

# The Concept of Non-Violence in Jainism

The concept of non-violence has been preached by almost all the religions of the world. All the thinkers of humanity and the founders of religious orders universally accepted it as a core principle of human conduct and cardinal religious virtues. In Indian religions in general and Jainism in particular non-violence is considered as a supreme moral virtue (*Ahiṃsā paramo dharmah*).

In *Ācārāṅga*, a canonical Jaina Text of 4th cent. B.C., Lord Mahāvira declares that "All the worthy men of the past, the present and the future say thus, speak thus, declare thus, explain thus, that all the breathing, existing, living and sentient creatures should not be slain, nor treated with violence, nor abused, nor tormented. This is the pure, eternal and unchangeable law or the tenet of religion."<sup>1</sup> 'Bhaktaparijñā' also mentions the superiority of non-violence over all other virtues. It says "just as in the world there is nothing higher than mountain Meru and nothing extended than the sky, so also (in the world) there is nothing excellent and universal than the virtue of non-violence."<sup>2</sup> In *Praśnavyākaraṇasūtra*, non-violence is considered as a shelter to all the living beings. In it *Ahiṃsa* is equated with sixty virtuous qualities such as peace, harmony, welfare trust, fearlessness etc.<sup>3</sup> For Jainas non-violence is a wider term comprehending all the virtues. It is not a single virtue but a group of virtues. *Ācāryā Amṛtacandra* in his famous work *Puruṣārthasiddhupāya* maintains that "all moral practices such as truthfulness etc. are included in *Ahiṃsā* (non-violence), similarly all the vices are comprehended in *Himsā* (violence) because virtues do not vitiate the real nature of self while vices do vitiate. Thus, in Jainism non-violence represents all the virtues and violence all the vices.

The same view is also propounded in the famous Hindu work *Mahābhārata*. It says 'As the foot-prints of all smaller animals are encompassed in the footprint of an elephant in the same way all the virtues (*dharma*s) are included in *Ahiṃsā* (non-violence).<sup>4</sup> Further it maintains that there is nothing higher than the virtue of non-violence<sup>5</sup> because it comprehends all the virtues<sup>6</sup> Lord Buddha in *Dhammapada* also remarks enmity is never appeased by enmity, but only by non-enmity- it is an eternal law.<sup>7</sup> In other words it is not the violence, but non-violence that can be accepted as an universal law of human conduct.

Not only in indigenous religions, but in the Semitic religions also non-violence is accepted as religious virtues. 'Thou shall not kill'<sup>8</sup> is one of the ten commandments, which is prescribed by prophet Moses. In the Holy Bible Jesus Christ also said 'Love thy enemy'.<sup>9</sup> In Islam the supreme being (Allāh) is called the Beneficent (*Al-Rahmān*) and the Merciful (*Al-Raheem*). These injunctions of the great prophets and law givers of the world show that it is the doctrine of non-violence which can only be a universal law of an advanced human society.

This universal acceptance of the ideal of non-violence does not mean that the ideal has been practised by all the religions of the world, in the same spirit and by all the means. In Vedic religion we have the injunction such as "Consider all the creatures of the world as your friend"<sup>10</sup> or "see all the beings as your ownself",<sup>11</sup> yet in practice we find that; in early Vedic religion there are sanctions for not only animal sacrifices but for the human sacrifices also. In Vedas, we have the prayers to the deities for the total destruction of the enemy and victory over it.<sup>12</sup> This shows that the primitive religion and early Vedic religion also were not very much cooped with the doctrines of non-violence. It is also true in the case of Judaism and Islam. Though in Judaism 'thou Shalt not kill' is accepted as one of the ten commandments, but for the Jews people, this injunction only means not to kill the people of their own group and faith. Similarly in Islam, the ideal of non-violence is confined to the follower of their own faith. In it we have the sanction for *Jehada*. Both of these Semitic religions also have sanction for animal sacrifices. Thus, we can say that in early Vedic religion, Judaism and Islam along with the other primitive form religions of the world, the concept of non-violence is only confined to the non-violence towards the people of one's own group and faith. In the history of Semitic religion." Christianity for the first time totally condemned the human killing. Lord Jesus Christ bestowed his compassion on all the human beings, though in Christianity, we do not have any sanction for animal sacrifices in the name of religion, but for the sake of human food animal killing is allowed in it. In the history of indigenous religions *Vaiṣṇavism*, Jainism and Buddhism, condemned all the violence towards the animal-kingdom. Though in Buddhist countries meat-eating is a common

practice yet we must be aware of the fact that this does not have any religious sanction on the part of Buddhism. Vaiṣṇavism prohibit the violence towards the vegetable kingdom. It is in Jainism for the first time that the violence towards the vegetable kingdom as well as other subtle being of the water, earth, air and fire is totally shunned off. A Jaina monk neither can eat raw vegetables, nor can accept the meal which is prepared for him. He can drink only boiled water or water which is completely lifeless. He observes non-violence by all the nine means, i.e. (1-3) not to do violence through mind, body and speech, (4-6) not to order for violence through mind, body and speech and (7-9) not to recommend violence through mind, body and speech.<sup>13</sup> So far as the conduct of house-holder is considered, he has been prohibited only from the intentional violence of mobile beings.

