people of this world go hungry to gross bed. There is mismanagement of

the economic resources at a global level which contributes to injustice. The economic flow is from the poorer nations to the richer.

War and Violence

Greed for more possessions and the desire to acquire new markets is yet another reason for war. The industrial build up offers employment to quite a few of the vigorous men.

Military training brings out the worst of the nature in man. It ultimately produces a professional killer. Patriotism is deceitfully exploited to the gain of the war monging bosses. Tolstoy says that war not only makes man an animal but also turns him into a machine that blindly goes out and kills.

The money spent on War and its preparation is enough to provide for the basic food requirements of the whole world.

War and preparations for war have disastrous effects on the world's resources. The world is spending a million and a half U.S. dollars per minute on armaments, which is equivalent to the value of the basic food requirement of the world. Twentyfive per cent of the world's scientific manpower is engaged in military and military related pursuits. If all the world's resources, material and personnel, are redirected from the destructive to constructive channels, humanity will take a new turn in peace and prosperity.

Non Violence as an alternative way

According to Tolstoy, there are two principles that work in man. They are the law of love and the law of aggression. The law of love is deep seated and is present in each of us. It is possible to reach out for it in others. If one is patient enough, even the most hard hearted criminal will respond to it. Equally present in man is the law of aggression. Gandhiji felt that the legitimate anger

should be transmitted into constructive indignation. Martin Luther King Jr recognised this and used it as a potent and an efficient strategy in his struggle.

He advocated that the Christian doctrine of love be operated through the Gandhian method of non violence.

The Dynamics of Non Violence

The power of love and non violence are so harmonious that along with the other forces of nature they conserve the highest form of growth process.

Buddha said that by hating hatred does not cease, but by non hating. Compassion and self control are the highest virtues in the Buddhist thinking. In Hinduism, as Dr. Radhakrishnan says 'Ahimsa Paramodharma' i.e., non violence is the highest virtue. In Maha Bharata Yudistira tells Bhima

that Non Violence is the highest religion, the highest penance, the highest truth from which all virtues flow. Gandhiji said that non violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering.

Jesus went a step ahead and said, 'love your enemy'. When your enemy is hungry feed him, when thirsty, give him a drink. He coupled this with His concept of forgiveness and taught us to show the left cheek, when struck on the right one.

Active non violence means undiluted love and fellow feeling. This works essentially through moral persuasion. Normally, two kinds of power are operative in affecting change in relationship and attitude. They are psychological and social power. Martin Luther King Jr. in his struggle employed them effectively to bring about changes in the relational consequences between the whites and the blacks, in the U.S.A.

Integrity and empathy are two cardinal qualities that form the conduct of non violence. Integrity signifies consistency and wholeness leading to human unity, It upholds values like honesty and fairness. Empathy is seeing things through the eyes of the other. Lack of this essential quality is one of the basic causes of the never ending problem of the people of South Africa or that of Srilanka or Punjab. Non Violence has a liberating and a transforming effect.

History of Non Violence

The history of Non Violence and its concept has been traced to the Chandogya Upanisad, the Chinese Tao Te Ching and other ancient scriptures like the suffering servant of the Bible.

The practical application of non violence lies in the implementation of absolute moral truths in the realm of historical action. The core of non violence is embedded in personal conduct. The

non violent man accepts violence with dignity and a measure of agapic resourcefulness.

It demands courage, faith and freedom from arrogance. This in turn helps to testify to the power of love by the deeds of truth. One of the essential areas is to assert the abandonment of the use of force. This was done during the devising of the Atlantic Charter, by Churchill and Roosevelt. They expressed their belief that for spiritual as well as realistic reasons the nations must abandon the use of force.

Gandhiji's concept

Non Violence implies complete self purification as is humanly possible. Man for Man, the strength of non violence is in direct proportion to the ability of the non violent person not to inflict violence and not the will.

Non Violence as a principle is always greater than violence, because the power at his disposal

is more than what he could have with the use of violence.

There is no such thing as defeat in Non Violence. But the end of violence is death.

The ultimate end of Non Violence is victory if such a word can be used. In reality if there is no defeat, there can be no victory.

Levels of generic Non Violence

There are three basic forms of non violence:

Non Resistance

Passive Resistance

Active non violent Resistance

Non Resistance

Tolstoy puts the teachings of Jesus Christ in this way. "Never resist evil doer with force. Do

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326, V Main, 1 Block
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not meet violence with violence. If they beat you endure it.

