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Non-violence in the Indian religious tradition.

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NON-VIOLENCE IN THE INDIAN RELIGIOUS TRADITION

by

John Foot

A Thesis

**Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
through the Department of Religious Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts at the
University of Windsor**

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1998

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NON-VIOLENCE IN THE INDIAN RELIGIOUS TRADITION

The purpose of this thesis is to trace the roots of non-violence from the Vedic Age, circa 3000 BCE to the present day. The emphasis is on the history and philosophy of the three main religions of India, Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. For the modern period significant stress will be placed on Mohandas Gandhi, the single most influential devotee of non-violence.

An investigation of the early culture of India, reveals a group of people living in the Indus Valley as sophisticated and as aware of the world as any other civilization during the same time period. The collections of the compositions of the Vedic poets, collectively known as the Vedas reflect the rich culture and ideas of the Vedic people. Roots of non-violence emerge in the earliest work, the Rig Veda, a great collection of hymns dating back to the second millennium BCE. An evolutionary process of the growth and development of non-violence occurs in the quintessential documents of the Vedas, the Upanishads. The development of monism matures in the Upanishads and is reflected in the non-violent way of life. Buddhism develops around the same time as Jainism in the sixth century BCE. Jainism represents the epitome of non-violence.

Following the discussion of each religious tradition of India the thesis considers the reasons for violence and the reasons for non-violence in an attempt to analyze the philosophy of non-violence.

The latter part of this work examines the life and evolution of Gandhi and his use of non-violence to mobilize the masses of India to gain independence from Britain. His work in India was continued by the saintly Vinoba Bhave and the pragmatic J.P. Narayan. In the west Gandhi's example inspired Martin Luther King Jr., to use Gandhi's techniques in breaking the status quo for the blacks of America.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to both of my parents. My father especially who was a life-long social advocate, and taught me the need to respect the dignity of the human person. At my graduation my mother said that he would have been so proud of me. I know that they both would be proud of this work.. Thank you Janice for all of your help and support.

A special thanks to my teacher and mentor Dr. Mahesh Mehta. I would also like to thank Dr. George Crowell,. Professor Howard Pawley for being my readers and Dr. Norman King for all his help over the years.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The 20th century has been the most productive century in terms of social progress, advancements in health, science, education and wealth. Increasing widespread violence has also made it the most destructive century ever.

Violence takes many forms. This chapter will discuss only a few of those forms.

There is violence toward animals, fish and birds in the wild, by hunters and abattoirs.

There is elemental violence directed at trees, water and nature in general. Reckless logging, clear cutting in the ancient forests is eroding the world's mountainsides and causing further problems for the environment. The cutting of large tracts of rainforest is out of control and affecting the production of the world's oxygen supply. Indiscriminate chemical dumping in the river systems are poisoning water supplies, and causing serious birth defects such as Minimata Disease.

There is individual criminal violence toward others in the form of rape, murder, and mass murder, as in the recent spate of school shootings in America.

There is violence against children. This takes many forms such as child labour in remote agricultural regions of Mexico, in Egyptian carpet factories, Asian shoe and textile plants and untold numbers of brothels. In health. In 1966, over 2 million deaths world wide could have been prevented in children under five by simple immunization.¹

There is the systemic violence of poverty. Gandhi said that this was the worst form of violence. In our seemingly affluent world, there are in excess of one and a third billion people living in serious poverty. Almost three-quarters are women who are unable to have the basic necessities of life, and in turn to provide for their children.²

There is institutional violence exercised by the military or police forces in non-democratic states such as Indonesia in East Timor, and China in Tienamin Square.

There is media violence by way of television and films that generate vast quantities of gratuitous violence.

There is corporate violence where people and natural resources are simply swept aside under the guise of progress. The giant James Bay project displaced a large portion of the resident native population, and interfered with traditional hunting grounds, and the migratory paths of many animals.

There is ethnic and tribal violence seen in the mass killings in Rwanda and in the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia.

There is the political violence carried out systematically by governments against their own people. Nazi Germany is of course the prime example but it continued with the likes of Stalin, the Shah of Iran followed by Khomeni, Pol Pot in Cambodia, and Pinochet in Chile.

There is the violence of warfare. So far, this century has generated 250 wars and almost 110 million related deaths. The number of civilian casualties has also increased dramatically, accounting for almost three-quarters of all war-related deaths in the 1980's.³

There is only one lasting alternative to violence, the way of non-violence. As there is a history of violence, so is there a history of non-violence.

I grew up in England, in a family where the virtue of non-violence was a prominent factor. At a very early age my father took me, and some of my siblings, on “Ban the Bomb” marches in London in the early 1950’s. Every Sunday I helped him deliver the “Daily Worker” in Hatfield where I grew up. In an effort to alleviate the housing shortage my father would organize “squats”, often at abandoned military buildings. He was responsible for finding housing for many people after the war. As a peace activist and compassionate man, he was a great influence on my life. This personal background helped me decide to go into the study of non-violence. As India is the home of the non-violent tradition it was only natural that I selected this topic for my thesis.

This thesis will trace that history of non-violence from its earliest roots in the Indian religious tradition and will explore the contribution of the three main religions of India on the development of non-violence. It will then show how this non-violent tradition manifested itself in India in Mahatma Gandhi, and by way of Gandhi reached Martin Luther King Jr., in the west. The thesis shows how the idea and practice of this rich religious tradition of India can contribute toward overcoming violence in the modern world.

It appears that Mahatma Gandhi is the bridge between the ancient and the modern, the east and the west. This is because Gandhi was a modern thinker who on one hand belonged to the ancient religious traditions of India and on the other was educated in the west and was well acquainted with the literature and culture of the west. He incorporated

the Indian ethical and spiritual principles and successfully applied them for the realistic purpose of ending British domination in India, and achieved freedom in a peaceful and amicable way.

The idea of non-violence is based on the concept that there is a mutuality among all human beings, that a certain relationship or bond exists. The great English poet John Donne wrote in the 16th Century, “No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent; a part of the main.” We are no longer isolated, insular beings but are living in a complex, interrelated world that is a single global entity.

Non-violence has always been an inherent part of human behaviour. It ensured the survival and functioning of human beings in their group situations such as a family, where close mutual support and co-operation is required, tribal community, or country. Non-violence is a fundamental principle: the essence of a moral and legal system which allows society to have built-in mechanisms for reduction and removal of violent conflicts. It is a pre-requisite for the continuation and development of a society. This has been recognized throughout the ages by all manner of thinkers. The great rulers of early India, such as Ashoka, knew that reconciliation and persuasion were far more effective in resolving conflicts than force.

Many thinkers rightly consider it is necessary to reject violence even if it is the only way to achieve social and political change. This way of thinking may be based on either an ethical or a religious principle “thou shalt not kill” or on a belief in the value of every living creature. Both principles conclude that human life is to be respected and that violence is simply immoral. Furthermore, political change based on violent coercion is not

lasting. For any change to be meaningful and lasting it must be brought about in a positive non-violent manner, with the consent of both parties.

There can be no economic stability or lasting prosperity in a violent environment. Levels of infrastructure from the municipal to the federal cannot function efficiently. Services such as roads, schools, hospitals, sanitation, water and other basic amenities of life are among the early failures in the states experiencing serious instability due to violence.

Every time we speak or act, we affect one another for better or for worse. When we relate to others with good intentions and good will, the results are positive. When we speak and act with bitterness or hatred the results are negative. The consequences are on all of us.

There are exceptional human beings who will never use force under any conditions. However there are circumstances where it is permissible, even necessary to use force. One example would be to protect one's own life or the life of another, especially that of a child, or weaker person. Other reasons might be to counteract a violent individual, or a group of people posing a serious threat, to the larger public. For public safety one might out of sheer necessity have to resort to required force. Sometimes it is impossible to avoid violent action. Situations do arise in our complex world where there is no choice but to use a counter offensive, even when it means harm may come to the innocent civilian population.

Against this overall background of violence. The fundamental principle is violence begets violence. Violence cannot be overcome with violence but can be assuaged by non-violence just as fire by water and hostility by good-will.

Now the thesis will explore the three ancient religions of India and trace their history and thoughts on non-violence. After the historical survey of these three traditions a chapter on the philosophy of non-violence deals with the rationale and theoretical justification of the principle of non-violence.

Coming to the modern period the most outstanding and influential exponent of non-violence is Mahatma Gandhi. This chapter covers Gandhi's program and teachings of non-violence. This chapter is followed by a discussion of his closest disciple and follower, the saintly Vinoba Bhave, who was considered his direct successor. He was the carrier of Gandhi's non-violent program into economic and agricultural reform in the villages of free India.

Then coming to the west is a chapter on Martin Luther King, the western counterpart of Gandhi. He implemented Gandhi's teaching and techniques for redressing discrimination and injustice against the black community in America. The chapter ends with King's concrete achievements in the area of civil rights and changing the attitude of people towards the black populace.

Endnotes Chapter 1

¹ Ruth Leger Sivard. World Military and Social Expenditures 1996 16th edition. (Washington: World Priorities, 1996) 5.

² Leger 30.

³ Leger 7.

Chapter 2

Hinduism

In this chapter I will deal with the history, growth and development of non-violence from the earliest known Indus Valley culture, to the Vedic Age. There is a general belief among Indian scholars, that the Indus Valley culture precedes the Aryan Vedic culture that came about 1500 BCE. The Indus Valley culture predates the Vedic culture and is placed in 2500-1500 BCE. It would be safe for the purpose of this thesis, to proceed on the basis of the currently accepted view of the priority of the Indus Valley culture, in relationship to the Vedic culture.

The earliest Indus Valley civilization and culture displayed a sense of unity and community in their design and amenities. The sense of unity extended to the animal world, as borne out by the depiction of animals on seals and motifs discovered in excavations. Cities were well thought out and carefully planned. They had a strong peripheral wall, a strong citadel, a public granary, and residential quarters for workers.¹ Main avenues were wide and laid out in a rectangular grid pattern. There are indications that street lighting existed. The city had an elaborate drainage system. There was a public well in each street. Almost every house had paved floors, courtyards and drains. Many homes had private wells and baths.²

The most notable, public building was the Great Bath in Harrapa. It was housed in a building 180 feet by 108 feet. The actual pool itself was 39 feet by 23 feet and 8 feet deep. On all sides are galleries and various rooms as well as a hot air bath. In Mohenjodaro, in a similar building there are Turkish baths³ as well as the same small rooms as in

Harrapa. They indicate the possibility of use for religious or ritual purposes. Although the purpose of the two great baths remains unknown, evidently there was some important, regular community use. Careful town-planning, adequate water supply and efficient drainage system, prove the existence of a group of people who recognized the importance of living together in some order and harmony.

The people of the Indus Valley displayed a profound reverence for animals. Evidence of this comes from the earliest archaeological finds, excavated at Harrapa and Mohenjo-daro, in the form of the steatite seals. The most famous, the Pashupati Seal, (Lord of the Animals) shows an important god who is a prototype of Shiva surrounded by various, carefully depicted, minutely detailed animal figures. There are four animals; an antelope at the base of a pedestal, (the other has been lost), a unicorn, a buffalo and a tiger.

Over 2,000 seals have been discovered in Indus sites so far. The seals were manufactured from steatite, faience, ivory and pottery. Inscriptions on the seals do not seem to have any connection with the figures on them, as the same animal figure is found on a variety of seals with completely different inscriptions.⁴ To date the inscriptions on these seals have not been deciphered.

The most common animal appears to be the unicorn or antelope, resembling a bull, but without a hump, and a single protruding horn shown in profile. In front of the unicorn is placed a curious object, the lower portion of which is a bowl-like receptacle, with an upper part resembling a

cage. Probably both the animal and the object, have a ceremonial significance connected with the principal deity of Mohenjo-daro. Other animals depicted are the short-horned bull, the Brahmani bull, the elephant, the tiger, the rhinoceros and the antelope. A flat-bottomed, low manger or trough appears on some seals, and it is seen only before wild animals. The short-horned bull, the buffalo, and the rhinoceros are very carefully and realistically portrayed. The tiger with an open mouth and protruding tongue sometimes gazes at a tree on whose branches a man is perched.⁵

A close relationship, intimacy and reverence to such animals are suggested by these seals.⁶ Their primary purpose was probably to mark ownership but they probably also served as amulets.⁷ Domesticated and wild animals were part of the Indus Valley life. Skeletal remains of buffalo, sheep, elephants, pigs, and camels have been found. The humped ox or Brahmani bull was represented on many seals. It appears to have been a sacred animal, as it is today. The cow was certainly known, although surprisingly there are no depictions. Excavated clay models show the lion, tiger, rhinoceros, monkey, dog and hare. Harrapa also knew of the domestic cat.⁸ This large assortment of animals and the domestic cat, speaks of a society that respected and enjoyed animals.

Although a staple part of the people's diet was wheat, oats, barley, rice, milk, fruit and vegetables, there is no doubt that animal flesh, along with fish and turtles was consumed. Burnt bones were found in the excavations of houses, lanes and streets, clearly indicating meat as part of the diet.⁹ This does not mean however that there were no

vegetarians in this society. The possibility existed that vegetarians and non vegetarians existed side by side then as they do today.¹⁰

Our present knowledge of the Indus Valley culture is based on archaeological remains. They were followed by the Vedic culture that left a rich mass of religious and philosophical literature collectively called the Vedas. It is this literature that became the definitive source of knowledge about the Vedic views and practices.

Vedic literature is made up of the four Vedas, namely the Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda, the Brahmanas or the sacrificial texts, the Aranyikas or the forest books and finally the Upanishads. The exact dates and origin of the four Vedas are unknown, but are widely accepted as being around 1500 BCE. The oldest, the Rigveda, is a collection of hymns directed mainly at the gods. It contains some remarkable roots of the idea of non-violence that existed in Vedic culture.

It is a well-accepted fact that animal sacrifices took place in Vedic society. Animals automatically acquired a sacrificial status due to their importance. Great emphasis was placed on the ritual itself. The animal that was to be sacrificed was not considered an animal, but a symbol of those powers that the sacrificial ritual stood for. It is important to take into consideration that these killings were not indiscriminate, but took place for ritual and sacrificial purposes. They were always performed with great reverence.

It is a fact that the Vedas place great emphasis on sacrificial ritual and at times they recommend the sacrifice of animals such as goats, oxen, and

horses . . . but the sacrifice of an animal is not really the killing of an animal. The ritual does not proceed with the understanding or intention that an animal is going to be killed. The animal to be sacrificed is not considered an animal; it is instead a symbol, a symbol of those powers for which the sacrificial ritual stands. ¹¹

There is no doubt that the people had a caring attitude towards animals. This is especially prevalent in the case of the cow. The cow has long been a sacred animal in Hinduism. In the Rig Veda the cow is referred to as Aghnya, not to be killed.¹² In the Rig Veda, the loving song of prayer is compared to the lowing of a cow for her calf.¹³ Another hymn addressed to the cow it is said, "Make our house happy with your pleasant lowings."¹⁴

Further reverence is noted in the Atharva Veda; "love one another as the cow loves the calf she has borne"¹⁵ The pastoral scene of a little boy walking home beside a calf, with the cattle streaming home is described in the Atharva Veda.

May there come to thee in the evening
the calf and the little boy
and cattle streaming along¹⁶

The cow was an economic necessity and a principal source of wealth. There are many quotes in the Rigveda that testify to this importance. A few of the original mantras

are quoted below.¹⁷

God gives the bovine wealth to man (8.4.16)

Good cows, who nourish all, are the wealth which
we should get. (91.162.22)

Cows are a source of happiness (8.49.9)

Cows give milk; this food gives us strength. Cows
are the fount of energy. (5.23.2)

Drink cows milk. Let everyone use it; it is the best
food. (1.53.4)

Obviously such an important animal deserved to be revered and to be protected. The emphasis thus shifted to non-killing and non-violence in the entire thinking and action of the early Indian society. Words were coined in Vedic Sanskrit to denote a cow as one who is not to be destroyed.

Aghnya - One who is not fit for killing

A-hi - Not to be killed

A-diti - Not to be cut into pieces."¹⁸

Early animal sacrifice was a way of life, always done for a specific purpose. It was not considered improper if it was done in a holy place with the right intentions.¹⁹

The Vedic culture placed great emphasis on concord, unity and harmony. There

was a strong sense of community, of belonging to each other, in personal and social relationships.

**Common be your prayer;
Common be your end;
Common be your purpose;
Common be your deliberation.**

**Common be your desires;
Unified be your hearts;
Unified be your intentions;
Perfect be the union amongst you.**

Rigveda X 191-3,4.

The concern for unity and harmony manifests itself positively in many hymns. The idea of unity through common understanding, is a powerful idea expressed throughout the Rigveda.

The Yajurveda states: may all beings look on each other with a friendly eye, may I do likewise and may we all look on each other with the eyes of a friend. (36:18)

Concern is clearly illustrated for pregnant women and unborn children in two hymns that are specifically for a safe pregnancy and birth and to protect the embryo.

**Let Vishnu prepare the womb; let Tvastr shape
the forms.**

**Let Prajapati shed the seed; let Dhatr place
the embryo in you...**

**Let Agni the killer of demons unite with this
prayer and expel from here the one whose name is
evil, who lies with disease upon your embryo,
your womb . . . ²⁰**

**In the marriage of Surya there is a blessing sought for the gods to bless the
husband and wife and "unite their hearts."**

**Stay here and do not separate. Enjoy your whole life span
playing with sons and grandsons and rejoicing in your own
home. Let Prajapati create progeny for us; let Aryaman
anoint us into old age. Free from evil signs, enter the world
of your husband. Be good luck for our two-legged creatures
and good luck for our four-legged creatures. Have no evil
eye; do not be a husband-killer. Be friendly to animals, good-
tempered and glowing with beauty . . . Let all the gods and**

the waters together anoint our two hearts together. Let
Matarisvan together with the Creator and together with her
who shows the way join the two of us together.

Rig Veda X-85,42-47

Without compassion in a society there is no charity and charity is a virtue that is well praised in the Rig Veda. A specific hymn is offered for those who make efforts to help the suffering of others.²¹ Hospitality was an essential part of Vedic times. The Rigveda states that the house of an inhospitable man is no home.²² A good householder should always share his food with the needy according to this ideal. ²³ "He is all sin who eats alone."²⁴

There was a great deal of emphasis placed on the truth. People prayed for truthful speech to guard them.²⁵ Their devotion to the truth shows a regard for morality, a building block of ahimsa. "I shall keep the vow of righteousness. Bless me with strength therefore. May successes attend to me. I enter from untruth to truth. I abandon untruth and accept truth."²⁶

The importance of unity between family members is emphasized in the Atharva Veda²⁷. A son must be obedient to his father; a woman must speak well to her husband; brothers and sisters are to be agreeable and speak to each other with good intentions.²⁸ Good relations were desired with all members of society.²⁹

Unquestionably the Vedas, especially the Rig Veda contain the elements that make up ahimsa. Great emphasis was placed on truth, righteousness, charity, compassion,

harmony, non hatred, good will, and a yearning for the safety and unity of loved ones. The great concern for unity and harmony in human relationships is a positive aspect of harmlessness. Harmony in human relationships presupposes non-injury in the community.

While there are no direct references to non-violence found in the Vedas, the writings very clearly bring out life affirming principles.³⁰ From within these texts the theory of Rita evolves as further movement towards non-violence. B.G. Gokhale explained:

the most significant concept developed in the Rigveda is that of rita, which apart from being the cosmic law is essentially a moral norm. It is truth, order and a host of other things. A constant awareness of the gods, prayers to them and performance of ritual in their honour, kindness, hospitality, love of man and detachment from the world of possessions comprise the aspects of the way of transcendence in the early Vedic literature.³¹

Rita was not to be taken for granted. In the natural world there is a natural order but in the human world it depends essentially upon human attitudes. Individuals have the responsibility for living together in harmony and co-operation. A benevolent world does not happen without these right human attitudes.