In Pali tripiṭaka, Buddha himself prohibited the meat-eating to the monks, if it is seen, known or heard that the animal was killed for them. Though, Buddha allowed his monks to accept invitations for meals i.e. to accept the meals which is prepared for them. Buddha also not prohibited his monks from eating raw vegetable and drinking the water of well or river. All this shows a development in the meaning of the term non-violence. This development did not take place in a chronological order, but through the cultural and rational development of human society. The development in the meaning of the term non-violence is three dimensional : (1) to refrain from the violence of human beings, to vegetable kingdom and life existing in the finest particles of earth, water, air and fire (2) to refrain from the external act to the internal will of violence i.e. from outward violence to inward violence and (3) to refrain from the violence of other self to the violence of one's own self.

### **Religious sanction for violence and Jaina view-point**

The acceptance for the 'inevitability of violence in the social and individual life is something different from giving it a religious sanction. Though Jaina thinkers accept that complete non-violence as they consider it, is not possible in this worldly life. Yet neither they gave the religious sanction to the violence nor they degraded this ideal of non-violence by saying it as impracticable. Even if some sort of violence is permitted to the house-holders and in some cases to monks in the Jaina scriptures such as Niśithacūrṇi 15 etc., they never say that this type of violence is not violence at all. For example, in building the temple

of Jina, there will be unintentional violence of one sensed being of earth, water etc. and there may occur unintentional violence of two or more sensed beings. But they never said that violence done in the name of religion is not violence at all, as Vedic scriptures propound. They say that it is a violence, done for the sake of the greater good of the individual and society. It is a little demerit conducive to greater merit. If in a situation violence is inevitable, Jaina thinkers advice to opt the lesser violence for the greater good. Intentional violence of immobile one-sensed living beings for lively-hood and in religious performances is permitted to house holders only.

### **Rational Foundation of Non-Violence**

Mackenzi, an eminent Western scholar, believes that the ideal of non-violence is an outcome of fear.<sup>16</sup> But Indian thinkers in general and Jainas in particular never accepted this view. For them the basis of non-violence is the concept of equality of all beings. They based this ideal not on the emotional basis but on the firm footings of reason. The Daśavaikālika, a Jaina canonical text of 3rd century B.C. mentions that every one wants to live and not to die. For this simple reason Nigganthas prohibit the violence.<sup>17</sup> It is also mentioned that Just as pain is not dear to oneself, having known this regarding all other beings, one should treat all the beings equally and should keep sympathy with all of them on the simple basis of equality.<sup>18</sup> The simplest rule of our behaviour towards the others is 'whatever you desire for yourself and whatever you do not desire for yourself, desire that or do not desire that for others.'<sup>19</sup> This experience of likeness of all beings and the regard for the right of all to live are the basement for the practice of non-violence. It is not only in Jainism, but in Buddhism and Hinduism also non-violence is supported on the rational ground of equality of all beings.

In Dhamampada Lord Buddha also remarks 'All men tremble at torture and love life and fear death, remember that you are like unto them, so do not kill nor cause slaughter.'<sup>20</sup> In Iṣopaniṣad it is declared "For a man who realises this truth, all beings need, become the self; when one thus sees unity, what delusion and what sorrow can one have". This idea of the Iṣopaniṣad (6 & 7) is echoed thus, in the Gītā : "The man whose self has been integrated by yoga sees the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self : he sees the same everywhere". Sarvatra samadarśinaḥ. "One who sees, by analogy with oneself, the same everywhere, whether it is pleasure or pain, is the best yogi,

Ātm'aupamyena samañ paśyati. (Gītā, vi.29,32) Our classical commentators have rightly brought out the implication of this. By analogy with oneself (ātmaupamya) when one realizes that what is good or bad for oneself must be so for others, one would always do only what is good for others. He would be engaged in the welfare of all beings (Sarvabhūtaḥita), hating none, and with friendliness and compassion for all.