If they take your possessions, yield them up. If they compel you to work, work. if they take from you what you consider yours, give it up". This does not mean acquiescence. It means yielding up at one level to over come evil with good. This has redemptive influence in a spirit of love. This is revolutionary.

Passive Resistance

Passive form of resistance is more an appeal to Justice than to love. It is a pragmatic form conducted by the unarmed. It aims at defending rights and asserting claims, while conserving spiritual integrity. Non co-operation, withdrawal, walkout, boycott are all expressions of moral resistance.

Gandhiji's method of Sathyagraha (Soul Force) exemplifies this insight. It has tactical applica-

tions in the various forms of non violent action. Bertrand Russel pointed out during World War I, that if passive resistance were adopted deliberately by the will of the whole nation with the same measure of courage and discipline, which is now displayed, it might achieve a far more perfect protection for what is good in national life than armies and navies can ever achieve without demanding the courage and the waste and the welter of brutality in modern war. One should bear testimony to truth and love which will demonstrate his faith.

Non Violent direct action

The specific characteristics of non violent direct action is assertive. It is a positive action in contrast to inaction or withdrawal, like civil disobedience, sitting in as human obstacle, blocking traffic etc. It makes more exacting demands upon personal conduct and on meeting the opponent in his own disputed territory, like public

prayer vigil whether silent or vocal. The action may be more symbolic rather than coercive and gives the opponent sufficient notice and external details to offer him an opportunity to take the necessary precautions. As the action is rooted in love it is intrinsically non violent.

Some case studies in non violent resistance

It is important to recognise that non violent methods which were morally right have been successfully applied from time to time in various countries in different situations.

In 1840 Hungary was finding Austrian rule oppressive and demanded self government. There was violent repression with the assistance of the Russian army. A farmer, Ferenes Deak, organised the people for passive resistance and non co-operation against the Austrian emperor until the Emperor could persist no more and conceded to the demands of the Hungarian people.

In 1910, Brazil witnessed a conflict between the indigeneous Indians and European imigrants. Colonel Rondois, who was responsible for the immigrants refused to take up arms against the Indians. In course of time, though he lost some of his soldiers, he ultimately won the Indians over by his novel technique of "Patience, suffering and love".

In 1940 the Nazis invaded Denmark. The Danish King resisted all attempts of Hitler to dominate Denmark and effectively resisted, non violently, the ruthless Nazis for over two years.

Norway was also invaded by the Nazis. The pro German dictator Vidkun Quisling tried all the violent Nazi techniques to subdue the teachers who resisted. Vast majority of them resisted non violently for five years, with grim endurance, for the cause of justice and freedom.

We are all familiar with the heroic struggle against the social discrimination in Montgomery, USA. In 1955, a black lady refused to move back from her seat in a bus to give room to a white passenger. She was arrested. This triggered off the release of the long smouldering resentment of the black community into non violent action. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. adopted Jesus Christ's ethic of love and Gandhiji's non violent resistance. This resulted in achieving the major rights for the black people.

In India, there have been several success stories of non violent resistances. Events in Kotgarh, Simla, against the BEGAR customs, campaigns against the compulsory indigo planting in Champaran; The Vaikom Sathyagraha in Kerala, for temple entry of Harijans etc. are only some examples. The historic non violent struggle for the freedom of India, under the leadership of Gandhiji is unique history in itself.

The Law of Love

Kabir, one of India's medieval sages said, "He is learned who has mastered the single word of love". Greek philosopher Plato said love (Eros) was man's way to the divine, his seeking and striving to attain immortality. In Aristotle, love assumes a cosmic significance. In Greek language, three kinds of love are mentioned: Eros, the love of the beautiful (sexual), Philios, the love of a friend and Agape the love of the divine. The love demonstrated on the cross of Jesus Christ is the Agape love, which empties itself to the utmost, for those which are least desirable; the unflinching will for the highest good of the beloved. It is that kind of love which possess the power to penetrate barriers and love the stranger, the outcaste, the ugly and the evil doer. Agape is not primarily man's endeavor to reach God, but God's sacrificial way to man. Jesus said "love your neighbour as yourself". St. Augustine said, the right kind of love begins with oneself but it does not stop there, but

goes on to his neighbour (caritas). It widens itself to embrace our nearest kin, then strangers and finally enemies. Love of one's neighbour is the ladder on which we can mount up to God. I love God as my "SUMMUM BONUM" (my highest good). It follows that I must wish my neighbour also to obtain a share in that "BONUM". "HUMAN LOVE" said Luther, "is acquisitive but God's love is creative, creating something out of nothing".