"It is the responsibility of the people as upholders of cosmic order to uphold life itself by holding back fear and ensuring confidence. Those who create this confidence in life through moral action and

profound identification with the lives of others are truly the givers of life." ³²

Rita must be cultivated and maintained by the way of life. The ethical impact of rita becomes apparent in the confidence and compassion that it began to generate in a society that recognized ahimsa in its way of life and expressed itself in the Upanishads.

The Upanishads are often referred to as the quintessential part of the Vedas. It however should not be said at the expense of earlier works, especially the Rigveda. The Upanishads are generally considered to have been composed around 600 BCE. Scholars consider them to have partially come about both as a revolt against animal sacrifices and priestly authority.

The word itself means to sit down near "upa-(sit) ni-(near) shad(down)". Those seeking further enlightenment of the philosophical speculation in the Vedic hymns sought out yogis and learned "sitting down near" to them.

The Upanishads tell us that the descendants of the people of the Rigveda now began to consider the ultimate truth, which lies behind the world of creation. For them this ultimate truth was the highest principle that manifests itself in creation and receives all things back at dissolution, Brahman. Within the individual self was the Atman.

"Fetch me the fruit of the banyan tree."

"Here is one, sir."

"Break it."

"I have broken it, sir."

"What do you see?"

"Very tiny seeds, sir."

"Break one."

"I have broken it sir."

"Now what do you see?"

"Nothing, sir."

"My son," the father said, "what you do not perceive is the essence, and in that essence the mighty banyan tree exists. Believe me, my son, in that essence is the Self of all that is. That is the True, that is the Self. And you are that Self, Svetaketu!"³³

From this story in the Chandogya Upanishad comes the phrase tat tvam asi, "you (the individual) are that (universal essence). These words quoted by the father to the son are the leading theme of the Upanishads.

The sage Yajnavalkya described the self as "not this, not this . . . it is incomprehensible, imperishable, . . . unattached, . . . unfettered, . . . it does not suffer, . . . it does not fail."³⁴ The goal during the period of the Rigveda was a safe long life on earth followed by a life in heaven with the gods. After recognition of the Brahman and the Atman, the highest goal became unity with the self.

Philosophical thinking of this nature affected the development of ahimsa. The word Ahimsa is found for the first time in the Chandogya Upanishad.

"Ath yat tapo danam arjavam ahimsa

satyavacanum ity ta asya daksinah.

Whatever penance, charity, sincerity, the desire
not to do harm and truthfulness are, these are
his contributions."

Ahimsa is now added to the virtues first found and intimated in the Rigveda. Ahimsa sarvabhutani, no injury to any being became one of the duties of the householder. Characteristics of a religious man were to include penance, charity, honesty, non-violence and truthfulness.³⁵

Reaction against unnecessary animal killing is found in the Chandogya Upanishad. For the first time there is a clear statement that ritual sacrifice of animals is permitted nowhere but in a sacred spot³⁶ and because of this, new value was attached to animal life.

The historian D.D. Kosambi, put forward a pragmatic reason for the slowing down of animal sacrifices. As agriculture stabilised it simply became uneconomical to continue to indulge in ritual animal slaughter.³⁷

Another Upanishad includes non-violence and truthfulness among the most important virtues of Sattvika guna. The ethical behaviour of a Yogi is outlined and includes among other things, non-violence, truthfulness, non stealing, celibacy, and kindness.³⁸ It becomes apparent in the Upanishads, that a non-violent society is emerging, emphasizing virtues of compassion, self-control, kindness and the practice of non injury to all living beings.

There was a belief that good behaviour and right actions were rewarded; that one became good by good action and bad by bad action. Non-violence became a stronger virtue in the life of the people as they sought union of the atman with Brahman. In the final verse of the Chandogya Upanishad it says:

He who concentrates all his senses in the self, he who is harmless towards all creatures except at holy places, he who behaves thus throughout his life, reaches the Brahman world, does not return hither again, yea, he does not return hither again.³⁹

The synthesis of karma with rebirth, had a great influence in the development of non-violence. The seeds of karma were sown during this period. Both men and the gods were subject to karma. It was a subtle power attached to the individual. The present condition of the individual, is influenced by all past actions and present actions will affect the future for that same individual. An offence or bad action results from violation of the moral code, a break from truth, harmony and right. Living in harmony, offering prayers and sacrifices was the expected righteous behaviour. Duty was owed to not only those in your community, but to humanity in general.⁴⁰ Offence against a friend or stranger was considered an agras, a sin.

People were anxious to enjoy life to its fullest and the pleasures of this world were apparent to them. The Vedic hymns are full of entreaties for food, drink, wealth, power

and a long healthy life. Herein lies one more building block of the propensity towards a non-violent philosophy and way of life -the potential for the recognition of karma. It is not specifically mentioned in the Rig Veda although there is the awareness that a person's conduct in this world will determine their life after death.⁴¹

Karma is mentioned in the Upanishads. The Brhadaranyaka Upanishad, one of the oldest states that

"as man lives, so he becomes. He who has done good is born again as a being having good tendencies, and he who has done evil as a being with evil tendencies . . . according to the performance of his action is his destiny." ⁴²

This principle eventually became present in every form of the Hindu tradition, including Buddhism and Jainism. The foundation was laid out in Upanishadic philosophy. Unlike early Vedic beliefs where it was the more elite who were exposed and influenced to the doctrines of the day, the everyday person became exposed to the new concerns. The world view of non-violence was continuing to develop.

Man undoubtedly considered a new relationship with the animals in his society. Awareness and evolution of reincarnation and soul transmigration were clearly mentioned in the Upanishads. This undoubtedly played a further significant role in the emphasis on non-violence and the norms of moral standards. Animal sacrifices would become less and less palatable as time went on and these new norms became entrenched.

The most important principle that had now developed was that the sacredness of all life, no matter how insignificant, was recognized. It was now recognized and accepted that we are all one, and in harming others we are harming ourselves. Here one finds the truth of non-violence. The Upanishads contributed greatly to the tradition of non-violence in an extremely positive sense and to the interpretation of human beings as active participants in a newly understood world.

A fundamental principle of the Upanishads is the nature of truth. There is a respect for truth that implies a reverence for principles and standards. In many cases in the Upanishad's truth, is often accompanied by non-violence as another virtue. Some philosophers will suggest that there is a close relationship between non-violence and truth, because truth is basic to non-violence. Truth, in its broadest sense means not only the spoken word but our inner thoughts, our actions, our beliefs and whether or not we live up to them. One's actions must live up to their words.

In the Upanishads truth became a duty as important as that of every other espoused virtue. There was an emphasis on justice and sympathy to others. In the Upanishads it was one of the underlying and central themes to the evolving moral system.

The Dharmashastras stressed the importance of ethical behaviour. The most influential of these was Manusmṛiti. The Laws of Manu give recognition to the concept of ahimsa. Compiled between 200 BCE and 200 CE, they established the public norms of classical Hindu society.⁴³ Manu appears to prefer himsa (violence) with animals, as being a necessary exception. It is acceptable only in sacrificial tradition. Manu recognizes that there is a natural proclivity in all human beings towards excessive drinking, eating meat

and sex, but declares that there is greater merit in abstention.

56. There is no sin in eating meat, in (drinking) spirituous liquor, and in carnal intercourse, for that is the natural way of created beings, but abstention brings great rewards. Manu.⁴⁴

There is still acknowledgement of animal sacrifice under the right circumstances and future punishment for those who kill without reason.

38. As many hairs as the slain beast has, so often indeed will he who killed it without (lawful) reason suffer violent death in future births.

39. Svayambhu (the Self-existent) himself created animals for the sake of sacrifices; sacrifices (have been instituted) for the good of the whole (world); hence the slaughtering (of beasts) for sacrifices is not slaughtering (in the ordinary sense of the word).

43. A twice born man of virtuous disposition must never...cause an injury (to any creature) which is not sanctioned by the Veda.

46. He who does not seek to cause the sufferings ... to living creatures... obtains endless bliss.⁴⁵

There are strong pronouncements on the taking and eating of meat.

48. Meat can never be obtained without injury to living creatures, and injury to sentient beings is detrimental to (the attainment of) heavenly bliss; let him therefore shun (the use of) meat.

50. He who ... does not eat meat ... will not be tormented by diseases.

52. There is no greater sinner than that who ... seeks to increase (the bulk of) his own flesh by the flesh of other (beings).⁴⁶

Non-violence was declared to be the supreme ingredient of dharma in the Mahabharata, even higher than that of celibacy. The Mahabharata⁴⁷ is an epic tale that recounts the story of families and people, that is symbolic of life and death that touches all of mankind. The totality of life is seen in this epic. A verse in the Mahabharata states that everything in the Mahabharata is elsewhere. What is not there is nowhere.⁴⁸

The virtues that were nurtured in the Vedas and further developed in the Upanishads become fully rooted in this work; the roots of dharma; the ten highest ethical values: austerity, learning, self-sacrifice, faith, forbearance, sacrificial ceremony, purity of emotions and pity, truth and self-control. Non-injury to all other beings are considered to be the eternal duty of all men.⁴⁹

Ahimsa is extolled in the Mahabharata:

Ahimsa paramo dharma sarvaprambhutam vara.

tasmat pranabhutat ma himsyat brahmanaat kvacit.

(Non-injury is the highest virtue of all living beings; hence a Brahmin should not kill a living being).

-Adiparvam, 11,13-14

Ahimsa sarvabhutesu dharman jayayastaram viduh.

(Non-injury towards all living beings is said to be the greatest virtue).

-Dronaparvam, 192.38

Ahimsa sarvabhutebhyo dharmebyo jyayasi mata.

(Non-killing towards all living creatures is considered to be the greatest of all virtues).

-Shantiparvam, 256-6

Ahimsa parmodharmas tatha himsa param tapah ahimsa param satyam yato dharma pravartate.

(Ahimsa is the highest of virtues, it is the highest penance, it is the greatest truth, and is the bliss of dharma).

-Anusasanparvam, 115.25

The meat of other animals is like the flesh of one's son. That foolish person, stupefied by folly, who eats meat, is regarded as the vilest of human beings.

Ahimsa is the highest dharma. Ahimsa is the best austerity (tapas).
Ahimsa is the greatest gift. Ahimsa is the highest self control.
Ahimsa is the greatest sacrifice. Ahimsa is the highest power.
Ahimsa is the highest friend. Ahimsa is the highest truth. Ahimsa is
the highest teaching.

MahabharataXII:116:37-41

The awareness that harming others harms oneself is fully rooted in the Mahabharata; "treat the others as if it were one's own self and hence adopt non-violent behaviour." (XIII.II4)

"In the Mahabharata, there are references saying that men indulging in killing living beings (prani-himsa) deserve to go to hell. (MAP,23.69) The merits of other penances is destroyed if one practices Himsa (MSP,192.17) Not only this but actions done with Himsa kills faith (sradda) and faith being destroyed, it ruins them. (MSP 264.6) One should never do that to another which one considered undesirable (pratikula) for oneself (atman)(MAP,113.8)"⁵⁰

Codes of discipline were laid down regarding violent action. Certain conditions had to exist for force of any kind to be used. In battle there was a strict ethical code. War was permitted only when all other means of conciliation had failed. Force was to be used

only for the preservation of righteousness. When engaged in war a king had to be fair when fighting. (MSP XCVI) If he was not fair and honest, he automatically associated himself with himsa. Punishment of any subjects or enemies was only for the purpose of maintaining righteousness. The sin that was committed in the slaughter or punishment for the good of the many, would be destroyed by penance and charity. (MSP, XCVII,3-8)⁵¹

There are many stories in the Mahabharata that were used to explain ahimsa. A king named Sanaka, had a hundred wives but only one son. He wanted one hundred sons and would do anything to fulfil that desire. A Brahman suggested that he should sacrifice his only son, Janata, and let the queens smell the smoke of the sacrifice. In turn this would yield him one hundred sons being born, with Janata, being the eldest born to his former mother. The king agreed but the mothers cried out to stop. The Brahman was indifferent and sacrificed him for the desire of the king. The mothers smelled the smoke, and in time one hundred sons were born, with Janata, reborn to his former mother.

In due course both the king and Brahman died. The king saw the Brahman being roasted on a fire in hell. The Brahman told him that it was the result of what he did for the king, the result of being indifferent to all the motherly feelings and caring nothing for the cruelty inflicted upon Janata. Even though the king did not care how he acquired a hundred sons, the Brahman should have used good, rather than evil means to attain the end. He concluded that he who injures innocent people, go to hell and that these tendencies have to be eradicated from the human heart. (MVP,CXXVII, 15.28; CXXIX, 2-12)⁵²

Another story tells of a hermitage that was taken over by escaping thieves who

were hiding from soldiers. A sage who had taken a vow of silence was suspected of complicity. The soldiers put him on a sula, a long pointed nail along with some of the thieves. He did not die in spite of the fact that he was not given any food and continued to practice austere penance. One day he enquired of Dharma why he was being made to suffer such punishment. Dharma replied that a little insect was once killed by him with a blade of grass and that this was the consequence of that action. Injury done to others, eventually results in injury to ourselves. (MVP. CXXVIII, 15.28; CXXIX 2.12)⁵³

Bhisma tells the tale of Jajali and Tuladhara.

Jajali, a Brahamana, came to Tuladhara, a trader, and asked him the reason of having such stability of understanding in spite of being a trader. Tuladhara replied that morality consisted of universal friendliness and beneficence to all creatures. The highest form of morality consisted in a living that is based upon total harmlessness towards all creatures. Only he who is imbued with morality or righteousness who is always engaged in the good of all in thought, word and deed. Brahma is attained by that person who does not behave sinfully towards any being in any form. He, who inspires fearlessness in all, acquires a state in which there is no fear. He, who is purged of all desires of injuring others, acquires the merit of righteousness. He, who on his part assures fearlessness to all, acquires the merit of all

sacrifices and ultimately acquires fearlessness for himself. There is no duty superior to the duty of not injuring other creatures. Of all the gifts, the promise of harmlessness to all creatures is the greatest (MSP,CCLXVIII,5,6,9,17,18,25,30,31).

Tuladhara's words of wisdom left Jajali a wiser man so much so that he took it to be a sin to fly off the birds who came and sat on his head. He even allowed them to build nests in the coils of his hair. Jajali did not stir so as not to injure them (MSP, CCLXVII, 15.37) Tuladhara said, "See, many birds are stirring in the sky. Amongst them are those who were brought up on your head. Those birds, treated affectionately by you, are showing love for you who is their father. All acts, that are not injurious to any creature, bear good fruits here and hereafter. Those acts that injure others destroy faith and bring ruin on the destroyer (MSP,CCLXX,6). Ahimsa must be followed by every means within the power of a man. One who has a following and one who has riches, if adopt the virtue of Ahimsa, is sure to attain prosperity and heaven (MSP,CCLXVII,27). All the gods live in every creature who has five senses (MSP,CCLXVII,42). Hence to injure any human being is to injure God himself.⁵⁴

The Bhagavad Gita, written between the fifth and second centuries BCE has had

great impact on the doctrine of non-violence. Gandhi, based much of his non-violent doctrines on it. Robert Oppenheimer, quoted from it when he witnessed the first atomic explosion. "I am become death the shatterer of worlds."

There are many contradictory speculations about the Gita. It is a mistake to consider in any way that the Gita is a justification for war. Nothing could be further from the truth. The whole theme of the Gita is the emphasis on action and duty; the philosophy of karma yoga, the affirmation of life. Man cannot survive without acting, without performing his duty. There is in fact a correlation in philosophy between the Rig Veda and The Gita. In the Rig Veda it may be that animal sacrifices are demanded, yet if they are performed according to the necessary rituals for the betterment of the individual and advancement of society, then one's duty is merely being performed. So it is in the Gita.

Just prior to the start of a great battle, the great military leader Arjuna is hesitant to engage in war. It is a civil war that will see members of his family killed, possibly by himself. His chariot driver Krishna, who is really the incarnation of Vishnu, tells him to reconsider his situation. Not only is it his duty to fight, but if he does not, he will be condemned to repeat this situation in his next life, which he will be condemned to for failing to do his dharm, his duty. Regardless of the consequences, the loss of life whether it is necessary or unnecessary, one is bound by duty to fight, precisely because society as a whole will be better off for the defeat of the enemy.

The emphasis is on selfless action. Any action that is performed on behalf of a cause, especially a noble one must be done without any thought of reward in this life. Krishna, explained to Arjuna that if he could understand and follow the action of karma

yoga, then he would break free from the cravings that shackled his actions. Every action taken with one ideal in mind, the eventual re-unification with the Supreme Being. All the worldly desires and rewards for action have to be forgotten, be denied. No pleasure, or gain can be remotely considered, for if it is, there can be no good karma for that person and they will remain chained to the cycle.

It did not matter in the final analysis whether or not Arjuna won or lost, what mattered was that the action was taken, that duty was followed. By virtue of the practice of karma yoga, one is eventually released from samsara, the never-ending cycle of death and re-birth.

Of the six, major philosophical systems of India, Sankhya is probably the oldest. It occupies an important place in non violence as it constitutes the philosophical source of Buddhism and Jainism. There is an emphasis on Yoga which includes self-discipline and non-violence. There are interdictions in the Sankhyakarika against the killing of animals which it considers sinful. As always there are exceptions for animal sacrifices but the overall thought is that even this can lead to an unfavourable situation for the individual.⁵⁵

The Yoga system of philosophy includes non-violence as its chief yama or restraint. It was a virtue to be cultivated without exception. In the Yoga-sutra of Patanjali, ahimsa was the supreme virtue that was to be practiced in an absolute form with no exceptions. The most significant element in this approach to non-violence was that was not simply treating the killing of animals as a bad act but as a supreme virtue and moral quality which led towards salvation.

A more modern influential writing, often neglected was the Tiru-Kural written

around 200 CE It is a work consisting of 1330 maxims that is unequivocally life-affirming and lays great emphasis on non-violence. It is firm in its statements on the eating of meat and avoidance of killing.

verse 251

How can he practice true compassion

Who eats the flesh of animals to fatten his own flesh?

verse 254

If you ask, "What is kindness and what is unkind?"

It is not killing and killing. Thus, eating flesh is never virtuous.

verse 255

Life is perpetuated by not eating meat.

The clenched jaws of hell hold those who do.

verse 321

What is virtuous conduct? It is never destroying life,

For killing leads to every other sin

verse 324

What is the good way? It is the path that reflects on

How it may avoid killing any living creature.

verse 327

Refrain from taking precious life from any living being,

Even to save your own life.

In this chapter I have discussed the growth of non-violence starting with its early, personal understanding in the lives of the Indus Valley people, moving to the collective way of life of the people of the Vedas. A greater movement towards non-violence and rejection of sacrificial killing emerged more fully in the Upanishads. They paved the way for much of the future thinking regarding the sacredness of life of all living beings.

Each new writing helped to bring about an additional advancement, no matter how small in the growth of non-violence. Sections of the epics devote many chapters to convey its importance. In later works such as the Yoga-sutras of Patanjali it forms the cornerstone of the philosophical thinking.

Endnotes Chapter 2

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³ Majumdar 178.

⁴ Majumdar 186.

⁵ Majumdar 187.

⁶ Christopher Key Chapple, Nonviolence to Animals, Earth, and Self in Asian Traditions (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993) 7.

⁷ A.L. Basham, The Wonder That Was India (New York: Grove Press, 1959) 19.

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¹¹ Basant K.Lal, Hindu Perspectives on the Use of Animals n.d. n.p. 201.

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¹³ Rig Veda VIII 95.1.

¹⁴ A.C.Das, Hymns from the Rigveda 13.

¹⁵ Atharva Veda, III.30

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¹⁷ Prabhakar Machwe, Cow In Indian Tradition n.p. n.d. 160.

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¹⁹ Unithan and Singh 33.