Non-violence is nothing but to treat all living being as equal. The concept of equality is the core of the theory of non-violence. The observance of non-violence is to honour each and every form of life. According to Jaina point of view, all the beings have equal right to lead a peaceful life. Though violence is unavoidable yet it can not be the directive principle of our living, because it goes against the judgements of our faculty of reasoning. If I think that nobody has any right to take my life on the same ground, I have also no right to take another's life. The principle, 'live on others' or 'living by killing' is self-contradictory. The principle of equality propounds that every one has the right to live. The directive principle of living is not 'Living on others' or 'Living by killing' but 'Living with others', or Live for others (Parasparopagrahojīvanām).<sup>21</sup> Though in our worldly life complete non-violence is not possible yet our motto should be 'Lesser violence is better Living'. It is not the struggle but co-operation is the law of life. I need other's co-operation for my very existence and so I should also co-operate in other's living.

### The meaning of Non-violence

The term non-violence (Ahiṃsā) has various connotations. Generally it means not to kill, slain or hurt any living being. Ahiṃsā means abstention or refraining from hiṃsā. Hiṃsā means violence, injury, harm, deprivation, mutilation, disfigurement and causing pain and suffering to others. In Tattvārthasūtra the term violence is defined as to hurt the vitalities of a living being through the operation of intense passion infected activity of mind, body and speech. This definition of hiṃsā covers two aspects external and internal. In Jainism, violence is considered of two types -- Dravyahiṃsā and Bhāvahiṃsā.<sup>22</sup> The act of harming or hurting is Dravyahiṃsā i.e. external violence and the intention to hurt or to kill is Bhāvahiṃsā i.e. internal violence. There is a causal relation between Dravyahiṃsā and Bhāvahiṃsā. Generally, Dravyahiṃsā caused by entertaining impure or passionate thought activities such as anger, pride, deceit, greed, sorrow, fear,

sex-desire etc. An outer act of hurting others vitalities if proceeded by impure thought activity i.e. ill-will then it really becomes an act of violence. On the basis of dravya and bhāva hiṃsā we have four alternatives of violence (1) both intention and act of killing (2) only there is an intention of killing, not the act of killing. (3) act of killing minus intention of killing and (4) neither the act of killing and nor the will,<sup>23</sup> though apparently it seems an act of hurting.

In Jainism, violence not only involves the killing or causing harms to other beings but it is also related to our ownself. To hurt the vitalities of other beings is called para-hiṃsā, i.e. violence of others while to entertain impure thought activity or ill-will is the violence towards our ownself. Impure thought activity or ill-will injures the real nature of this soul by disturbing its equanimity. The evil thought activity vitiates the purity and equanimity of the soul hence called sva-hiṃsā i.e. violence of our ownself. This violence of our ownself is more than the violence of others, because the later may only be possible when former had taken place. Generally, we cannot kill or cause harm to others without impure thought activity or ill-will i.e. the violence towards others implies the violence of our ownself. Bhaktaparijñā mentions "killing of other beings is killing one's ownself and compassion for others is the compassion for one's ownself." Thus, will is the mother of activity. Ill-will causes sinful activity. The violence towards others can only be committed after committing violence towards one's ownself. Ācārāṅga says, "he who ignores or negates other beings, ignores or negates one's ownself. He whom you wish to kill or control or on whom you wish to inflict suffering is yourself."<sup>24</sup> We can not kill or harm other without killing our ownself i.e. without vitiating our equanimity, the real nature of ourself. It is the attachment and hatred which make violence possible. In the state of equanimity i.e. non-attachment and non-hatred commission of violence is an impossibility. Thus, passions necessarily lead to the violence of our ownself as well as to otherselves. Ācārya Amṛtacandra in his famous work Puruṣārthasiddhyupāya mentions "The absence of attachment and other passions is non-violence, while presence of these is violence. This is the essence of Jaina scriptures. There will be no violence even if vitalities are injured when a person is not moved by any kind of passions and is careful in his activity. But if one acts carelessly moved by the influence of passions, there is certainly a violence whether a living being is killed or not. Because a passionate person first

injures his ownself through the self. It does not matter whether there is subsequently an injury is caused to another being or not."<sup>25</sup> The will to injure and act of injuring, both constitute violence, but of these two, first is more vital, so far as the principle of bondage is concerned. Thus, in Jainism every activity of mind, body and speech infatuated with passions and carelessness is called violence and absence of violence is non-violence.

### Positive aspect of Non-violence

Further, we must be aware of the fact that in Jainism non-violence is not merely a negative concept i.e. not to kill; but it has positive meaning also as compassion and service to living beings. Once a question was asked to Mahāvira 'O Lord, one person is rendering his services to the needy persons while other is offering pūjā to you, of these two who is your real follower, Mahāvira answered 'first one is the real follower of mine, because he is following my teaching.'<sup>26</sup>

### Non-violence and War

Just as peace and non-violence are synonyms so are the war and violence. There can be no war without violence. One who is engaged in war is definitely engaged in violence. Though aggressive and unjust wars have been condemned by all the religions yet defensive wars are considered as moral and just. Judaism, Islam, Christianity and Hinduism all support those wars which are fought for a religious and just cause. Islam considers Jihad as a religious duty. In Hinduism Bhagavadgītā also supports war for the sake of just cause.