Herbert Spencer described the origin of species by means of natural selection leading to the survival of the fittest in the struggle for life. But many modern biologists believe that mutual aid is a feature of greater importance for maintenance of life and preservation of species. Disciplined, intelligent and creative love reduces frustration, resentment and violence and creates healthier outlet for energy. Although non violence is not love, it is a way of seeking justice in a

manner that is compatible with love. It causes minimum damage and holds the door open for creative and constructive possibilities.

Ruthless physical force and passive resistance

Napoleon once said that the secret of a military victory is twentyfive per cent physical and seventyfive per cent psychological or moral. In war one seeks to demoralise the opponent, break his will, destroy his confidence, enthusiasm and hope. Captain Liddel Hart, well known writer on war, wrote in his book "The Immemorial Lessons of History" that the true aim in war is to weaken or destroy the morale of the enemy command, soldiers and government and not the bodies of their troops. The balance between victory and defeat turns directly on mental impressions and indirectly on physical forces.

The object of non-violent resistance is to some extent analogous to this object of war, but with

the difference that the purpose of demoralising the opponent is only to re-establish in him a new and nobler moral based on sounder values. The aim non violent resistance is not to break the opponents will, as in war, but to alter it; not to destroy his confidence, enthusiasm and hope, but to transform it for a much loftier purpose. There are lessons for us from the past the encounter of the army against the defenceless people as it happened when British troops occupied Ruhr after World War I; and the American soldiers staged demoralization strikes in Germany and Philippines (1945). In the Jallianwalabagh tragedy in Punjab, when British soldiers opened fire on hundreds of innocent defenceless people, it brought down the prestige of the armed forces and the British government and enhanced the cause of political freedom for India by winning sympathy and uniting people.

It may be argued that non violent resistance may not succeed against powers with a reputa-

tion for callous brutality. Historic evidence shows that Cromwell's brutality in the conquest of Ireland, did not defeat the passive resistance of the Quakers. In Nazi Persecution of the Jews in 1940, Nazis permitted the American Quakers to do relief work in Germany. When Soviet government crushed the Hungarian rebellion in 1957, the morale of the Russian troops who were in contact with Hungarian workers deteriorated so much, in spite of Soviet indoctrinisation, that the troops had to be withdrawn and replaced.

Conclusion

We are living in a world of violence. The thrust towards violent conflicts in our world is disastrous and yet seemingly irresistible. War and violence have never achieved lasting solution to any problem.

The principles of non violent resistance to overcome violence and injustice had been con-

ceived and applied independently by people, in many countries throughout human history. It has been used in political, social and economic conflicts against individuals, armed forces, powerful dictators and mighty world powers. Seers like the Buddha, Mahavir, Francis of Assisi, George Fox, David Thoreaus, Leo Tolstoy, Luther King Jr. and many others were champions of its cause. Mahatma Gandhi was a rare person who applied non violence successfully on a national scale. This is significant in the present day situation when we are faced with violence and when this small planet of ours is threatened with total annihilation by nuclear holocaust. We need a new orientation in the system of education aiming for peace and justice.

The unity of human species, to think, feel, will, understand and act is a fact. Though there are differences in face, culture, nationhood, ideology and religion, humanity is essentially one. It is

ultimately love that counts, both as a source of resilient inner strength and as a means of rapport. In this process, non violence or agapic (active) love is the force that can bind the world and its people together and bring in solidarity and sobriety to a world caught up in the power of the wicked in violence. The choice is before us.

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Sporstraat 38
1815 Bk Alkmaar
Netherlands

CAN YOU JUSTIFY ?

- * The horrors of Hiroshima ?
- * The killing of millions in wars ?
- * The blood curdling violence in Sri Lanka and Punjab ?
- * The spending of a million dollars a minute for the arms race when millions are starving ?
- * The threat of total annihilation of mankind in nuclear holocaust ?

IS THERE AN ALTERNATIVE ?