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- ²⁰ R.V 10-184 and R.V. 10-162.
- ²¹ R.V 1.41.8-9.
- ²² R.V.X 117.4
- ²³ A.C. Das, Hymns From the Rigveda.
- ²⁴ R.V. X.117.6.
- ²⁵ Ghosh, 37 R.V.X.37.2.
- ²⁶ Y.V. 1.5 Ghosh 35.
- ²⁷ A.V.III, 30,3,4,5,6.
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- ²⁹ A.V.XIX 62.1.
- ³⁰ Unithan and Singh 31.
- ³¹ B.G.Gokhale. Indian Thought Through the Ages. (Bombay Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1961) 200.
- ³² Katherine K. Young , Hindu Bioethics 15.
- ³³ Basham 251.
- ³⁴ Basham 251-252.
- ³⁵ Unithan and Singh 34.
- ³⁶ Unithan and Singh 34.
- ³⁷ Unithan and Singh 77.
- ³⁸ Unithan and Singh 34.
- ³⁹ O.P. Jaggi, Religion, Practice and Science of Non-Violence (New Delhi: Munshiram Manohariat Publishers Pvt. Ltd, 1974) 3.
- ⁴⁰ Majumdar 385.
- ⁴¹ Majumdar 386.

⁴² Margaret Stutley, Hinduism, The Eternal Law (Northamptonshire: Aquarian Press, 1989) 29.

⁴³ Huston Smith, The World's Religions (San Francisco: Harper, 1991) 132-133.

⁴⁴ Max Mueller Ed. The Sacred Books of the East, vol. xxv 176.

⁴⁵ Mueller 176.

⁴⁶ Mueller 177.

⁴⁷ Scholars date the Mahabharata between 200 BCE and 200 CE.

⁴⁸ Chapple 75.

⁴⁹ Unithan and Singh 32.

⁵⁰ Ghosh 47.

⁵¹ Ghosh 47-48.

⁵² Ghosh 48-49.

⁵³ Ghosh 49.

⁵⁴ Ghosh 53.

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Chapter 3

Buddhism

In this chapter I will discuss Buddhism, its development, its influence on non-violence and the influence of non-violence on Buddhism. In the sixth century BCE there was an upheaval of ideas that led to new philosophical thought. Freedom of religious speculation which had been brought about by the Upanishads inspired a class of wandering ascetics, who were free from existing religious ideas and practices. The ritualism of the Vedic religion triggered a reaction that resulted in an atheistic movement and a monotheistic movement. Of the new religious sects, four played an important part: Jainism, Buddhism, Vaishnavism and Shaivism. Buddhism developed a philosophy and a code of conduct that was inspired by non-Brahmanical and renunciatory ideals.¹

Buddhism rebelled absolutely against the Brahmanical custom of animal sacrifice. The Pali canon expressed outrage over the violence against animals that was perpetrated by this way of life. Buddhism recognized the fundamental, inter-relatedness and harmony of all life. The Buddhist canon recognizes ahimsa as the highest dictum in its pattern of ethical conduct.²

There are no authentic accounts of the life of the Buddha. The first account of his life was written down about 55 years after his death. He lived from 563 to 483 BCE. Many stories and legends surround both his birth and his life. There are facts about him that are reasonably certain. The son of the chief of the Shakya clan, he was named Siddhartha. His family name was Gautama, by which he is commonly referred to in Buddhist literature.. His

family lived in Nepal, close to the Indian border. He became an ascetic and taught a new doctrine that attracted numerous followers. At the age of 35 he found enlightenment. After 45 years of teaching he died at the age of eighty.³

He contemplated the cause of sorrow and achieved insight why the world was full of suffering (dukkha) and unhappiness and what had to be done to overcome it. Dukkha was due to craving for individual gratification of desire; it could only be stopped by stopping the craving.

The chief issue that confronts Buddhism is the redemption of humanity from the cycle of rebirth. The ultimate goal is Nirvana. Nirvana is the spiritual destiny of a follower. When this goal is reached one has arrived at the “indescribable state of permanent nonexistence and supreme bliss.”⁴

Buddhism preaches a middle path for this liberation, avoiding extreme asceticism and sensual pleasures of worldly life. The middle path for this deliverance was to recognize the Four Noble Truths and to follow the Eightfold Path.

The Four Noble Truths

1. All existence is suffering (dukkha)
2. All suffering is caused by craving.
3. All suffering can be ended.
4. The way to end suffering is by practicing the noble eightfold path.

The Eightfold Path

1. Right Understanding

2. Right Thought
3. Right Speech
4. Right Action
5. Right Livelihood
6. Right Effort
7. Right Mindfulness
8. Right Concentration

Taken together the eight-fold path reflects the ethic of harmlessness. Buddhism is well known as a religion which professes peace and non-violence as the cardinal virtues. There are five precepts that a Buddhist seeks to follow. The first is not to destroy, cause to be destroyed, or to sanction the destruction of any living being. The other vows are to abstain from stealing, to abstain from harmful sexual behaviour, to abstain from lying and to abstain from intoxicants. It is in the first precept that the Buddhist recognizes their close relationship with all living creatures. To harm any living creature would ultimately harm oneself.

The Buddha wanted to eliminate the suffering of all living beings. There was no question of ever harming any person or animal. Even though animal sacrifices were still being practiced at this time, the Buddhists did not favour the killing of animals for ritual purposes. Buddhism evolved with the basic premise of the well-being of all. The concept of universal well-being leads naturally to ahimsa. The maturation of 2000 years of reflection on non-violence is realized in Buddhism.⁵

The Buddhists were against certain brahmanic beliefs. They rejected the belief of union

with Brahman by means of sacrifices as "misleading and baseless." There was harsh criticism of the belief that any virtue could be obtained by animal sacrifice. The early Buddhists accepted the Upanashadic theory of karma.⁶

It is interesting that Buddhists are not necessarily vegetarians, although in the Chinese monastic tradition they are.⁷ Meat eating is not considered killing. It is not forbidden in any canonical writings of Buddhism. In the Lankavatara Sutra, a strong position is taken in favour of vegetarianism. Buddha prohibited the killing of animals for meals, but allowed meat eating if the monk was not the cause of the animal being killed. He forbade the monks to beg for alms at any house where they knew meat was being cooked. It can be said that there was great stress on non-violence in early Buddhism.

Buddha did not specifically prohibit meat eating by his followers. He specifically rejected a suggestion from Devadatta⁸ to do so. Buddha did prohibit eating of flesh of any animal that was "seen, heard or suspected" to have been specifically killed for the benefit of a monk (Jivaka Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya 55).⁹

This middle path approach to meat eating can be understood by the fact that there were not really any Buddhists at this time, but rather followers of the Buddha, who were simply mendicants. People offered them alms out of respect and did not consider whether or not they were violating a teaching. Food of animals was to be graciously accepted as long as it was not specially prepared for the monk. To refuse an offering could be considered an offence against hospitality and would deprive the householder of an opportunity to gain merit. The animal was already dead and the monk could not benefit the animal in any way by refusal. Monastic

discipline would be undermined if the monks were able to pick and choose their food. In fact in order that a monk should not become attached to food, he was bidden to eat everything that is in his bowl. As an example of this discipline a monk known as Pindola, one day calmly ate the thumb of a leper that had fallen off into his begging bowl.¹⁰

Conze's opinion is that the continued emphasis on non-violence to any living being was a reaction to the increased violence of the time. This violence that affected human relationships was a result of the development of bronze and iron.

There was a backlash against the massacres which resulted from tribal and princely warfare; against the ritual slaughter of animals which were part of the Vedic sacrifices, and to some extent against the cruelty which peasants committed to the animals.¹¹

An indication of the early awareness of ahimsa is revealed in the complaints that were made by some people during the rainy season. The monks tended to travel in large groups and especially during the rainy season, plant life and small living beings would be crushed under foot. Buddha stopped them from travelling during this period.

Buddha said that sacrifice of animals was neither desirable nor necessary. Offerings could just as easily be made with gifts of food or personal goods. Buddhists also recognized the importance of cattle. Cows were the wealth of the people and should not be slaughtered. They did not hurt anybody and made an important contribution with their milk. They came from a long tradition of being recognised as an important part of society.¹²

There was a belief that people could be reborn as animals. In Buddhist texts they were shown to be capable of meritorious behaviour. In one story of a previous incarnation, the

Buddha in the form of a deer came upon a pregnant doe that was to be sacrificed. He offered up his own life to save that of the doe.

In some Buddhist literature animals sacrificed their lives for humans. One story tells of an elephant throwing itself off a rock in order for stranded travellers to survive. In another, a rabbit builds a fire for a brahman and then throws itself into the fire so that the brahman may eat. The brahman is the god Indra in disguise, and as a reward places the figure of a rabbit in the moon.

There were stories where humans offered themselves for food to animals. A Buddhist threw himself before a hungry tigress in order that she would be able to feed her starving cubs.¹³

There is a Jataka tale that points out the importance of ahimsa and compassion. It is also a clear indictment of animal sacrifice. A goat is led to a temple for to be sacrificed. As the brahman was about to sacrifice the goat it first laughed then cried. The brahman asked why he did this. The goat replied that he just realized that this was the last of 500 rebirths as a goat. In his next rebirth he would return as a human. The reason for his cry was out of compassion for the brahman, because 500 births ago he was a brahman who sacrificed a goat. If the brahman killed him, he would suffer the same fate as the goat. The unnerved brahman freed the goat who trotted away and became human. The brahman was spared the same fate because of the goats compassion.¹⁴

There is a strong belief in Buddhism, in the kinship of everything that lives, which is reinforced by the belief in reincarnation. A human being could one day be reborn as an animal,

or even an insect, depending on one's karma. By treating a living being badly, one could potentially be harming one's own parent or some other loved one.

The Buddha's teaching of non-violence rests upon three cardinal premises. First is that redemption can only be personal and individual. Second is that the feeling of compassion is the source of spiritual transcendence which leads to sympathetic participation in the sufferings of others. Third is that interference, even in ethical actions can multiply misery and suffering. Therefore the principle of life-negation should be the guiding ethic of life. Therefore the emphasis is on the subjective recognition of the ethics of non-violence.¹⁵

Buddhism preaches a positive concept of non-violence and rules are laid down for householders as well as monks. "He must kill no living creature ... pursue a virtuous and righteous calling."¹⁶ A monk is taught to look at the whole universe with kindness, love, friendship and sympathy. "Our tempers must remain unruffled. No evil sound shall issue from our lips, we will remain friendly and sympathetic, in a temper of loving kindness, without secret malice and we will irradiate the whole world with broad, deep, unlimited feeling free from wrath and rancour."¹⁷

In the course of time, Buddhism underwent many transformations but maintained the same fundamental values. As it spread throughout the area, the ethics in Buddhism became even stronger. With the help of state support non-violence became part of the social and cultural life of society.

During the reign of Ashoka (273-232 BCE.) the ethics associated with non-violence became state policy. He renounced war as a means of settling political issues and substituted a

policy of dharma vijaya, victory through morality. In one of his many edicts he prohibited animal sacrifices. He did not prohibit the killing of animals for food nor did he prohibit capital punishment for serious crimes, but nevertheless the advancement of ahimsa during his reign was extraordinary. Some scholars find similarity between the dharma shastras and the ethical edicts of Ashoka. ¹⁸

In spite of a commitment to non-violence, there remained the assumption that punishment for crime was necessary. Gautama is asked by an officer who knows of his non-violent position, about criminals. Should they be punished? He replies that they should be punished, and that this does not contradict the teaching of non-violence. The offender in committing the violent act, brings the violence of the punishment upon himself. In no way is the executioner held responsible. This position allowed the law of the land to be compatible with the ethic of non-violence. ¹⁹

Non-Violence is at the core of the Buddha's denunciation of war. The major ideas pertaining to war and its evil consequences are formulated in two significant contexts. The first context is the monastic order and its relationship to the violent elements of the state machinery. The second context is the explicit political philosophy of pacifism as an active ethical principle of state both in respect to its internal administration and external relationship to other political entities. It may even be argued that in Buddha's teachings one finds the first rudiments of a political philosophy

that attempts to transform the state into an ethical category. It is this perspective that distinguishes the Buddhist view of the state from the Hindu conception as present in the Arthashastra and Mahabharata.²⁰

The idea of war was abhorrent to Buddha and his followers. It was considered an act of degradation and one that defiled “spiritual progress.”²¹ Talk concerning legends, past glories, gossip, anything that even alluded to war was something that did not contribute to advancement of an adherent trying to reach Nirvana. No monk was allowed to engage in warfare of any kind. “The third Parajika rule specifically dealt with this situation by clearly stipulating that any association with the deprivation of life was an unpardonable offence.”²²

As well as pronouncements on war, early Buddhist canons make significant statements on internal and external violence by the state. In the Diggha Nikaya, there is a story about King Mahavijita. He had acquired great tracts of territory and wealth through his military might. In spite of this, violence continued in his kingdom. There was a great deal of internal strife and dissension. A wise brahman gave counsel to the king:

It might be that your majesty would think the revolt of the brigands could be suppressed by means of executions, imprisonment, confiscations, threats or banishment. However, this revolt of the brigands will not be suppressed perfectly in that way. Those who survive the killings will afterwards harass the King’s country. However, depending on the

following policy this revolt of the brigands will be suppressed perfectly:
Now, let His Majesty the king grant seed and fodder to those in his country who take up agriculture and cattle breeding. Let His Majesty grant capital to those who undertake commerce. Let His Majesty dispense wages and food to those in his country who undertake the royal service. Those people, being intent on their own work, will not harass the King's country and at the same time there will be a great accumulation for the King. Through the country remaining secure and without oppression or subversion I think men will live with open houses, glad and rejoicing, making their children dance.²³

(Diggha Nikaya 5)

The brahman is offering counsel that is very different to the traditional way of dealing with dissension. Violence is "self-defeating and destructive." Violence in any degree tends to generate more violence, usually to a greater degree. More violence will not contain a rebellion, only justice and moderation will. "The more unjust the state, the greater the violence." If the state resorts to the use of more violence then it is eventually countered with more violence from its subjects.²⁴

Emphasis on non-violence continued to mature. In later years, Harsha, (606-647 CE.) also a convert to Buddhism, introduced policies of non-violence as official state policy. He even went so far as to have the killing of all animals prohibited.

Ahimsa is one of the most important concepts in Buddhism, although there are very few direct uses of the word. The word ahimsa does not appear in Tri Pitaka literature, but there is a similar term, Panatipata virati. Panatipata is a conjunction of three words- Pana+Ati+Pata. Pana means all living beings, Ati is knowingly or forcibly and Pata means to deprive of life - to deliberately deprive a living being of life. Virati means to refrain from this.²⁵

Harming one by mind or words, not just by physical means, is classified as violence by Buddhists. In order to be truly non-violent one must not harm others even by thought. The rationale behind this is that when a person thinks of harming another, one disturbs oneself, forfeits their peace of mind and is in a way, violent to oneself. According to Buddha, when one's mind is not occupied with desirable actions it is unable to work on harmonising society.

Ahimsa is a cornerstone of Buddhism. It is practiced towards all living beings not just human beings. In the Dialogues of the Buddha it explains that it is based upon daya, compassion, sympathy and pity, hiraṇukampa, and the feeling of shame, lajja, which results from the cruelty of harming any form of life. Where there is compassion inside a person it manifests itself in the outward act of ahimsa. When a Buddhist practices ahimsa they come to know the true feeling of love and will attain happiness. This will in turn lead them to Nirvana.²⁶

Buddhism in the early days spoke loudly against poverty because it involved such profound suffering. Buddhists suggested that the rulers set up rice kitchens to help the poor and alleviate the suffering wherever possible. The ruler should govern by righteousness (dharma) to prevent poverty which will in turn keep crime from rising. They should be judicious in their taxing as this can also cause poverty.²⁷

Emphasis and comparisons are found throughout Buddhist writings:

**They who are gentle sages,
Constantly restrained in body,
Go to the unshakeable abode,
Whither having gone, they do not grieve.**

(Dhammapada, 225)

**Gotoma's (sic) disciples are always well and awake,
Both day and night their minds in harmlessness delight.**

(Dhamapada, 300)

**With all I am a friend comrade to all,
And to all creatures kind and merciful,
A heart of amity I cultivate,
And ever in good-will is my delight!**

(Thag. V.648; Psalms of the Brethren, P 280)²⁸

A mind that attains Brahma Viharas will be unable to harbour hatred of any kind. In

Pali this means an excellent or sublime state of mind. It is a description of the four pillars of ahimsa:

- 1. Metta (Love or loving kindness)**
- 2. Karuna (Compassion)**
- 3. Mudita (Sympathetic joy)**
- 4. Upekha (Equanimity)²⁹**

In summary it is clear that the destruction of passions is a pre-requisite for a Buddhist. One must be compassionate to all and ensure that all of their activities are completely non-violent. Only then can one “be a true follower of Ahimsa in Buddhistic thought... When the inner feeling of Ahimsa becomes complete and perfect, it becomes expressed in outward actions and where the two harmonise in actual, (sic) it can be called a life of the true follower of the Buddha.”³⁰ Buddhism has clearly played an important part in the development and growth of non-violence.

Endnotes Chapter 3

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² Braj Sinha, "Religion and Violence-An Early Buddhist Perspective," ARC: Journal of Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University 13.2 (1986) 23.

³ A.L. Basham, The Wonder That Was India (New York: Grove Press, 1959) 256-257.

⁴ University of Minnesota Home Page on Buddhism.

⁵ Indu Mala Ghosh, Ahimsa Buddhist and Gandhian (Delhi: Balaji, 1989) 59.

⁶ Majumdar, History 373-375.

⁷ Christopher Key Chapple, Nonviolence to Animals, Earth, and Self in Asian Traditions (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993) 29.

⁸ Devadatta has been described by scholars such as Basham as Buddha's envious and wicked cousin.

⁹ John Kahila, World Public Access, Internet, Brookline, MA. Jan. 17, 1997.

¹⁰ Edward Conze, Buddhism: Its Essence and Development (New York: Harper and Row, 1975) 62.

¹¹ Conze 61.

¹² Ghosh 64-65.

¹³ Chapple Nonviolence 23-24.

¹⁴ Chapple Nonviolence 24.

¹⁵ Unithan and Singh 66.

¹⁶ Unithan and Singh 66.

¹⁷ Unithan and Singh 66-67.

¹⁸ Unithan and Singh 72.

¹⁹ Roy Amore, "Peace and Non-Violence in Buddhism." University of Windsor. n.d.

²⁰ Sinha 24.

²¹ Sinha 25.

²² Sinha 25.

²³ Sinha 27.

²⁴ Sinha 28.

²⁵ Ghosh 60.

²⁶ Ghosh 61.

²⁷ Roy C. Amore, "Peace and Non-Violence in Buddhism". University of Windsor, n.d.

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²⁹ Ghosh 89.

³⁰ Ghosh 74.

Chapter 4

Jainism

The period around the sixth century BCE, was a time of great intellectual and spiritual development in Northern India. During this time the old social order was changing and new ones were beginning to take shape. Several reactions took place as the Vedic ritual culture began to lose credit. The first reaction came from the Upanishads, the end product of the Vedic literature. They slowly undermined the sacrificial priestly way. Another was monotheism. This was launched in all probability by Krishna, or his immediate followers within the Hindu tradition, and was known as Bhagavatism. The recognition of a Personal God, or the recognition of the Upanishadic Brahman, influenced certain thinkers. Jainism, inspired by ascetic ideals, and in opposition to the brahmanical orthodoxy, became a new religious force.