Now, we shall consider the position of Jainas in this regard. Jaina thinkers advocate non-resistance towards all the force whether used justly or unjustly. Jaina monks are totally prohibited for any resistance which involves violence. For Jainas, war is always immoral act, for it is always waged due to our attachment and involve violence : external as well as internal. In Jaina canons it is said "what is the use of fighting with others. If one wants to fight he should fight with himself because it is your passionate self which is to be conquered. One who conquers his ownself conquers four passions and five senses and ultimately conquers all the enemies."<sup>27</sup> All wars have their origin in passions and attachment and so generally speaking are all unjust. Jaina monks are not permitted to violent resistance even for the protection of their own life, but as an exceptional case if the very existence of Jaina order is in danger, they are permitted

even for the violent resistance. In Jaina canons we have the example of Ācārya Kālaka, who engaged himself in warfare against the king of Avantī for the rescue of his nun sister Sarasvatī.<sup>27</sup> But all that resistances of that nature are considered as an exception. So far as ..... as an moral act.

So far as the house-holders are concerned, they are allowed to involve in such wars, fought for the just cause. But it should be noted here that the war fought for the just cause must be a defensive one and not an offensive one. The aggressive wars fought by Jaina kings were never considered by Jaina thinkers as moral act.

It was Jainism that gave the idea of wars where in violence was not involved. This spirit may will be understood by the story of Bharat and Bāhubali; Bharat who wanted to be a Cakravartī King attacked Bāhubali who accept his sovereignty. Both were engaged in war, refused to when they were suggested for a non-violent method of war, both of them agreed to. In our age Mahatma Gandhi had demonstrated the way of passive resistance i.e. Satyāgraha.

Jainism sets its goal as the ideal of complete non-violence external as well as internal : The realisation of this ideal in the practical life is by no means easy. Non-violence is a spiritual ideal, fully realisable only in the spiritual plane. The real life of an individual is a physio-spiritual complex; at this level complete non-violence is not possible. According to Jaina thinkers the violence is of four kinds (i) deliberate (Sankalpī) or aggressive violence i.e. intentional killing (ii) protective violence i.e. the violence which takes place in saving the life of one's own or his fellow being or in order to make peace and ensure justice in the society (iii) Occupational i.e. violence taking place in doing agriculture or in running the factories and industries (iv) violence, is involved in performing the daily routine of a house-holder such as bathing, cooking, walking etc. The first form of violence must be shunned by all, because it relates to our mental proclivities. So far as the thoughts are concerned, a man is his own master. So it is obligatory for all to be non-violent in this sphere. From the behavioural point of view, deliberate violence is aggressive. It is neither necessary for self-defence nor for the living.

The Second form of violence is defensive taking place in the activity of defence. It becomes necessary for the security of one's life. External circumstances may compel a person to be a violent or to counter attack in defence of his own life or that of his companions or for the protection of his belongings. A person living in family is unable to

keep away completely from this type of violence because he is committed to the security of family members and their belongings. It will not be possible for him to resist non-violently with success. Only a man, unattached to his body and material objects, his heart free from malice, can protect his rights non-violently. A non-violent opposition only may be fruitful against an enemy with human heart.

So far as occupational violence is concerned everyone cannot shake it off. For so long as a person has to earn his livelihood and to seek fulfilment of his physical needs, deliberate violence of vegetable kingdom is unavoidable. In Jainism intentional violence to mobile animals by a house-holder has been forbidden even when it becomes necessary for the maintenance of life and occupation.

Undoubtedly one or other form of violence is inevitable in our life, but on this basis we can not take decision that the observance of non-violence is of no use in the present. Just as violence is inevitable in the world for living, non-

violence is also inevitable for the very existence of human race. So far as the existence of human society is concerned it depends on mutual co-operation, sacrifice of ones interest in the interest of his fellow-beings and regard for other's life. If above mentioned, elements are essential for our social life, how can we say that non-violence is not necessary for human life. Society does not stand on violence but on non-violence, not on fulfilment of self-interest but on sacrifice of self-interest, not accepting our own rights but in accepting the rights of others as our duty. Thus, we can say that the non-violence is an inevitable principle of the existence, for human society. At present we are living in age of nuclear weapons and due to this the existence of human race is in danger. At present it is only the observance of non-violence, which can save the human race. It is mutual credibility and the belief in the equality of human beings which can restore peace and harmony in human society.