According to the Jain tradition there were twenty-four Tirthankaras or "ford-makers across the stream of existence", and each preached a doctrine according to their own time. There is little historical foundation for the first twenty-two. The last two were Parsva and Mahavira and they are well recorded in the Jain tradition. There is mention of Mahavira and his contemporaries in the Buddhist canon.¹

The souls of the Tirthankaras are endowed with special knowledge and are highly exemplary from the very moment of their birth. They renounce all special privileges, status, worldly pleasures, riches and adopt asceticism. By an austere lifestyle and enduring great penances they destroy the sins accumulated in previous lives, burn off all karmas and adopt a spirit of equanimity to both friend and foe. There is neither attachment nor hatred

towards anyone.²

The term jina means conqueror or victor. Jainas are followers of the path established by the Jinas, those who have conquered the "suffering inherent in attachment."³ Vardhamana, known to his followers as Mahavira, (the Great Hero), a contemporary of the Buddha became the acknowledged leader of the Jains. The son of a Kshatriya chieftain, Mahavira was born around 540 BCE. At the age of 28 he renounced his princely life and became an ascetic seeking liberation from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. For some years he travelled with another ascetic, Gosala Maskariputra, who left him after an argument and founded the sect of the Ajivikas.

In the thirteenth year of his asceticism Vardhamana found full enlightenment and Nirvana; he became a "Worthy" (Arhant), a "Conqueror" (Jina) a "Ford-maker."⁴ After achieving enlightenment he was acclaimed leader of the Jainas. He gained a great following and a reputation as a Jina.. Many of the same leaders and kings who patronized the Buddha also patronized Mahavira. He outlived Gosala and the Buddha and died of voluntary starvation at the age of 72 around 468 BCE. Rather than a founder, he became leader and reformer of an already existing religious community.⁵

After a prolonged famine they moved from the Ganges region to the south, where they became well established. A schism followed that exists to the present day on the issue of the rule of nudity established by Mahavira. There arose two sects, the Digambaras (Space-clad or naked) and the Svetambaras (White-clad)⁶

Jainism is a very austere religion. The goal of "passionless detachment" is arrived at only by a very and often severe lifestyle, ideally concluding in death by voluntary self-

starvation. All of this is achieved without the help of any god or gods, but strictly by self-effort.⁷ Their world is not created or maintained by a personal god but functions only in agreement with universal law.⁸

The general pessimism of Jainism is well illustrated in the following story said to have been told by a Jain monk to a prince to convince him of all the evils that exist.

There was once a man who, oppressed by his poverty left home and set out for another city. But after a few days he lost his way and found himself wandering in a dense forest. There, he saw a mad elephant angrily rushing toward him with upraised trunk. Immediately he ran to flee there appeared a terrible demoness with a sharp sword in her hand. In fear and trembling, he looked about him for a way of escape until he saw a great tree and ran towards it. But he could not climb its smooth hole, and afraid of death hung inside an old well. He fell but managed to catch a clump of reeds growing from the wall, and clung to them desperately. For below him he could see a mass of writhing snakes, enraged at the sound of his falling, and at the very bottom, identifiable from the hiss of its breath, a mighty black python with its mouth wide open to receive him. Even as he realized his life would last only as long as the reeds held him, he looked up and saw two mice, one white and one black, gnawing at the roots. Meanwhile the elephant, enraged at not catching its victim, charged the tree and

dislodged a honeycomb. It fell on the man clinging so precariously but even as the bees angrily stung his body, by chance a drop of honey fell on his brow, rolled down his face and reached his lips, to bring a moment's sweetness. And he longed for yet a few more drops and so forgot the perils of his existence.

The man is the soul. His wandering in the forest is existence. The wild elephant is death. The demoness is old age. The tree is salvation, where there is no fear of death, but which no sensual man can attain. The well is human life. The snakes are passion. The python is hell. The clump of reeds is man's allotted span. The black and white mice the dark and light halves of the month. The bees are diseases and troubles. The drops of honey are but trivial pleasures. How can a wise man want them, in the midst of such peril and hardship?⁹

Critics argue that Jainism is a religion that promotes self-centredness due to its emphasis on passionless detachment. This is not true. First consider the four bhavanas, (cardinal qualities), an integral part of the daily Jaina religious life.

1. maitri - friendliness
2. karuna - compassion
3. pramoda - happiness or joy
4. madhyasthya - equanimity

In the fourth lecture of the Dashavaikalika sutra a monk is admonished to:

know the nature of self and others; first knowledge, then compassion; thus does one remain in full control. How can an ignorant person be compassionate, when he does not know good from evil? Knowledge leads to compassion; compassion is manifested in behaviour: Whatever beings there are, whether moving or non-moving, thou shall not hurt, whether knowingly or unknowingly ... All beings desire to live; no one wants to die.

Therefore a nirgrantha refrains from all acts of injury¹⁰

Five main vows govern the life of a Jaina. They are abstentions from negative things, known as anuvrata, small vows:

- to refrain from the taking of life
- to refrain from lying
- to refrain from stealing
- abstention from sexual desire
- abstention from possessiveness

There are stricter vows, Mahavrata, for a monk. Food intake is very limited, a vow of poverty is taken, (in the Digambara sect they renounce all clothing), there is no digging, no bathing, no lighting or extinguishing of fires and no fanning of oneself.¹¹

The first anuvrata, ahimsa is considered the most important. In every school of Indian thought, great prominence is given to Ahimsa but the Jainas are the ones who give it the most prominence. All other virtues are based upon ahimsa. The following vow is taken by a Jaina mendicant:

I will desist from the knowing or intentional destruction of all great lives (trasa, souls embodied with two or more senses). As long as I live, I will neither kill nor cause others to kill. I shall strive to refrain from all such activities, whether of body, speech, or mind.¹²

There are two kinds of himsa (violence). The first is samkalpaja-himsa which refers to all intentional violence. The second, Arambhaja-himsa happens accidentally or is considered unavoidable. The first can be easily avoided by any thinking individual. The latter is unavoidably committed in situations such as the preparation of food, the cleaning of a house, bathing, building, making clothes and so on.¹³ One must obviously exercise a great degree of care in order to minimize arambhaja-himsa. This is especially important in the case of self-defence or a defensive war. Violence in this instance is called virodhi-himsa (injury generated by standing in opposition).¹⁴

Himsa has ordinarily been understood in India as harm done to others; for Jainas, however, it refers primarily to injuring oneself- to behaviour which inhibits the soul's ability to attain moksha. Thus the killing of animals, for example is reprehensible not only for the suffering produced in the victims, but even more so because it involves intense passions on the part of the killer, passions which bind him more firmly in the grip of samsara.¹⁵

Ahimsa is Parmo dharma, above all else. It is the cornerstone of Jainism.¹⁶ The Acharang Sutra states:

...thus say all the perfect souls and blessed ones, whether past, present or to come -- thus they speak, thus they declare, thus they proclaim: All living things breathing, all things existing, all things living, all beings whatever, should not be slain or treated with violence, or insulted, or tortured, or driven away. This is the pure unchanging eternal law...¹⁷

Ahimsa is to be practiced at the mental level as well as the physical. To speak badly to, about, or of a person, is himsa. To think badly towards a person is himsa. To hurt the feelings of a person is himsa. Ahimsa also means that one not only does not kill but also does not cause killing or approve of any kind of killing.

Any injury caused by mental activity, physical or verbal is violence. Passion causes a person not only to inflict pain on others, but to injure the purity of themselves. Therefore one should not utter a word which is likely to cause pain to another; should not make another say words that would hurt another; should not harbour any prejudicial thoughts towards another and should not entertain feelings of ill will towards another.

Violence is directly connected to "parigraha" or ownership. The main cause of

violence is possession. Physical possession and the need to have must be limited or even eliminated to achieve ahimsa.¹⁸ Jainism does not extol enforced poverty but suggests that material wants should be minimised.

The first steps of ahimsa are taken at the personal level and the sincerity of the individual in their practice of ahimsa is an important beginning. Jainism explicitly forbids the harming of all living things, regardless of their size. The cruelty and killing of the smallest animal shames humanity. Not only is the killing of any animal expressly forbidden but also lives such as ants, flies, birds, and fish. Even plants are considered sacred.

All Jains are vegetarians and eat only what the plant will give away such as grains, fruits and certain vegetables. They will never eat a root vegetable if it means destroying the plant. Drinking of cow's milk is allowed only if the cow is well taken care of, the needs of the calf first satisfied and it is known that she will be allowed a natural death.

So personal is ahimsa with Jainas that the most auspicious way for them to end their life is by the sallekhana or the fast unto death. When it is clear that a person's life is over they are encouraged to accept their imminent death and engage in this final fast. In this way no further violence is promoted.¹⁹

Ahimsa is constantly in the fore of everyday-life for a Jain; "restraint of mind, control of tongue, carefulness on roads, removing beings from the road, and eating in daylight (to avoid ingestion of bugs)."²⁰ Travel is largely restricted due to the potential harm that is done to living things. (This is one explanation for the regionalism of Jainism).

Even the type of work is restricted. Monks cannot farm as this involves destruction of both plant and animal life. The practical side is taken into account and lay people are

allowed to farm, as carefully as possible, or a large portion of the people would be deprived of food.

Like much of their philosophy that came from early Hinduism, the Jains inherited a respect for animals. Animal shelters for unwanted and abandoned animals were established in India centuries ago. Today they exist in cities all over India with many of the original sanctuaries still in existence.

Within the Jaina philosophy of the belief that every human being has experienced previous births as animals. A great act of wrongdoing results in rebirth as an animal and one of the greatest misdeeds is cruel treatment to either a human or an animal. Animals are said to have feelings and are able through good deeds to improve themselves.

Jains are totally opposed to animal sacrifice, even for religious purposes. Animals hold a high place in the order of life. The following story illustrates the power and intellect of animals in Jaina belief.

Long ago, there was a large forest fire, and all the animals of the forest fled and gathered around a lake, including a herd of elephant, deer, rabbits, squirrels, etc. For hours the animals crowded together in their small refuge, cowering from the fire. The leader of the elephant herd got an itch, and raised a leg to scratch himself. A tiny rabbit quickly occupied the space vacated by the elephant's foot. The elephant, out of an overwhelming desire not to hurt the rabbit, stood on three legs for more than three days until the fire died down and

the rabbit scampered off. By then, his leg was numb and he toppled over. Still retaining a pure mind and heart, the elephant died. As a reward for his compassion he overcame the need for embodiment as an animal and was born as a prince by the name of Megha and eventually became a disciple of Mahavira, taking the vows of a monk in the hopes of transcending all forms of existence.²¹

Insect life is carefully protected. Drinking water is strained and gauze masks are worn in order to avoid inhalation of small insects. Dusters are carried to gently brush away small insects to prevent their being trampled underfoot.

All beings are divided into two parts, nonliving (ajiva) and living (jiva). Ajiva is inanimate. Jiva includes almost everything that is living such as trees, grass and weeds. Everything has a life force or jiva which is always in a state of motion, affected by karma that causes the jiva to be reborn time after time.²²

The lowest form of life is called nigoda. They are born and die seconds later. They reside everywhere. The next level are the earth bodies, water bodies, fire bodies, and air bodies. Finally are the plant and animals which are further divided depending on the number of senses that they have. Jivas differ and comprise six different groups:

- (1) Ekendriya, one sensed, such as earth bodied, fire bodied, air bodied, vegetable bodied.
- (2) Dvendriya, two sensed, such as worms, conch, and shells.
- (3) Treendriya, three sensed, such as bugs, ants and scorpions.
- (4) Chaturendriya, four sensed such as wasps, moths, and bees.

(5) Panchendriya Asaini, irrational five sensed, such as a kind of serpent found in water.

(6) Panchendriya Saini, rational five sensed such, as humans, birds, fowl, animals and fish.²³

The Jain mendicant is set apart from other monks, in his daily practice of ahimsa by his recognition of even the most subtle of beings, the ekendriya. The importance of recognizing the sanctity of even this life is stressed in the Acaranga-sutra:

Take note-there are innumerable tiny beings individually embodied in earth. Take note-there are some holy men who truly control themselves, safeguarding even these beings, while others, (such as the monks of other sects) fail to do so, and thus are only pretending to be renunciants.²⁴

Truthfulness or satya is to abstain from lying (asatya). Jainas see a close relationship between himsa and asatya as all lying is deliberate and consequently involves some injurious action. Himsa results from telling lies. The honesty of the Jaina businessman is well known in India and speaks well of their tradition of satya.²⁵

The next vow non-stealing or asteya in its broadest term means not taking anything that is not given. Merchants must engage in assiduously honest trading. They cannot sell stolen merchandise, use false weights and measures, adulterate any products, substitute inferior goods or refrain from paying the required taxes. All such actions involve himsa as they reflect the presence of greed.²⁶ Outright theft causes himsa by the taking of what is

not given and causes harm and upset to those who lose what is theirs.

The fourth anuvrata, sexual restraint or brahmacharya speaks directly to men as they are considered more prone than women to sexual misconduct. All women should be viewed with the respect that he holds for his sister and mother. The laity should focus on moderation in marriage and not engage in any excess desire as this results in himsa. The very act itself kills many single sensed animals. Mendicants abstain completely.²⁷

Non-attachment or aparigraha keeps one focused on their purpose in life. The desire for worldly possessions affects the purity of the soul and this injury to the self is himsa.

For those unaware of the true nature of Jainism, it is a simple matter to dismiss it as an overzealous, dour religion. There is no other religion that has contributed so much to the well-being of life forms, especially those in the animal kingdom. They have raised world-wide awareness to the cruelties inflicted upon animals in farming and meat processing; in medical and pharmaceutical laboratories; in both the manufacturing and testing of cosmetics; in the entertainment industry and even in something as seemingly innocent as education. Frogs are routinely used for dissection in high school biology classes. It is estimated that in California alone, 525,000 frogs are killed for this purpose.²⁸

What difference does it make whether or not we treat animals with the same reverence as we treat human beings is an often asked question. The answer simply, is ahimsa.

For the Jain vegetarianism alone is not enough. All life is to be respected. All life

is to be treated as equal. All creatures should be treated as we ourselves wish to be treated. This is the very essence of ahimsa for a Jain.

Endnotes Chapter 4

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- ² Shri Jayatilal Sanghvi, A Treatise on Jainism, University North of Carolina n.d. 1.
- ³ Christopher Key Chapple, Nonviolence to Animals, Earth, and Self in Asian Traditions (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993) 9.
- ⁴ A.L.Basham, The Wonder That Was India (New York: Grove Press, 1959) 288.
- ⁵ Majumdar 411-413.
- ⁶ Basham 288-289.
- ⁷ Myrtle Langley, "Jainism Respect for All Life", University of North Carolina, n.d.
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- ⁸ Basham 290.
- ⁹ Langley 12.
- ¹⁰ Padmanabh S. Jaini, The Jaina Path of Purification (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979) 65-66.
- ¹¹ Chapple 10.
- ¹² Jaini 173.
- ¹³ Jaini 44.
- ¹⁴ Jaini 170-171.
- ¹⁵ Jaini 167.
- ¹⁶ Bothara 55.

¹⁷ Bothara xv-xvi.

¹⁸ Bothara xvii.

¹⁹ Chapple 95.

²⁰ Chapple 10.

²¹ Chapple 12.

²² Chapple 10-11.

²³ Sanghvi 43.

²⁴ Jaini 241-242.

²⁵ Jaini. 173-174.

²⁶ Jaini. 175.

²⁷ Jaini 176.

²⁸ Jaina Bhavan Seminar, April 2-3, 1994. Buena Park, California.

Chapter 5

Philosophy of Non-violence

Hinduism

In Hinduism there are two philosophical reasons for non-violence. The first is the principle of organicity. The world is one living organism. We are inter-related fellow beings. We are all organically related, not merely by physical contiguity, like the various limbs of the body or the parts of a tree. Since all beings originate from the same spiritual source, Brahman¹, there is an organic relationship. As such if we harm another person we are harming an extension of ourselves.

The second reason is that of immanence. Since all things derive from God they all share the same life-force. The individual counterpart of the universal principle is called atman, the self, which is the core and the essence of all things. The Divine power permeates the entire world like salt in the sea water. On the ground of immanence one can say that at a deeper level all things are one and the same, despite their superficial and psychological differences.

The great and saving knowledge which the Upanishads claim to impart lies not in the mere recognition of the existence of Brahman, but in the continual consciousness of it. For Brahman resides in the human soul-indeed Brahman *is* the human soul, is Atman, the self.²

It is from these two principles that the idea of non-harming derives. All living beings who appear to be mutually related are at a deeper level pervaded by the same principle of life and consciousness, by virtue of being derived from the same Divine source. Thus all sentient beings are in a sense one, despite their outward differences.

As far back as the Rig Veda the concern for unity and harmony was illustrated clearly as outlined in chapter two. The life affirming principles of the early Vedas suggested that in order for society to live together in harmony there must be little or no violence.

Buddhism

In Buddhism it is recognized that we are all living in an inter-related, inter-dependant world. The world is a "wholeness" in which all parts are connected with one another. Even though nothing is permanent and everything is in a state of flux, all things are bound by the principle of dependent co-production. Thus in a pragmatic way, the idea of non-violence comes into play in Buddhism. There is an emphasis on Dharma or the principle of harmony. One should live in an ethical, harmonious way in our world of mutual dependence. Harmony leads in a very natural way to ahimsa or to non-harming.

This is the reason for Buddhism to advocate ahimsa. The ethics of the Dhammapada contain many references to non-violence.

Not reviling, not injuring, restraint according to the law,
moderation in eating, dwelling in solitude, diligence in higher

thought, this is the teaching of the awakened." (185)

"He who carries out his purpose by violence is not righteous."

(256)

"A man is not noble because he injures living creatures. He is called noble because he does not injure living beings." (270)

Monks travelled widely in the early days and were subject to various kinds of violence. Security in their travels, would have been important to them as violence would have easily resulted in injury, and possibly death. However, even in the most difficult of situations monks were exhorted to metta and karuna, loving kindness and compassion.

Our thinking will not be upset and we will not utter one evil word. We will abide friendly and compassionate with a mind of loving-kindness void of inner aversion. Having penetrated that person with a mind of loving-kindness, we will remain (in this state). Beginning with that (person) having penetrated the whole world with a mind of loving-kindness which is expanded, dedicated, limitless, peaceful (and) non-binding, we will remain (in this state).³

In Mahayana Buddhism, the sole purpose of life for Bodhisattvas, or highly advanced saints is to live to serve others. Their attitude is to be directed by compassion

and they must act without any self-interest. No action is appropriate if it does not benefit others. Everything that they do is governed by great compassion for all sentient beings. “It is the deepest conviction ...there is no difference in essence between himself and all others.”⁴.

Jainism

In Jainism the concept of immanence holds true without the idea of God. There prevails the principle of inner spiritual unity of all beings. Jainism falls between Hinduism and Buddhism but inclines towards Buddhism in the denial of God, but does not agree with it in terms of the denial of the inner self.

Non-violence is the very core of Jaina philosophy. It is based on the dictum “All living beings are bound together.” Non-violence must be practiced with feeling and compassion. A non-violent way of life is the most important element in the ultimate goal of purification of the soul. Jainas are not simply against the physical act of killing or harming but condemn all hurtful -- actions from hurting another person’s feelings to harmful thoughts..

Syadvad, is a philosophical process that allows an opponent to be right, even when one believes them to be wrong.⁵ If one can think in this very positive manner it allows for a previously unknown level of tolerance. It replaces fanaticism and dogma and makes the world a much safer place in which to live.

Surendra Bothara explains that Jains call living organisms Jiva (alive, existing) and Prani, (one endowed with breath or life). Jiva is also means soul.⁶ Jain thinkers have an

evolution theory that connects all forms of life from the lowest to the highest. We are all tied together in unity. Chapple further explains this unique relationship. "The philosophical system underpinning the practice of ahimsa posits that all being (sat) is divided into nonliving (ajiva) and living (jiva) forms."⁷ These jivas contain a number of life forces that have been in existence since the beginning of time. The jivas are in a state of constant flux. They are affected by karma that causes them to be "reborn repeatedly within a hierarchy of states ranging from that of ... humans ...to plants and animals..."⁸

Karma and Reincarnation

The development of the concept of reincarnation/rebirth had a great effect on the philosophy of non-violence. An individual will exercise caution in the use of violence, if the chance exists that it could possibly be against a past family member, reborn as another person. The prospect of that person in another life form would cause one to reconsider animal sacrifice or the casual squashing of an insect.

Some scholars maintain that rebirth did not originate with the Indus Valley culture and is not found specifically until the Upanishads.⁹ There is however a hymn in the Rig Veda¹⁰, that tells of life after death. For the forward thinking philosopher perhaps this is a smallest hint of a person being eventually reborn.

This concept becomes clear in the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad.

Just as a caterpillar when it has come to the end of a blade of grass, after having made another approach (to another blade)

draws itself together towards it, so does this self, after having thrown away this body, and dispelled ignorance, after having another approach (to another body) draws itself together (for making the transition to another body)¹¹

In the same Upanishad, a sage says that one becomes good by good action and bad by bad action. “According as one acts, according as one behaves, so does he become. The doer of good becomes good, the doer of evil becomes evil. One becomes virtuous by virtuous action, bad by bad action.”¹² Karma now begins to play a very significant role.

The philosophical development of karma and reincarnation, had a profound impact on the attitude of non-violence towards all life. The fact that rebirth was possible in the form of an animal also gave an added dimension to the value of animal life and to the idea of the continuum of life.

In the Upanishads, a major transformation came about in regard to the attitude toward animal sacrifice. The inefficaciousness of animal sacrifice became apparent and caused people to look at their understanding of the world and their relationship to Brahman. In this new emerging world view animal sacrifices became unnecessary and unproductive. This led to a deep ethical significance of the concept of non-violence.¹³

The mysticism of the Vedic tradition was anchored in the theory of identity of all souls so often repeated in the Upanishads, but the emergence of the theory of reincarnation

drives a wedge between the individual soul and the universal soul as a result of implicit recognition that souls are influenced by the phenomenal world of human activities and behaviour and participation in the sensuous realm of life.¹⁴

The Upanishadic idea of the consubstantiality of the integrally connected, individual soul and the universal soul and the idea of the mutual unity of all souls are related with the ideas of karma and reincarnation. This means that despite the essential unity of all souls, each soul is conditioned by its own psychic disposition and actions resulting from this unity. The differences in the souls' disposition and actions are responsible for the differences in their future births. The souls transmigrate from one embodiment to another in a continuous series of births and rebirths, deaths and re-deaths. This process is called samsara or change, movement or cycle of births and deaths. The transmigratory phenomenon is determined by the specific action or karmas of each individual soul giving rise to differences in status on the scale of mundane life. This perpetual continuity of rebirths is terminated in the realization of the fundamental unity of all life. This fact of unity always persisted through all changes in the phenomenal life but was not perceived as such. The movement from samsara or transmigration to moksha or ultimate liberation is immensely facilitated by the practice of non-violence towards all forms of life for the same reason.

The idea and practice of non-violence depend upon the understanding of the equality and oneness of all life, and the theory of reincarnation shows the basic unity of all living beings through all changes in their forms. By protecting all life we prevent the

possibility that we will harm a relative or a loved one who is in the process of samsara.

The practice of non-violence towards another living being is a very vital aspect of spiritual practice. It establishes one's perception of the non-difference of oneself. Non-violence makes possible one's progress towards the ultimate goal of human life, achieving freedom from the bondage of self, which is equivalent to moksha or nirvana.

From the point of view of the theory of rebirth prevailing in all the three religious traditions, human embodiment is regarded as the highest and the best form of life in relation to the others. This is because only the human form, with all its capabilities in terms of mental and spiritual growth, can advance the ultimate end of total freedom from all bondage of limitations. This places highest value on the acquisition of human birth. However, it is also imperative that the human person live in harmony and harmlessness in relation to other life forms. This attitude of non-hurting enables one to achieve the highest goal of human life.

The ethics of non-violence were influenced by the belief that the actions of an individual in this life affected their next life. Consequently violent actions of an individual to another entity lead to an inpropitious rebirth that would be a deterrent to harming. The belief was that the soul passed from "life to life for all eternity or for an inestimably long period of time." All forms of life became naturally linked into one system.¹⁵

The natural relationship between Karma and re-birth is accepted in all six Hindu systems of salvation. In Patanjali's system ahimsa appears as the first yama or restraint. It is the foundation of all virtues. Patanjali says that when the quality of harmlessness is fully stabilized by a yoga practitioner creatures naturally hostile to each other shed their

animosity and live together in a friendly way.

When we recognize that we are all one and the same, that fundamentally we are not different from the next person, we have the basis for performing non-violent action. This view allows us to see the sacredness in all life. It helps us to see beyond self-interest and allows us to be sensitive and aware of the needs and wants of those around us.

Chapter 5 Endnotes

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- ¹ See the Taittiriya Upanishad, III.1.1.
- ² A.L.Basham, The Wonder That Was India (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1959) 250
- ³ Hans Wolfgang Schuman, Buddhism (Wheaton: Quest Books, 1973) 78.
- ⁴ Schuman 110.
- ⁵ Surendra Bothara, Ahimsa, The Science of Peace (Jaipur: Prakrit Bharti Academy, 1987) 19.
- ⁶ Bothara 16.
- ⁷ Chapple, Nonviolence to Animals 11.
- ⁸ Chapple, Nonviolence to Animals 11.
- ⁹ Unithan, T.K.N. and Singh, Yogendra, Traditions of Non-Violence (New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1973) 37.
- ¹⁰ In Book X hymn XVI verse III states that the body is sent to other places after death.
- ¹¹ S. Radhakrishnan Ed., The Principal Upanishads (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1993) 271.
- ¹² Brhad-aranyaka Upanishad IV.v.x.
- ¹³ Unithan and Singh 36.
- ¹⁴ Unithan and Singh 36.
- ¹⁵ Basham 242.

Chapter 6

Gandhi

The British presence in India began in Elizabethan times. Merchants came to trade for goods in Madras, Calcutta and Bombay. European presence was not unknown in India. The spices of Malabar had attracted Vasco de Gama as far back as 1498. Different European powers vied for favour with local rulers and formed alliances.

India became one of the centres of world trading prior to the start of the Industrial Revolution. By the end of the eighteenth century, trade suffered a serious decline. There were many causes, but chief among them was a lack of internal peace. The Mughul Empire was declining and unable to maintain stability. Indian shipping had been ruined by European rivalry. The Indian cotton market had been hit hard by the closing of the British markets due to prohibitions generally as a result of interference by the East India Company.¹

The French challenged the authority of the British East India Company and fought with some Indian allies against the British. Robert Clive defeated them at the battle of Plassey and took control of the Ganges delta. Lord Cornwallis consolidated British power in the late eighteenth century and brought some peace and stability to the warring Indian states as well.

Relations were good between the wealthy upper-classes and the British. Many army officers of both nationalities were in the army to make their fortune. The British were generally welcome to most areas where they went until the Mutiny of 1857. There

were many causes for the infamous Mutiny. There was the fear that customs, religion, and social structures would be lost or irreparably damaged. The most well known issue was that of the cartridge for the new rifle. The end of the bullet had to be bitten off before loading and firing. Rumours spread that the cartridge was greased with the fat of a pig, cow or ox. These rumours were true and the British found another lubricant to replace it when they realized the implications but it was too late. There was no trust left in this matter and many men flatly refused orders and many were jailed.² There was widespread revolt all over India against all Europeans. Atrocities took place on both sides and eventually order was restored.

History has shown that the failure of the 1857 revolt ushered in a new sense of nationalism in India. British rule had brought about economic ruin for the majority of the country. There was chronic poverty and widespread famine.

While in the first half of the nineteenth century there were seven famines with an estimated total of 1.5 million deaths, in the second half of the nineteenth century there were twenty-four famines with an estimated total of 28.5 million deaths, and eighteen of these twenty-four famines fall into the last quarter of the nineteenth century.³

Another serious problem was the racial arrogance of the British. There was no pretence of cordiality and goodwill especially after the strained relations resulting from the

events of 1857. With the opening of the Suez canal, the British ceased to look upon India as their adopted home and developed a different attitude. Indians were looked down on. Rude behaviour was often accompanied by assault. Striking servants at the least provocation was a common sight. The ever-increasing humiliation at the hands of the British caused deep wounds. "It may be said without much exaggeration that the racial arrogance of the Englishmen made the rule more unpopular and hated in India than probably any other single factor."⁴

India was ready for someone to free it from the British yoke. That person was Mohandas Gandhi. He was known in later years as Gandhiji, out of deep abiding love and respect. He occupies an important place in history not only for his leadership in the freedom of India, but for his legacy of non-violence. He was the most influential founding father of the non-violent movement. Social movements everywhere have been influenced by his teachings. His non-violent strategy was the model for many of the early civil rights struggles in the United States. Gandhi believed that lasting peace could only be achieved through peaceful means and that truth and love would overcome all injustices.

Renowned biographer and author Robert Payne, said that there were two, authentic, political geniuses, Lenin and Gandhi. They will be remembered a thousand years from now when other leaders have been forgotten. One determined upon violence the other determined upon non-violence. Through Gandhi we have learned that even the most tyrannical government cannot resist the non-violent means of resistance. When people are prepared to die for their beliefs, no power on earth can resist them. This was Gandhi's most powerful weapon. He was prepared to die. Privately his aim was to see

God face to face. Publicly his aim was to liberate India from the British.⁵

Mohandas K. Gandhi was born in 1869 in Porbandar, western India. His father and grandfather served as prime ministers in the princedom. His family was both well placed and well to do. His mother was very religious and often fasted. Gandhi inherited many of his views from his mother. His father, who died when Gandhi was 16, had exposed him to frequent discussions on religion with his friends. Jainism was an extremely strong influence in the household due to its influence in the Gujarati region and to a Jain monk, Becharji Swami, who gave his mother advice after his father's death.⁶

If he was to eventually succeed his father as prime minister, Gandhi would have to go to school in England. He was interested in medicine but his brother reminded him that his father was against the dissection of dead bodies and wanted Gandhi to go into law. His mother was against his going to England for fear of moral corruption. Becharji Swami convinced Gandhi to take a solemn vow not to touch wine, women or meat. His mother consented.

He was generally unhappy in England and adjusted to his situation as best he could. No difficulty was experienced with his studies and he was called to the bar in June 1891.⁷ It was in England that he first studied the Gita. Also he read the New Testament and saw similarities between it and the Gita. As a result of knowledge gained from these readings, the various people that he met and other literature that he discovered, he gently pondered the purpose of his life.

He returned to India and was less than successful as a new lawyer. An opportunity was offered to him by a Muslim company to be their South African legal representative.

In late 1892 he left India for Natal. Certain events would take place in South Africa that would profoundly affect the direction of the young lawyer's life. South African society was divided by colour, class, religion and profession. English prejudice and racial intolerance were now part of life in South Africa. While travelling in a first class compartment Gandhi was told to leave and go to the third class car. He refused and was unceremoniously thrown off. It was perhaps here that Gandhi began his non-violent struggle. He had run across evil, directed physically at him and decided then and there that he was going to rebel.⁸

In 1906 he formed an ambulance service run by Indians to help the British during the Zulu rebellion. He later admitted that this was due to a misguided sense of loyalty to the British. It was during this time that some scholars feel Gandhi made a decision which profoundly altered his inner life. As he himself put it:

The vow which Gandhi made early in July 1906 was to color the remaining years of his life. His theories of non-violence, *ahimsa*, would spring out of his vow of chastity, *brahmacharya*. The vow signified a return to his religious roots, a deliberate cleansing of himself in preparation for the hard tasks ahead. With this vow he accomplished the transformation which would lead him to becoming known as a *mahatma*, a great soul, one of those half-legendary beings who can influence events by their mere presence, by their sanctity.⁹

Gandhi's first major test was the protest of the Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance. It required all Indians over the age of eight to register with the authorities, be fingerprinted and carry an identity card with them at all times. Anyone who failed to register and be fingerprinted would lose the right of residence, could be fined, imprisoned and deported from the Transvaal. Any Indian who failed to produce a certificate on the street when ordered to show it would suffer the same consequences. The Indian community realized that this would be the beginning of similar laws that would be enacted all over the country and that eventually no Indian would be able to remain in South Africa.

Gandhi disliked the term passive resistance. In consultation with his cousin he settled on the word Satyagraha. Gandhi said that Satyagraha differs from Passive Resistance as the North Pole from the South. The latter has been conceived as a weapon of the weak and does not exclude the use of physical force or violence for the purpose of gaining one's end, whereas the former has been conceived as a weapon of the strongest and excludes the use of violence in any shape or form.

Its root meaning is holding on to truth, hence truth-force. I have also called it Love-force or Soul-force. In the application of Satyagraha I discovered in the earliest stages that pursuit of truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one's opponent but that he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy. For what appears to be the truth to one may appear to be error to the other. And patience

means self-suffering. So the doctrine came to mean vindication of truth not by infliction of suffering on the opponent but on one's self.¹⁰

Gandhi and others were jailed for refusing to register. Negotiations took place with General Smuts who said that if they registered strictly for the purpose of control and immigration (Transvaal had unilaterally declared independence from Britain) he would release them and soon repeal the act. Gandhi agreed and told his followers that it was now their duty to register so that the act would be repealed. Smuts not only failed to repeal the act but introduced even stronger measures. He further declared, that he had never promised Gandhi that the act would be repealed. Many were angry and felt that Gandhi had betrayed them. Double crossed by the government Gandhi was taunted by some of his co-workers:

"There you are. We are often telling you that you are very credulous, and believe in anything that any one says. It would not matter if you were so simple in your private affairs, but the community has to suffer for your credulity in public matters." Gandhi replied, "It is not credulity but trust, and it is the duty of every one of us, yours as well as mine, to trust our fellowmen."¹¹

Gandhi protested again, refused to pay the fine and was jailed. During his time in jail Gandhi had time to read many of Tolstoy's works. Both men were of similar natures.

Although they never met they did correspond and each influenced the other.

Tolstoy was greatly troubled by the disparity between the message of Christ and how Christians actually lived. At 57 he renounced his way of life, gave away much of his wealth, became a vegetarian and devoted the rest of his life to search for a deeper religious insight. His desire was to convince humanity to accomplish a "synthesis between creed and conduct. This involved manual labor, minimum needs, no holding of property, no killing."¹²

He was tormented by the gap between belief and action. Tolstoy believed that a Christian should enter into disputes with no-one, attack no living being, use no violence, suffer without resistance, and that by this attitude towards evil he could not only set himself free but also the world at large. Gandhi had reached the same conclusion in his study of the Gita and the Sermon on the Mount.¹³ He also read Ruskin and Thoreau's Civil Disobedience for the first time.

In early 1911, Smuts and Gandhi reached a provisional agreement where the original act was repealed but many of the original immigration provisions stayed in force. Later many promises were broken including the scrapping of an annual head tax. The Supreme Court ruled that Hindu and Muslim marriages were invalid and therefore Indian wives were illegally in South Africa and would be deported. During the long renewed Satyagraha, there were huge protest marches and miners went out on strike in support. Gandhi was again sentenced to jail after refusing to pay a fine.

The courage of the Indian protesters against this latest repression won sympathy from South African whites and raised a storm of world-wide protest. A government

commission was called and Gandhi's release was recommended. The results of the commission however left the Indian community dissatisfied.

Gandhi organized a new protest in response. At the same time the government declared martial law because of a major railway strike. The possibility existed for the first time to organize with Europeans against the government. Gandhi immediately cancelled the march and offered support to the striking Europeans.

The strike escalated and the whole South African Union of railway employees, for reasons entirely of their own, went on a strike of such serious proportions and implications that the government had to declare martial law. If the railroad workers, in seizing this moment were deliberately exploiting the government's predicament, the Satyagrahis (a Satyagrahi is one who follows Satyagraha) would not do likewise. Gandhi informed Smuts that he was going to interrupt his campaign until the government had settled its affairs on the other front. This was a decision both magnanimous and wise, if for no other reason than the Satyagraha cannot be overshadowed by other events.¹⁴

Gandhi was unsure where to put his trust. He was uncertain now if it was with the labour movement who might offer potential strength and solidarity or with top government leaders. He needed to avoid harassing the government and rather win their sympathy and admiration. He was only partially successful in accomplishing this. Without doubt the Indian community benefited from his leadership and many important reforms were won but persecution and discrimination continued until the end of apartheid. The Satyagraha which began in 1908 continued until 1914. The struggle exacted a great deal of emotional and financial hardship. Gandhi was aware that things could have been even

better and stated that "it was not because of any flaw in the weapon of Satyagraha...but because there were not enough Satyagrahis in South Africa."¹⁵

His adversary General Smuts had nothing but the highest admiration for Gandhi, which illustrated the success of Gandhi's non-violent principles. "It was my fate to be the antagonist of a man for whom even I had the highest respect...He never forgot the human background of the situation, never lost his temper or succumbed to hate."¹⁶ He further admitted the difficulties that the government faced carrying out a law without strong public support, and the discomfort of having to repeal the law.

A few days before Gandhi arrived in England on his way home to India, the First World War broke out. He raised an ambulance corps of eighty, most of them students. How could Gandhi, a man of non-violence be part of a war? His answer was simple. He accepted the benefits and protection of the British Empire and would not allow it to be destroyed.¹⁷ Sickness forced him home to India at the beginning of 1915. It was a country that he did not know and that did not know him – yet.

Gandhi was committed to helping the poor improve their status. He led local campaigns to assist tenant farmers in improving their conditions. His first major campaign in India was on behalf of the textile workers in Ahmedabad, an important textile centre. In the latter half of 1917 the area had suffered a plague and the workers were given bonuses as an inducement to stay. As soon as the plague was over the employers announced their intention to withdraw the bonuses. Gandhi was asked to help resolve the dispute. The workers, who already lived in harsh poverty, demanded an increase of 50 percent. The mill owners locked out the workers and threatened to dismiss anyone who did not return

to work for an increase of only 20 percent. Gandhi, after an investigation, decided 35 percent to be just.

Some workers say that we can demand more than 35 percent. I say you can demand even a 100 percent increase. But if you make such a demand, it would be unjust. Be content with what you have demanded in the present circumstances. If you ask for more, it will pain me. We cannot make an unreasonable demand from anybody. I believe that the demand for 35 percent is just.¹⁸

The mill re-opened with the offer of only 20 percent. The workers responded with a strike. The strikers had little food and no money to support their families. Gandhi refused any financial help from some well-to-do sympathizers and would not let the workers collect donations.

What is the meaning of Satyagraha if workers join the struggle thinking that you will give them money for it or support them with your money? The real secret of Satyagraha lies in bearing cheerfully the difficulties that it may entail. The more a Satyagrahi suffers, the more he is tested.¹⁹

Gandhi exacted a promise from all the workers that they would not break the strike until the issue of wages was settled. They must remain united at all costs in order to maintain pressure on the mill owners. The biggest problem was that the mill workers were so poor that they could not afford to strike. They were undisciplined, volatile men from rural areas who constantly lived on the edge of poverty. Gandhi was always fearful of violence and wrote a series of handbills urging the men to remain peaceful and act honourably. He constantly called for "discipline, determination, and the acceptance of suffering." No one was allowed to insult the mill owners whom Gandhi saw as good but misguided men.²⁰

As the strike dragged on some workers began to complain. Gandhi they said was well fed, free to move about and had nothing to lose. He did not want this Satyagraha to fail and felt that it would collapse unless he injected a new ingredient. He decided that he would fast. Gandhi saw one grave defect in the fast. He knew many of the mill owners so well that he knew they would be influenced by his action unless he could convince them otherwise. He told them they should not give in to the workers demands unless they were truly convinced that their demands were justified. After three days the strike was settled with the wage increase being what Gandhi had asked for. For the first time he had fasted for a public cause. A weapon that became a simple, dramatic and highly effective part of his Satyagraha strategy.

Gandhi had supported the British in their war effort against Germany. Many of his friends criticized him for his activities. He was strongly opposed to the war but recognized that he lived in a world where there are many things that we do although in

reality we are against them. The path of duty was not always an easy one to discern for his followers.

The war ended and Gandhi was convinced that the British domination would be eased. He was certain that the overall situation would slowly improve and that there would be a gradual move towards self-determination. In fact the opposite happened. The Rowlatt Bills introduced in 1919 made it a punishable offense to have in one's possession any anti-government literature. Anyone engaging in or suspected of engaging in terrorist activity would be tried in camera with no right of appeal. Ownership of any seditious literature was punishable by two years imprisonment with two years restricted liberty upon release.²¹ This happened at a time when the people of India were in a militant mood, as were many others after the end of the war, such as the Chinese and Egyptians.

In the months before the bill was passed into law, Gandhi readied himself for a new Satyagraha. He travelled across India with his friend Mahadev Desai to prepare the people for his upcoming campaign of non-violent resistance. Desai read many of his speeches as Gandhi was recovering from a bout of illness. He constantly wondered how he would begin this new campaign. One night in Madras an idea came to him in a dream. A general hartal. A strike from one end of the country to the other. The suspension of all "economic activity: shopkeepers do not open for business, employees do not report for work, factories stay shut, ships are not loaded or unloaded. Gandhi urged that hartal day also be a day of "fasting and prayer".²² This was his first political act against the British government of India. The beginning of a non-violent campaign that would last for twenty-eight years.

The hartal began in Delhi and Bombay. It went without incident in Bombay but in Delhi as with other cities the hartal provoked violence between groups of protesters and the army. As the violence began to spread Gandhi cancelled the Satyagraha. His miscalculation he explained, was that he overlooked the fact that a person must be trained in civil disobedience before civil disobedience against some laws could succeed.²³ It was a lesson that became a cornerstone of the American civil rights movement in the mid 1950's.

On April 13, 1919 in the state of Punjab, a group of Sikhs gathered to celebrate a festival. A notice posted the day before by the authorities stating that there were to be no mass meetings. Unfortunately the notice was posted late in the day and in inconspicuous locations. It culminated in the infamous, bloody massacre in the sacred city of Amritsar. Three hundred and seventy-nine defenseless men, women and children were systematically slaughtered. At least four times as many were wounded. General Dyer, the British officer responsible for the carnage was ultimately disgraced and relieved of his command. Gandhi was devastated by the events at Amritsar and fasted for twenty-four hours on the anniversary of the massacre, for the remainder of his life.²⁴

He needed to re-think his strategy. One real Satyagraha was enough for victory and he now considered the possibility of a one man Satyagraha campaign. He was forbidden to travel outside of Bombay and began this new Satyagraha by deciding not to obey the order. The authorities were advised of his schedule, so that if they wished, they could arrest him when the train left the area. A rumour that he had been arrested while travelling to Delhi brought about riots and bloodshed. The government made it clear that they would have to deal effectively with any riots that took place as a result of his arrest.

He lost his nerve and cancelled his campaign. Convinced that it was still the right solution he thought and thought about how to make it effective without provoking his own followers and the government. His solution would be the supreme act of a Satyagrahi. When the time came, he would fast to death if necessary.

In March 1930 Gandhi conceived the idea of the Salt March. "What he wanted above all was a total act of protest, a complete end to the domination of the British in India."²⁵ He declared, "Our cause is just, our means are strong, and God is with us. There can be no defeat for Satyagrahis, unless they forsake the truth and non-violence and turn a deaf ear to the inner voice."²⁶

It is interesting to note that the timing of this Satyagraha followed successful labour protests in certain parts of India. A huge strike of 150,000 Bombay textile workers took place in 1928. There were mass protests against the arrival of the Simon Commission from Great Britain which had come to consider a new constitution for India. There was not one Indian on the commission. The Congress party, ever fearful of a full-scale revolution, finally felt that the time had come to initiate a civil disobedience campaign. The Congress proclaimed January 26, 1930 as Independence Day. Huge crowds gathered everywhere to celebrate. Congress members resigned from the legislature. Gandhi, had full authority over the plans for civil disobedience.

He intended to bring down the Empire with a pinch of salt. The law prohibited Indians from the centuries old practice of making their own salt, They were forced to buy imported salt and to pay a government salt tax. Many in the movement were sceptical that this would mobilize people. Gandhi had assumed correctly that resistance to the salt laws

would be an emotional issue, especially among the poor. He also proposed picketing of all foreign businesses, withholding payment of all taxes, boycotting the courts and resignation of government servants. Nehru and other members of Congress were afraid that if violence started Gandhi would call it off. He assured them that this time he would not. He said that this time there was no turning back and that he would rather die a dog's death than return to the ashram a defeated man.

To draw the attention of India and the world to this event he led a march of 241 miles in 21 days to the seacoast at Dandi. He had planned everything in great detail, arriving on the eve of the anniversary of the Amritsar massacre. The next day he walked into the sea. The lump of salt that Gandhi took that day was carefully preserved and later sold at a fund raising auction for 1600 rupees.²⁷

Villagers all along the coast went into the sea with pans to make salt. Mass arrests took place. The police began to use violence but the protesters continued their non-violent action. It was a credit to the people that they followed Gandhi's request. Congress openly sold illegal salt. Hundreds of its members, including Nehru, were arrested. A month after he had picked his salt from the sea, Gandhi was arrested. An infamous act took place in response to a march that Gandhi planned to raid the Dharasana Salt works. As he was in jail it was led by the poet, Sarojini Naidu. After morning prayers she told 2500 volunteers that they must "not even raise a hand to ward off a blow."²⁸ The police methodically beat, peaceful wave after gentle wave of marchers over several days. Two people died, and hundreds were beaten unconscious. Many were left with crushed skulls and crippling injuries. This incredibly brave action was only possible

because of the strong belief in the religious tradition of non-violence.

After the incident Tagore said that Britain had lost her moral prestige in Asia and was no longer regarded as "champion throughout the world of fair dealing and the exponent of high principle, but as upholder of Western race supremacy and the exploiter of those outside her own borders"²⁹

Two things were achieved by Gandhi. The British people at last became aware of how cruelly India was being subjugated. He gave the Indians the conviction that they could hold their head high and would eventually shake off the British yoke. The Indians had not retreated or cringed. Britain was now powerless and India invincible. \$\$\$

In March 1931 Gandhi negotiated a settlement with Lord Irwin. The salt laws were amended but not repealed. Amnesty was given to those who had not committed violent offenses. Congress would be part of planned upcoming reforms at the upcoming Round Table Conferences.³⁰ As a result of these meagre concessions, civil disobedience and combative forms of protest were called off. Expectedly Gandhi came under criticism, especially from the press. When questioned he stated that he had made it quite clear that independence did not mean complete disassociation from Britain. If they we had been fighting a violent war in India he said that there might have been ruin for one or the other party but as it was a non-violent struggle he pre-supposed a compromise.

He left for England in late August, 1931. He was the sole delegate to the upcoming Round Table Conference. He declared that "I represent, without any fear of contradiction, the dumb, semi-starved millions of my country, India."³¹ He represented himself as holding the power of attorney for India. This became a very controversial issue

among many Indians who disputed that he was the sole representative. Gandhi's abandonment of the non-violent protest had left him with less bargaining leverage than he had probably hoped for. There was a great deal of dissension between Hindus and Muslims on many issues. Other minorities-Sikhs, Untouchables, Indian Christians and expatriate Europeans-also demanded guarantees. Negotiations were slowed down by Gandhi's insistence that he truly represented all the minority groups. He finally agreed to separate constituencies for Muslims and Sikhs, but not for other minorities, especially the untouchables³². There were some politically, complex reasons for this approach and it alienated the Untouchable leader, B.R. Ambedkar³³. Gandhi held that the Untouchables cause was being adequately supported by Congress and that allowing them separate electorates would only create a split in Hinduism.

Upon his return to India, Gandhi found that little had changed. The new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon simply saw Gandhi as a "dangerous and unscrupulous agitator, to be put behind bars at the first opportunity and if possible banished to the Andaman Islands."³⁴ Willingdon had no intention of working with Congress. He promised co-operation only if the Congress were obedient and submissive to his wishes. Gandhi told him that he would launch another civil disobedience action like nothing the country had seen before, claiming that he was only following his creed of non-violence. "I believe that civil disobedience is not only the natural right of a people, especially when they have no effective voice in their own Government, but that it is also a substitute for violence and armed rebellion."³⁵ He was later arrested as he had been many times before under the infamous Regulation 25 which allowed arbitrary arrest. Some months later, still in prison he received word that

the "Depressed Classes", were to be given separate constituencies. Gandhi objected on the grounds that not only did it create an intolerable division in Hinduism, but that it would perpetuate the "Depressed Classes". He said that he would rather see Hinduism die than Untouchability live.³⁶

He wrote to the British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald that he would protest the decision by fasting to death. He said that if he was wrong in his judgement against the edict that his death would be a penance for his mistake and that if he was right then he would have failed anyway. He claimed that the fast was not so much to coerce the British but to prod the Hindu conscience. He wanted to shake the Hindus out of their apathy towards the Untouchables. He received a telegram from Tagore saying that he approved of the fast "for the sake of India's unity and her social integrity."³⁷ A few days into his fast and Gandhi was near death. Ambedkar came to see him at Gandhi's request and they negotiated. They came to no agreement. On the fifth day his people came to him with an agreement which Gandhi agreed to. He was near death when the British finally consented to it the next day. To the relief of all he broke his fast.

Fischer best described this unique situation that was not really understood by those outside of India.

Gandhi's relationship with the Indian people was not based on logic and legalism. It was a highly emotional relationship. For the Hindus, Gandhi was Mahatma, the Great Soul, a slice of God. Were they going to kill him? The moment the fast began, texts, constitutions,

awards, elections, etc., lost their significance...Gandhi had made each Hindu personally responsible his life.³⁸

His non-violent action had brought about a religious renewal in the Hindu community. At the time of the fast, many temples were opened to Untouchables for the first time. Harijans and Caste Hindus openly consorted in Delhi. In Bombay a nationalist women's organization voted 24,797 for and 445 against the admission of untouchables to their temples. While Gandhi's actions did not end the curse of untouchability it was the beginning of a new era in the caste system that continues to the present day.

When the second world war began, Gandhi cited many reasons for not launching a mass struggle. Gandhi held that Congress support for the war should be unconditional but only of a moral nature. The Congress was prepared to give active military support on the condition that Britain promise independence immediately after the war. The conflict between Gandhi and Congress on the question of non-violence would not go away. If Congress had to deal with the British and strike a deal they felt it would not be convenient to have a leader who held that any support given to Britain should be purely based on non-violence. Gandhi was relieved of his leadership in Congress.

Gandhi's non-violent approach to life was something that grew over the years. It would seem that he must have been a pacifist from the beginning of his public career. The absolute pacifism that he arrived at in the mid 1930's came as a result of his own inner development. Once when he was in jail a scorpion stung a fellow prisoner and he sucked out the poison. A leper sought admittance to his Ashram. Some members objected as

they feared infection. Gandhi not only admitted him, but gave him a massage. He undertook many fasts, to the death if necessary. Doctors always tried to discourage him as he suffered from a form of mild heart disease. It was his way however, to subordinate the flesh to the spirit. Moral considerations took precedence over a weak body. This was the source of his non-violence.³⁹ In later years he told Louis Fischer in an interview that violence was bred by inequality, non-violence by equality.

In July of 1940 the Congress made an offer to Britain to throw its full weight behind the war effort on the condition that Britain would grant independence after the war. Implicit in Britain's acceptance was the matter of the partition of India, which the Muslim league had been pressing for. The Congress was disappointed as they feared that a divided India was still susceptible to exploitation by the British. Gandhi was asked to assume the leadership again. He did and soon began a series of small satyagrahas. The protests were only symbolic and were intended to move the British. Vinoba Bhave, a long time follower of Gandhi was chosen to make speeches against the war, in defiance of the law. he was arrested as was Nehru and many other top Congress leaders.

In 1942 the tide of war turned against the British and Gandhi began to turn up the heat. He launched the "Quit India" movement, the beginning of quiet civil unrest that could eventually lead to a general strike if necessary. As civil unrest spread Gandhi realized that the protest would not be a short one that he had originally hoped for.

Gandhi seemed to become bitter for the first time in his life as he spoke to Congress that August

Here is a mantra, a short one, that I give you. You may imprint it on your hearts and let every breath of yours give expression to it. The mantra is Do or Die. We shall either free India or die in the attempt....consider yourself a free man or woman and act as if you are free and are no longer under the heel of this rebellion...this is open rebellion.⁴⁰

On August 15, 1947 official transfer of power took place. The greatest consensus is that India achieved freedom from the British as a result of a non-violent struggle led by Gandhi.

In 1947, after twenty-six years of nonviolent struggle under Gandhi's leadership, India won her political freedom from Britain... This was the first time in the history of the world that a great empire had been persuaded by nonviolent resistance to grant freedom to one of its subject countries.⁴¹

What should have been a momentous occasion was clouded by unparalleled tragedy. As a result of the partitioning of the sub-continent into Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan, the greatest refugee migration the world had ever known took place. Gandhi predicted a terrible legacy as a result of partition. The violence that the partition

agreement produced was far worse than anything that the politicians and even Gandhi had predicted. In his book "Stern Reckoning", Judge G.D. Khosla, set the number of deaths at 500,000.⁴²

As many as 10 million people were displaced on both sides of the new, arbitrarily constructed border. The largest single column of refugees that the world had ever known consisted of 800,000 people. Flying over it for fifteen minutes, at 200 miles an hour, a pilot said that he did not reach the end of one column.⁴³

The violence that began in the Punjab spread to other parts of India, often fuelled by rumour, speculation and hatred. Gandhi brought the parties together in Calcutta by fasting and prevented terrible bloodshed. Gandhi's last fast for non-violence took place in December of 1948. Kashmir, in northern India was still ruled by a maharaja. There were 800,000 Hindus and 3,200,000 Muslims. In September 1947 Pakistan began incursions into the independent state to support tribal dissension. The maharaja requested admittance to the Indian Union. They were duly admitted and India airlifted troops in order to prevent Pakistan from overrunning Kashmir. A small war broke out draining each country financially.

Gandhi approved of India's actions as he was against any partitioning of Kashmir. He felt that India had already been torn apart with one partition. He urged the leaders to arrive at an amicable settlement as quickly as possible and prevent any further deaths. Bloodshed continued in Calcutta and Delhi between Hindus and Muslims and violence was increasing. Gandhi considered the situation and declared that the fast was directed to "the conscience of all the Hindus in the Indian Union and to the Moslems of Pakistan."⁴⁴

There was no doubt that Gandhi would fast to death. He was reconciled to the fact that this could be his final fast and that he was ready to be received by God. No nebulous wording or loose promises would be satisfactory if he was to end his fast. Five days later a severely weakened Gandhi received an undertaking from the Congress president.

We take the pledge that we shall protect the life, property, and faith of the Moslems and that the incidents which have taken place in Delhi will not happen again. We want to assure Gandhiji that the annual fair at Kwaja Qutab-ud-Din Mazar will be held this year as in previous years. Moslems will be able to move about...just as they could in the past. The mosques which have been left by Moslems which are now in possession of Hindus and Sikhs will be returned. The areas which have been set aside for Moslems will not be forcibly occupied.⁴⁵

Gandhi spoke to both Muslim and Hindus in attendance. He accepted what they said but declared that he felt they did not accept full responsibility for all the troubles that occurred outside of Delhi. He was afraid that history would prove it an error that he gave up his fast. All Indians are brothers he told them, regardless of their being Hindu, Sikh or Muslim. He spoke on with great compassion and tears. Many sobbed openly. He recovered slowly and had to be carried about for the next few days.

Meanwhile a small group of men were determined to assassinate Gandhi. They held him responsible for the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Hindus in the Punjab. At 5.05 p.m. on January 30, Nathuram Godse, bowed to Gandhi at prayers and wished him well. He then shot him. Gandhi fell, murmured "Oh Rama" and died.

Gandhi was not influenced by any one particular source but by many. Those that had the most influence on him were the Bhagavad Gita, Ruskin, Tolstoy, Thoreau and the New Testament. Because of his commitment to non-violence he was open to the elements of the Christian tradition.

Gandhi first read the Gita in English as a student. He returned to it again and again and considered it "an infallible guide of conduct."⁴⁶ Gandhi discusses the impact that Ruskin's book "Unto This Last".

The book was impossible to lay aside, once I had begun it. It gripped me. Johannesburg to Durban was a twenty-four hours' journey. The train reached there in the evening. I could not get any sleep that night. I determined to change my life in accordance with the ideals of the book..⁴⁷

Of all the books that he had read in formal study this book "brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation" in his life.⁴⁸ This book was important enough to Gandhi that he translated it into Gujarati, calling it Sarvodaya, the welfare of all. It was

probably Ruskin's emphasis on equality that moved Gandhi so much.

I believe that I discovered some of my deepest convictions reflected in this great book of Ruskin and that is why it so captured me and made me transform my life.

The teachings of "Unto This Last" I understand to be:

1. That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
2. That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's inasmuch as all have the right of earning their livelihood from their work.
3. That a life of labour, i.e. the life of a tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living.

The first of these I knew. The second I had dimly realized. The third never occurred to me. "Unto This Last" made it as clear as daylight for me that the second and third were contained in the first. I arose with the dawn, ready to reduce these principles to practice.⁴⁹

Gandhi wrote of how Tolstoy's "The Kingdom of God is Within You" "overwhelmed" him. "It left an abiding impression on me. Before the independent thinking, profound morality and truthfulness of this book, all other books...seemed to pale into insignificance."⁵⁰ Tolstoy was an idealist and a perfectionist. He was constantly appalled at how far Christians lived from the real message and teachings of Jesus.

He read Thoreau while in a South African prison. Many of the ideas that he read in “Civil Disobedience” had already formed in his thoughts. He did however consider the work a “masterly treatise on the duty of Civil Disobedience.”⁵¹ It is interesting that he did not mention Thoreau in his biography. Gandhi was also impressed with Jesus’ non-violent life and his allegiance to the truth which eventually led to his death. He considered Christ a true Satyagrahi.

Gandhi wrote that he fell asleep reading the Old Testament, but he persevered and did not enjoy it. But the New Testament produced a different impression, especially the Sermon on the Mount which went “straight to my heart”. He compared it to the Gita.

The verses, ‘But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man take away thy coat let him have thy cloke (sic) too,’ delighted me beyond measure and put me in mind of Shamal Bhatt’s

For a bowl of water, give a goodly meal ;⁵²

For a kindly greeting bow down with zeal;

For a simple penny pay thou back with gold;

If thy life be rescued, life do not withhold.

Thus the words and actions of the wise regard;

Every little service tenfold they reward.

But the truly noble know all men as one,

And return with gladness good for evil done.⁵³

The concept of Ahimsa was well-known and well-established, in the history of religions but Gandhi transformed it into an extremely powerful instrument in the secular sphere. In a unique realization he accepted what was an individual, personal virtue with a strong religious connotation and applied it in a practical way for social and political change.

Gandhi saw three possible answers to injustice and oppression; accept the wrong and put up with it or run away; or stand and fight, or take what he considered the most courageous way, protesting exclusively by non-violent methods.

In 1920, he wrote in Young India:

Where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she should in a cowardly manner become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonour.

But I believe that non-violence is infinitely superior to violence, forgiveness is more manly than punishment... Let me not be misunderstood. Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from indomitable will... Non-violence is the law of our species, as violence is the law of the brute. The spirit lies dormant in

the brute, and he knows no law but that of physical might. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law-to the strength of the spirit.⁵⁴

His point was that it was better to take up arms and fight rather than be a coward in the fight against injustice. There was of course only one way for Gandhi and that was the way of non-violence. He stresses that non-violence is the way of courage.

A non-violent man or woman will and should die without retaliation, anger or malice, in self-defense or in defending the honour of his women folk. This is the highest form of bravery. If an individual or group of people are unable or unwilling to follow this great law of life, retaliation or resistance unto death is the second best, though a long way off from the first. Cowardice is impotence worse than violence. The coward desires revenge but being afraid to die, he looks to others, maybe to the government of the day, to do the work of defense for him. A coward is less than a man. He does not deserve to be a member of a society of men and women.⁵⁵

Ahimsa is not the way of the timid or the cowardly. It is the way of the brave ready to face death. He who perishes sword in hand is no doubt brave, but he who faces death without raising his little finger

and without flinching is braver. But he who surrenders his rice bags for fear of being beaten is a coward and no votary of ahimsa. He is innocent of ahimsa⁵⁶.

Gandhi took non-violence (ahimsa) from the non-secular to the political sphere in South Africa through Satyagraha. Satya - truth, agraha - adherence, holding on to (insistence). He referred to it as love force or soul force.⁵⁷ It also means holding firm to the truth, truth-fastness; standing up for what is known to be the truth. Satyagraha was not just a belief in the truth but it was something that was an active force, something to always hold on to. It was never at rest. Gandhi said that the very heart of Satyagraha is to be prepared to lay down one's life for what one considers to be right.

Gandhi wanted a word to accurately describe the action that the Indian community found it necessary to take. He asked the readers of "Indian Opinion", to suggest a name. His cousin, Maganlal Gandhi, suggested Sadagraha, firmness in a good cause. Gandhi was impressed by his cousin's insight and slightly changed the word to Satyagraha.⁵⁸

He proved the practicality of this method in his struggle in South Africa and paved the way for its use as a strong weapon in the fight against the British in India. If he was able to convince enough of India that Satyagraha was the method to adopt he knew India could be freed. It was important to Gandhi that people, his followers especially, realized that an eye for an eye kind of justice was not true justice. In fact he said that an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind. That was revenge, not justice. Justice was the ability to persuade the opponent through love and good-will. This places value on the human

person, who may be a sinner but still not deserving to be hated or hurt. The sin must be removed through non-violent means which aims only to remove the wrongfulness of the opponent. One must hate the sin he said, but not the sinner.

The term Satyagraha was coined by me in South Africa to express the force that the Indians there used for full eight years and it was coined in order to distinguish it from the movement then going on in the United Kingdom and South Africa under the name of Passive Resistance.

Its root meaning is holding on to truth, hence truth-force. I have also called it Love-force or Soul-force. In the application of Satyagraha I discovered in the earliest stages that pursuit of truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one's opponent but that he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy. For what appears to be truth to the one may appear error to the other. And patience means self-suffering. So the doctrine came to mean vindication of truth not by infliction of suffering on the opponent but on one's self.⁵⁹

Gandhi developed two types of Satyagraha action. The first was based on civil disobedience where an unjust law would be broken and the resister would go to jail. A point was made by the Satyagrahi because they were willing to go to jail for a just cause. Their opponents would eventually see the truth of the cause. The second type was non

co-operation. A series of strikes, boycotts, and refusal to pay taxes governed this type of Satyagraha. Examples of some of these actions such as the South African protests against the Head Tax, the Pass Laws, the Ahmedabad Textile Strike, the Hartal and Salt March are found in the first half of this chapter. His belief was that the power of the oppressor was based on the willingness of the people to obey. There were only 70,000 British troops upholding the rule of the British Empire in this country of 300 million people.⁶⁰

He believed that non-violence was the greatest, most active force in the world. One cannot be passively non-violent which was why he did not favour the term passive resistance. In spite of the negative particle non, it is not a negative force. The negative construction describes expected violence. Gandhi believes this restraint to be the chief and invariable manifestation of the inner spiritual force. He contrasts this “non-violence” with “un-violence”. A coward’s non-violence is un-violence.

A strict code of discipline was laid down by Gandhi for Satyagraha. In a 1930 article in “Young India”, he wrote:⁶¹

A Satyagrahi must never forget the distinction between evil and the evil-doer. He must not harbour ill-will or bitterness against the latter. He may not even employ needlessly offensive language against the evil person, however unrelieved his evil might be...A Satyagrahi will always try to overcome evil by good, anger by love, untruth by truth, himsa by Ahimsa. There is no other way of purging the world of evil...Although a Satyagraha can operate silently it requires a certain

amount of action on the part of the Satyagrahi. A Satyagrahi, for instance, must first mobilize public opinion against the evil which he is out to eradicate, by means of a wide and intensive agitation...An awakened and intelligent public opinion is the most potent weapon of a Satyagrahi.

In 1927 Gandhi laid out specific rules of Satyagraha, reminding the votaries that they “will strain every nerve to compass the end of the existing rule, will do no intentional injury in thought, word or deed to the person of a single Englishman.”⁶²

1. A Satyagrahi, i.e., a civil resister will harbour no anger.
2. He will suffer the anger of the opponent.
3. In doing so he will put up with assaults from the opponent, never retaliate; but he will not submit, out of fear of punishment or the like, to any order given in anger.
4. When any person in authority seeks to arrest a civil resister, he will voluntarily submit to the arrest, and he will not resist the attachment or removal of his own property, if any, when it is sought to be confiscated by the authorities.
5. If a civil resister has any property in his possession as a trustee, he will refuse to surrender it, even though in defending it he might lose his life. He will however, never retaliate.
6. Non-retaliation excludes swearing and cursing.
7. Therefore a civil resister will never insult his opponent, and therefore also not take part in many of the newly coined cries which are contrary to the spirit of ahimsa.

8. A civil resister will not salute the Union Jack, nor will he insult it or officials, English or Indian.
9. In the course of the struggle if any one insults an official or commits an assault upon him, a civil resister will protect such official or officials from the insult or attack even at the risk of his life.
10. If taken prisoner, behave in an exemplary manner.
11. As a member of a satyagraha unit, obey the orders of satyagraha leaders, and resign from the unit in the event of serious disagreement.
12. Do not expect guarantees for maintenance of dependants⁶³.

Thus he clearly laid out the conditions for a successful Satyagraha:

There can be no Satyagraha in an unjust cause. Satyagraha in a just cause is vain, if the men espousing it are not determined and capable of fighting and suffering to the end; and the slightest use of violence often defeats a just cause. Satyagraha excludes the use of violence in any shape or form, whether in thought, speech, or deed. Given a just cause, capacity for endless suffering and avoidance of violence, victory is a certainty.⁶⁴

Gandhi employed a variety of strategies according to what each Satyagraha had to accomplish. Sometimes a Satyagraha would employ more than one strategy.

The strategy of civil disobedience was not complying with an unjust law and suffering the consequences which usually meant jail. Sometimes the alternative was to pay a fine but usually the Satyagrahi refused to pay the fine. This strategy was used in South Africa to protest the Pass Law and the Head Tax. In India in 1930 to expedite talks on independence he threatened the withholding of taxes.

The strike strategy was used to gain better working conditions at the Ahmedabad textile strike. When complications arose Gandhi also used the fast as a supplement.

The fast was a tool that Gandhi used to indicate the seriousness of his cause. He was prepared to fast to the death if necessary. The fast was used successfully at Ahmedba. During independence negotiations, Gandhi felt a special clause on the "Depressed Classes" would further alienate the Untouchables from Indian society. He fasted on the premise that he would rather see Hinduism die than Untouchability perpetuated. During independence he fasted to stop the communal riots between the Hindus and Muslims with some effect in Calcutta and Delhi.

The hartal, a general strike was used as a weapon to protest the Rowlatt Bills which forbid Indians to own any literature, which was seditious according to the British.

Well organized marches were an effective strategy for gaining awareness. The best known was the Salt March.. He marched 241 miles, in 21 days, with his supporters to Dandi on the coast. In an act of civil disobedience took a lump of salt from the sea shore.

According to Gandhi, satya and ahimsa were not simply concepts to be aware of, but were values to be realized in both life and experience. The path of truth like ahimsa is very straight and clear. Two things are important in what Gandhi says. First,

one should care for the truth unceasingly, and secondly, one should attach greater value to it than anything else. The pursuit of truth should determine our entire conduct. "In such selfless search for Truth nobody can lose his bearings for long. Directly he takes to the wrong path. He stumbles, and is thus redirected to the right path." ⁶⁵

...without ahimsa it is not possible to seek and find Truth. Ahimsa and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like two sides of a coin, or rather of a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Who can say, which is the obverse, and which is the reverse? Nevertheless ahimsa is the means; Truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so ahimsa is our supreme duty. If we take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later. When once we have grasped this point, final victory is beyond question.

Truth is the end, Love a means thereto. We know what is Love or non-violence, although we find it difficult to follow the law of love. But as for Truth we know only a fraction of it. Perfect knowledge of Truth is difficult of attainment for man even like the perfect practice of non-violence.⁶⁶

Based on his belief and knowledge of ahimsa Gandhi knew that the truth of human nature corresponds to an innate desire for peace, freedom and dignity. Violence is

degrading and is the cause of hatred and falsehood. Non-violence would transform relationships and bring about a peaceful transfer of power.⁶⁷ He believed that it was impossible to ever perceive that violence could be used for good. It follows that the use of non-violence would always be positive and right; non-violence would always be negative and wrong. In "My Experiments With Truth", it is apparent that Gandhi correlates truth with non-violence. He often refers to non-violence as the way to realize the truth. The search for truth inevitably leads to the path of non-violence. For Gandhi the only realization of truth is through Ahimsa. He understood that truth was the integral part of Satyagraha. "To see the universal and all pervading spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creatures as oneself."⁶⁸

In the march towards Truth, anger, selfishness, hatred etc. naturally give way, for otherwise Truth would be impossible to attain. A man who is swayed by passions may have good intentions, may be truthful in word, but he will never find the Truth. A successful search for the Truth means complete deliverance from the dual throng such as of love and hate, happiness and misery⁶⁹

A strong belief in God supported Gandhi's belief in truth and non-violence:

Truth and non-violence are not possible without a living belief in God, meaning a self-existent, all knowing, living Force which inheres in every other force known to the world and which depends on none, and which will live when all other forces may conceivably perish or cease to act. I am unable to account for my life without belief in this all-embracing living Light.⁷⁰

He was very specific in his approach. In the search for truth, one cannot defer to convention. One must be flexible and open to correction. If someone is wrong they must be prepared to admit to it.⁷¹ His strategy was not evasive, he was always on the offensive, peacefully. His plan was to always confront his opponents in such a way that they could not avoid dealing with him. Even though he avoided violent confrontation towards his opponents he and his supporters were willing to confront violence. He was not afraid to die but would never kill or injure an opponent. Plainly for Gandhi, avoidance of any violence, is basic and elementary as is respect for all things living.

Gandhi was often asked to justify his reasons for denying the use of force. On the matter of Home Rule he was asked why the people could not use any means whatsoever, to achieve that end, even violence? After all the British used force when necessary. If a thief broke into your house surely you would be justified in using force to eject him?

Gandhi replied in characteristic manner:

Let us first take the argument that we are justified in gaining our end by using brute force because the English gained theirs by using similar means. It is perfectly true that they use brute force and that it is possible for us to do likewise, but by using similar means we can get only the same thing that they got. You will admit that we do not want that. Your belief that there is no connection between the means and the end is a great mistake.⁷²

The dealing with the thief is more complex for him. There are many variables says Gandhi. The thief could be a relative. He could be weak. He could be strong. He could be English. He could be armed, and so on. Depending on which he is, the situation would be dealt with in a different way. Fights could ensue if the robber comes back with more robbers. Neighbours could be affected. Your own peace is affected. You begin to live in fear of being robbed and attacked. What you must do is sit down and reason with the robber. While you are reasoning with him however he steals again. Rather than being driven to anger you must take pity on him. Leave your windows and doors open. Make everything accessible to him. When he comes again to rob he will be confused but steals nonetheless. Eventually his mind will become agitated. Eventually he will repent and return all your things. “The force of love and pity is infinitely greater than the force of arms. There is harm in the exercise of brute force, never in that of pity.”⁷³

The political side of Gandhi knew from past experiences, especially in South Africa, the importance of this philosophy. One of Jan Smuts’s assistants in South Africa

remarked to Gandhi, "I do not like your people, and do not care to assist them at all. But what am I to do? You help us in our days of need. How can we lay hands upon you? I often wish you took to violence like the English strikers, and then we would know how to dispose of you. But you will not injure even the enemy. You desire victory by self-suffering alone and never transgress your self-imposed limits of courtesy and chivalry. And that is what reduces us to sheer helplessness."⁷⁴

The core of Gandhi's teachings were meant for the entire world. His dream was to see all of humanity free and prospering. As well as fighting for India's independence, he fought for the rights of the Untouchables, advancement of women, land reform and social justice. He had long realized the injustices and hardships heaped upon the Harijans, Children of God, as Gandhi renamed the Untouchables. They were people condemned to a casteless life because of sins in a previous incarnation. Easily recognized by their dark skin, cringing manner and ragged clothing, they represented one sixth of India's population⁷⁵. Their children were not accepted in schools. Even their shadow could soil a caste Hindu. In some areas they were forbidden to leave their huts in the daytime. No Hindu could eat in their presence, drink from the same well or touch anything previously touched by them. Even in death they were pariahs as they were forbidden to use the common cremation grounds. Too often they were too poor to buy wood and their rotting bodies were left to the vultures. Since returning to India from South Africa, Gandhi worked tirelessly to advance their cause. Prior to independence he prepared a controversial fast to death to protect them. The end result was very promising and held hope for the future of the Harijans.

On the matter of women's rights, Gandhi felt that there was no true emancipation for India until women were emancipated. One half of the population, they were virtually without rights. They were subjected to child marriages, forbidden to remarry as widows, held hostage to exorbitant dowries and countless other abuses. Gandhi had them as full and active participants in his ashram and in the overall struggle for freedom. They stood in line with the men and were beaten by the authorities and went to jail alongside of the men. They served in the first cabinet and eventually India saw a women prime minister long before many Western countries.

By the use of truth and ahimsa, Gandhi's aim was to introduce Ram-Rajya, the Kingdom of God on earth, an era of unparalleled comfort, truth and justice, peace and happiness, after Independence. He envisaged, perhaps naively, an environment that could "generate a feeling of universal friendliness among all the beings."⁷⁶ His teachings were meant for all of humanity. Exploitation of one group of human beings by another must be abolished. The only way to this end is by truth and non-violence.

Endnotes

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- ¹⁴ Erik. H. Erikson, Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1969) 215-216
- ¹⁵ Gandhi, Satyagraha, 338-339
- ¹⁶ Fischer 117

¹⁷ Mehta 123

¹⁸ Mahadev Haribai Desai, A Righteous Struggle: A Chronicle of the Ahmedabad Textile Labourer's Fight for Justice. (Ahmedabad, India: Navijan Publishing House, 1951) 11

¹⁹ Desai 20

²⁰ Payne 323

²¹ Payne 329-332

²² Fischer 176

²³ Fischer 178-179

²⁴ Payne 337-340. Dyer gave no assistance whatsoever to any of the wounded and they were simply left to suffer or die. He personally directed the soldiers who were Gurkhas and Baluchi troops to always fire into the thickest part of the crowd. His intention was to cause a bloodletting that would be remembered for years to come and teach the subjects that they must obey British orders. As far as he was concerned at a very small cost in human lives he had upheld British peace in the Empire.

²⁵ Payne 389

²⁶ Payne 389

²⁷ Fischer 269

²⁸ Fischer 273

²⁹ Fischer 274

³⁰ Congress had boycotted the first Round Table Conference the previous year.

³¹ Payne 409

³² Payne 408-410

³³ Dr. Ambedkar was a distinguished lawyer. He had a strong physical presence, was stubborn and highly intellectual. His father and grandfather had seen service in the British army. He preferred British rule than to live under the centuries old Hindu discrimination. He had even once considered leading a mass movement of the Untouchable community into Islam. There was no love lost for Gandhi.

³⁴ Payne 431

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³⁹ Fischer 342-343

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⁷⁵ Collins and Lapierre 117.

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Chapter 7

After Gandhi in India

Probably no Indian has been mourned as deeply as Gandhi. He had challenged a great empire by means of a powerful, political struggle, the likes of which the world had never seen before. The large military presence at his funeral raises the question whether such a man of peace had been truly understood.

Gandhi knew that freeing India from the yoke of British rule would not solve India's problems. He said that an industrial economy stole work from people, and gave it to machines. It split society into two antagonistic classes. One of ownership, and one of labour. This in turn generated more government to regulate and support it, and in turn restricted individual freedom. He insisted that India could only become more healthy by revitalizing its villages, each one politically autonomous and economically self-reliant.¹

In this chapter the focus will be on two men, with very different personalities, but with common characteristics of compassion, dedication and boundless energy. Vinoba Bhave, who was Gandhi's spiritual heir and Jayaprakash Narayan, known as JP, who was probably the heir to the Mahatma's political side.

Vinoba Bhave is virtually unknown outside of India. He was born into a Brahmin family in Maharashtra in 1895. His family was deeply religious. Due to the fact that his father was in government service he spent a great deal of time with his grandfather, an extremely pious man who instilled much virtue in the young Vinoba. Extremely well educated he had a penchant for mathematics which became an important part of his life.²

An incident took place which illustrates this beautifully. For reasons of health Vinoba had to leave the Ashram for a period of a year. Exactly a year to the minute he returned, almost unnoticed and simply took his place in the kitchen peeling vegetables for the meals. Gandhi was surprised to see him back and welcomed him with affection.

Impressed by his punctuality, Gandhiji remarked:

“It shows your fidelity to the truth.”

“Rather, it is my loyalty to mathematics”, put in Vinoba politely.³

In 1916, he went to Benares, the holy city, searching for some answers to questions that he held deep within himself. After reading a report of one of Gandhi’s speeches, where he confronted an audience of British officials and Maharajas, condemning them for their riches, and calling for liberation through non-violent means, he was thrilled. Realizing that he belonged with Gandhi, he corresponded with him and soon joined him at his ashram where he spent the next five years.⁴

Eleven vows ended prayers at Gandhi’s ashram at the end of every day. Non-violence was the first, followed by: truthfulness, absolute honesty, chastity, poverty, manual work, temperance, fearlessness, respect for every religion, independence in the matter of money and avoidance of caste distinctions.

Gandhi’s regard for Vinoba was so high, that he said he understood his Gandhian thought better than he did himself. He showed this admiration by choosing him over Nehru, to lead a major Satyagraha in 1940 against British war policies.⁵ Like all those

who followed Gandhi and his policies of non-violence, he spent a good deal of time in jail where he reflected and refined his thoughts, and plans for the future.

After Gandhi's assassination, many followers looked to Vinoba for leadership and direction. Vinoba was as passionate about non-violence as Gandhi had been. He said that the right for which the non-violent person crusades must be self-evident. If it was an illusion or a pretence his mission would fail. A Satyagrahi must practice the virtues of loyalty, devotion, discipline, and above all courage. They must never betray or desert their leaders, never raise a hand against them, always show the respect that is due to them, even when they feel ill-treated. They must show the same feelings to their enemy. "If I wish to stay on the side of the just and the good, and count on the Divine Power which is the force of good, I must leave all violence to the wicked and throw away all evil on the side of evil". He said that non-violence was the newest and the oldest thing; the most traditional and the most revolutionary; the holiest and the humblest; the meekest and most demanding; the boldest and the sanest.⁶

At a conference of Gandhian political leaders and followers, Vinoba told the gathering, that as Swaraj had been reached, their new goal should be a society dedicated to Sarvodaya, the welfare of all. The name stuck, and they became known as the Sarvodaya Movement.⁷

One American study described Sarvodaya as "an ideal social order based upon nonviolence and envisaged in terms of harmonious, casteless, classless society with equal opportunity for all."⁸

Shortly after the conference, the Sarva Seva Sangh, Society for the Service of All, was founded. It became the core of the Sarvodaya Movement. As things began to develop many looked to Vinoba as a natural leader and successor to Gandhi. He preferred to quietly stay in his ashram, where he and his followers were working on becoming totally self-sufficient. He did not even attend the second Sarvodaya conference and had no plan to show up at the third in 1951. His colleagues threatened to cancel it if he did not attend, so he agreed to come. He decided however, to walk there, a distance of 315 miles. Along the way he visited many villages.⁹

At the end of the conference he decided that he would continue his mission, and walk to the nearby district of Telengana. A small guerrilla army had started an armed insurrection in this area. Comprised of poor villagers and idealistic, Communist students, they tried to redistribute the land owned by wealthy landlords by forcing them out, or killing them. The Indian army had been sent in to quell the uprising. The villagers suffered at the hands of both groups, who suspected them supporting the other side.

Vinoba hoped that he could end the violence. He refused a police escort and set off for the village of Pochampalli. He stayed with some Muslims and began receiving visitors in their courtyard. Most of the visitors were Harijans. After much discussion he asked how best they could be helped. They replied that if they could get some land to cultivate that they could solve most of their own problems. They asked Vinoba if he would ask the government to give them land.¹⁰

He remarked, "If land is not provided by the Government or if it takes time, cannot something be done by the village people themselves?"¹¹ A young villager suddenly stood

up and told Vinoba that he would make a gift of 100 acres. Vinoba was overcome with emotion. Later that evening he held an evening prayer session, and introduced this first donor¹² to the people. Vinoba had been in search of a non-violent solution to solve the problem of the landless and suddenly realized here was the solution. His mathematical mind must have begun to race as he calculated how much land would be required to solve the plight of the landless. He reasoned that 5 crores (a crore is a million) of acres would be required.¹³ The importance of this event is related here in Vinoba's words.

Further, I went on thinking that if I were to fear the mathematical figure and refuse to catch the hint from the event of the day, I had two courses open before me: either I must give up my faith in non-violence and accept violence as my creed or I should turn pessimist. I was prepared for neither. In the name of God, therefore, I went to sleep.¹⁴

Thus began the Bhoodan movement—"gift of land." During the next two months Vinoba visited 200 villages in Telengana asking for donations of land. He was greeted with great reverence by all who met him. He was happy among the poor. Happiness, he told people, is found in different kinds of manual labour. The life of the working poor was full of toil, but this was not something to be unhappy about. It was unfortunate that people had to work out of necessity and not out of love for the labour.¹⁵

The Bhoodan movement is founded on the rock of love and universal brotherhood of man. We in India should make a start towards our ultimate goal of oneness of the world by considering ourselves as Indians first. We must rise above parochial and caste distinctions. Bhoodan knows no language except the language of love.¹⁶

People who claimed the right to property, were according to Vinoba, enemies of God. Only God was able to be the owner of anything. The goal of his movement was to see that everything in the world was owned by the people, by the community.¹⁷

Having calculated that he would need one-fifth of India's farmland to supply the needs of the landless he approached the landowners. "I am your son, a member of your family. If you have four sons, I am the fifth and should be given my due share." To others he said, "...our ancestors used to perform Yajnas (a mission or offering) in order to restore peaceful conditions. To remove bitterness in the villages, I have started the Bhoodhan Yajna, and everyone should take part in it for the welfare of the masses."¹⁸

He described the Bhoodan Yajna "as an application of non-violence, an experiment in transformation of life itself."¹⁹

As I went on with the campaign, each day that passed brought out hidden meanings and disclosed new possibilities of this movement. Thus I grew in my own understanding of its vast potentialities and

had, what I may call a vision-a new revelation of the power of non-violence.²⁰

In the 51 days of his Telanga tour he collected over 12,000 acres. After he had left his workers stayed in the area to collect more land in his name. Over 100,000 additional acres were collected.²¹

The government suddenly took notice of Vinoba's crusade. They recognized it as an effective weapon against the growing strength of the communists. Nehru spoke in parliament and said that this frail man had accomplished more by non-violence than the military had been able to do by force.²² In order to keep the momentum going, the government gave large areas of land to the Sarvodaya program. One of most effective measures to support the program was to dispense with the land transfer tax, and other taxes involved with land donations.²³

Nehru asked Vinoba to come to the capital and offered to send a plane. He replied that he would come on his own time and in his usual way, which meant on foot. All the villages along the way welcomed him. By now he was known as, the god who gives away land.

The further effect of this non-violent success, was that the government began to consider other measures that they could take to alleviate the suffering of the less fortunate. They abolished certain taxes, and granted subsidies to encourage the production and sale of Khadi (hand - spun fabric). The government pledged to buy its homespun

requirements in Khadi shops. The president of the Republic, showed that he understood the need of heeding the advice, so often raised by Gandhi, about the importance of Khadi.

If I am not mistaken, he said, one man in charge of spindles in one factory throws two hundred spinners out of employment. One man in charge of several looms replaces a dozen weavers. By this you can reckon the amount of unemployment produced by one factory every day.²⁴

Once back at his ashram Vinoba continued to plan the advancement of Bhoodan. Shortage of land was obviously not limited to Telenga. One of the main reasons for poverty in rural India, was the amount of landless people. The movement continued to collect land. He wanted to have 2½ million acres donated by the 1954 Sarvodaya conference. Vinoba, led a campaign across Uttar Pradesh, where he collected 300,000 acres. He turned his sights next to Bihar, a place that had special meaning for him. It was the homeland of the Buddha, as well as the poorest state in India. Things did not go well in Bihar. Landlords were hostile and not interested in his goals. Some months into this difficult campaign he became sick and came close to death. This was the turning point, and much sympathy that had been aroused, translated into land donations. By the 1954 conference, he had reached his self-imposed deadline of 2½ million acres. At the end of the conference 3,200,000 acres were in hand.²⁵

In spite of various problems and difficulties, Vinoba persevered. By 1955 he was also requesting entire villages. This was the Gramdam, the village gift. By the end of 1957, the organization, Sarva Seva Sangh had 3,500 villages. The style of administration was such that no person could be pressured off or lose their land in difficult times. “While Bhoodan had been meant to prepare people for nonviolent revolution, Vinoba saw Gramdam as the revolution itself.”²⁶

Vinoba believed that success of the Gramdam would help people to learn to work together. Common ownership, common goals, and common decision making would bring about much needed unity. By 1960, only 7,000 villages were in the program.²⁷ In a country of a half-million villages, this was far from the non-violent revolution that had been sought. The majority were single-caste, Harijan villages, not what had been totally hoped for. For a number of reasons, in 1964, the movement began to slow down and lost momentum. In 1965, a famine revived interest when people realized the technical and financial help that was available to Gramdam villages. By 1966, 160,000 villages²⁸ were part of the program.

In early 1970, only a few thousand of the villages had actually transferred the land ownership to a village council and become properly organized. Many of the Sarvodaya workers were from well-off, rural and urban areas and were unwilling to live permanently with the poor. Also, there were not enough workers to cover all the villages that had declared themselves Gramdam. In 1971 the impetus of the Gramdam movement totally collapsed.

In early November, 1982, Vinoba now just passed his 87th birthday suffered a heart attack. He knew that his time to leave had come, so he simply stopped eating and on November 15 quietly passed on.

Jayaprakash Narayan, (J.P.), studied at Berkeley, and other U.S. colleges. He met different Communist professors and students during his studies, and was influenced by their philosophy. By the time he returned to India in 1929, he was a confirmed Marxist. He joined the Congress party and became the spokesman for the socialist group. Frustrated by the non-violent methods of Gandhi, he became critical of him. Their relations however were always cordial. Gandhi had a great respect for J.P.'s commitment and integrity.

J.P. was imprisoned at the outbreak of World War II as he spoke against the war effort. He escaped from prison and went underground to organize armed resistance. J.P. later said he eventually realized that the British felt less threatened by violent methods, than they were by Gandhi's tactics. He was something of a legend by the time he was recaptured. Just prior to independence day, and soon was released.²⁹

J.P. broke away from the Congress party to form the Socialist party. Prior to independence, he had been unhappy with the way the party was being run and had discussed his concerns with Gandhi.

Congress is not organizing the strength of the country. Merit does not count in Congress today. Caste and family relationships count.

This is the main reason we Socialists will not go into the Constituent Assembly.³⁰

Congress had formed a number of provincial governments and like many others, J.P. had seen the corruption and nepotism. He was also unhappy about the way the Congress depended upon the British to solve their problems with the Muslim league. He was of the opinion that they should just tell the British to go, that they would solve the problem themselves. Like some of the other Socialists he felt that the freedom, when it finally came, would be far more satisfying if the British were forcibly expelled.³¹

During his political career, he was offered a position by Nehru, that would have made him the number two man next to Nehru himself. He declined, something very few politicians could have done. Something was at work within him. The effect of Gandhi's influence, and the existing non-violence movement must have made an impression upon him. At the 1954 Sarvodaya conference, he publicly renounced his present political life, and offered himself to the Bhoodan as the first jivandan, life gift.³² He told Nehru in 1953 that "Bhoodan is the seed of love that is to grow into the tree of world peace."³³

Throughout the remainder of his active life he traveled widely with Sarvodaya, and became their main spokesman. He mediated armed conflicts between the central, and regional government. On a number of occasions he organized massive flood and famine relief operations.

In March 1974 seven students had been killed by the police during a protest against corruption, unemployment, high prices, and inadequate education funding in Bihar.

Distressed by the violence, the student leaders went to J.P.'s home and appealed to him, to help them organize along non-violent lines. Ailing at the time, J.P. heeded this call to non-violence. This was the beginning of a well-organized, mostly non-violent campaign that gathered 40,000 protesters at its height. Unfortunately J.P. was beaten by the police, suffering a broken arm and fractured skull. Three thousand young people were arrested. J.P. demanded to be arrested as well, but the police were under orders not to do so.³⁴

Realizing that the state government was not the real villain, he set his sights on bringing down Mrs. Gandhi and the Congress party. Helped by a coalition of workers, as well as local Gandhian workers, he drew huge crowds, not seen since the time of Gandhi. In March of 1975 he led a quarter of a million people in New Delhi to present a list of demands to Parliament.

Political and legal problems began to plague Mrs. Gandhi, and there were widespread calls for her resignation. At a huge rally in New Delhi, J.P. called on all Indians to immediately stop co-operating with the government, and asked the police, and army not to do anything that would violate India's Constitution. A few hours later a state of emergency was declared, and he was arrested along with hundreds of others. Some months later he was released due to illness.

After the state of emergency had been lifted, J.P. helped to organize all the coalition parties into a new Peoples Party, a Janata. As Mrs. Gandhi was swept out of power on March, 1977, J.P. called for a national campaign to set up local people's committees to watch the government and help guard against local injustices.³⁵

When J.P. died in October 1979, his death was “marked by funeral crowds of a size reportedly unmatched since the passing of Nehru.”³⁶

Today in India, the Ghandians are split along two lines, those who follow either the philosophy of Vinoba or J.P. Those following the branch of Vinoba promote a movement called Women’s Power Awakening. Vinoba like Gandhi believed that women had more than men to contribute towards the building of a non-violent society. They also head a campaign against the slaughter of cows, long a part of non-violence in Indian history. This is not only an issue of non-violence, but it is a potential damage to India’s self sufficient agricultural way of life³⁷. Useful plow and dairy animals are being slaughtered for export and to feed a meat-eating minority.

J.P.’s people committees continue to struggle and is now an adjunct of the Sarva Seva Sangh. The Sangh continues to strengthen their existing Sarvodaya groups. The followers of Gandhi have been enriched by the contributions and examples of J.P. and Vinoba who upheld the ideals of non-violence as laid down by Gandhi.

Endnotes Chapter7

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Chapter 8

Martin Luther King Jr.

There were several prominent western figures involved in non-violence after Gandhi. The ever present threat of nuclear war motivated local, national and international figures to focus on peace and disarmament. In the sixties and seventies, peace advocates in America became galvanized around the two main issues of injustice, the war in Vietnam and the civil rights movement. It was a time of great unrest where America seemed to have lost its way.

The civil rights movement did not begin when Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat for a white man. It did not begin when four students staged a sit-in at a whites only lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. It slowly grew out of centuries of mistreatment of blacks by white people and the government. Those who made up the movement were as diverse as America itself. They included the young and the old. They were of ages in between. They were left wing radicals. They were members of the black establishment. They were members of the black clergy who served their people in segregated churches. They were teachers who taught in segregated schools. They were waiters and cooks who served in segregated lunch counters and restaurants. They were students who began to expand their horizons at black universities, where black professors told them about the struggle of other oppressed minorities, and of leaders who led quiet non-violent revolutions. Leaders like Mohandas Gandhi.

Nobody followed in the footsteps of Gandhi like Martin Luther King Jr. While King is best known, for many reasons, it is important to note that there were many blacks, and some whites, who paved the way with individual actions. It was King who provided the inspiration for the civil rights movement.

Blacks were originally brought to America as slaves to work on the massive, labour intensive, rice and cotton plantations in the South. The Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 set them legally free. As federal forces withdrew, the blacks lost their protection and were at the mercy of new laws imposed by bitter southern states. Educationally and economically impoverished, the blacks were often worse off than before their freedom. Things were to get worse before they got better, starting with Plessy vs Ferguson of 1896. This was a Supreme Court Decision in which established the legality of separate but equal facilities for blacks. The result was even more segregated laws than before.¹ Despite the fact that slavery had been eliminated, social injustice was still a powerful force.

Martin Luther King Jr. was born into this inequitable society in Atlanta, in 1929. His family was middle-class, and lived in a comfortable black area of Atlanta just down the street from the Ebenezer Baptist Church. This was the church where Martin Sr., and his father-in-law before him were pastors. Life was comfortable for the young Martin growing up as a minister's son. Due to the Great Depression, 65% of all blacks in Atlanta were on relief of one kind or another and sharecroppers were being uprooted and thrown off the land.²

While growing up in the South of the 1930's the young Martin endured the humiliation of rigorously enforced segregation laws. Every facility throughout the South

was segregated. Railroad and bus stations had white and black waiting rooms, washrooms even water fountains. Movie theatres if they were open to blacks had a separate entrance, usually a rear one, and separate seating. Blacks, known as either Coloureds or Negroes were not allowed to use public parks, swimming pools, front entrances to department stores, or try on clothes in stores. Downtown soda fountains did not permit them to sit at the counter, but served them from a side window in a paper cup. Glass or metal dishes were reserved for white people only.

Martin Jr. was the second child. He and his older sister were doted on by their parents. Martin played with all the children in his neighbourhood including several who were white. When he was old enough to begin school his white friend told him that they could no longer play together because he was black, and that they would be going to different schools anyway. Young Martin was stunned. At six years of age he learned his first lesson in racism. Two years later he learned another when his father took him to buy a pair of shoes. The white store clerk told them that in order to be served they must go to the seats at the back of the store for coloured people. Martin's father refused and left the store. He told his son that he would oppose this system until the day he died.³ Once, when he was eleven a white woman that he had never seen before came up and slapped his face because he had apparently stepped on her foot. These are just a few of the incidents in a system that perpetuated violence to all Southern Blacks.

In 1944 at 15 he entered Morehouse College, an all black university where he studied Sociology, and considered going on to Law. At Morehouse he found a mentor in Dr. Benjamin Mays. He was a southern black who had been a pastor in the South prior to

becoming a college administrator. He wanted to see the churches playing a central role in the lives of the black community. Rather than simply giving relief and comfort from oppression he felt that the churches should become involved through social and political action.⁴

Involved in the NAACP, King also took time to be part of other organizations, one in particular which helped to shape his future outlook on the white community. As a member of the Intercollegiate Council, an integrated body of student representatives from different schools, he became convinced that:

We have many white persons as allies, particularly among the younger generation. I had been ready to resent the whole white race, but as I got to see more of white people my resentment was softened and a spirit of co-operation took its place.⁵

Another influence was the summer he spent working in Connecticut enjoying free access to all the public facilities denied to Blacks back home. He asked himself why did Blacks have to settle for less in Georgia than in Connecticut.

An ever abiding faith in God, quiet though it was, drew him closer to the Church. In 1947 he was ordained and was a full minister by the time he graduated. He became assistant pastor at the Ebenezer Baptist Church and decided to pursue theological studies. While attending Crozer Theological Seminary, Martin attended a 1950 lecture that was to have a profound influence on his life. Dr. Mordecai Johnson, was a university president

and an accredited observer at the founding of the U.N. Like King he was an alumnus of Morehouse. He had spent time in India and had come to lecture on Gandhi. Martin knew little of Gandhi and was sceptical of what was to come. He was overwhelmed by what he learned from the lecture. Gandhi had liberated India without a shot being fired; he had embraced the Untouchables, he had worked hard to remove much of the strife between Hindus and Muslims after Independence. Like many others he believed that the Mahatma had died a redemptive death. Non-violence had worked in India but “would it work in America where the whites, the large majority had staked their claim to the land long before the black minority obtained the first rudiments of citizenship?”⁶

The Johnson lecture was a pivotal event for King. He immediately purchased several books about Gandhi, and read them immediately. He was moved by the courage and spirit of the demonstrators who participated in the Salt March. The concept of Satyagraha, holding firmly to truth and love, impressed him deeply. Love was not a sign of weakness but strength. He was persuaded by Gandhi that the notion of “turning the other cheek”, and “loving your enemies was a very viable philosophy.

Gandhi was probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above mere interaction of individuals to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale. For Gandhi love was a potent instrument for social and collective transformation. It was in this Gandhian emphasis on love and nonviolence that I discovered the method for social reform that I had been seeking for many months.⁷

After completing his degree at Crozer, Martin won a scholarship to the School of Theology at Boston University. He went to study for his doctorate. Here he met and married his wife, Coretta. In 1954 with some reservations he took a job as a Baptist minister in Montgomery, Alabama. In May of the same year the Supreme Court banned segregation in public schools.⁸ It would be some years before this type of segregation was substantially overcome.

The first major success of what became known as the Civil Rights Movement, and the catalyst for every future event, was the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Rosa Parks, a young, dignified black woman refused to give her seat to a white man when the bus she was riding on became full. She was arrested and charged. King helped to lead a successful boycott of the buses by blacks in Montgomery. He was arrested and fined for leading an illegal boycott and his house was bombed. He knew that any violence from their side would invalidate their cause. He often reminded the people of this during the mass meetings that took place:

In our protest, there will be no cross burnings. No white person will be taken from his home by a hooded Negro mob and brutally murdered. There will be no threats and intimidation. We will be guided by the highest principles of law and order.⁹

During this period the Supreme Court declared Alabama's segregation laws unconstitutional. The boycotters were given workshops on non-violence, and taught how to handle potential verbal and physical abuse once they started riding integrated buses. Despite threats, shootings, bombings, and intimidation by the Ku Klux Klan, 50,000 people maintained their boycott for a year and sixteen days. They won.

Things had changed radically. People began to hold their heads up high. King had changed too. He had seen the effective power of non-violent resistance, and realized its power. He had realized like Gandhi that his cause was just, and he was willing to die for it. He recognized that all people were bound together, and that he must seek justice by adhering to truth and love. "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny."¹⁰ Other bus boycotts were organized throughout the South and met with success. Like Gandhi he recognized that non-violence does resist, but not violently.

By 1957, King and other black ministers had formed an alliance, the SCLC, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, to fight segregation. Time Magazine featured him in an article and he had become well known nationally. He was invited to Ghana to help celebrate their independence. A requested meeting with President Eisenhower to discuss the plight of blacks was turned down. Eisenhower was afraid of losing the powerful southern vote. Around this time a weak civil rights bill was passed that was completely ineffective. In spite of this Central High in Little Rock became integrated as a result of the groundwork that had been laid by the SCLC. Over 1,000 federal troops had to be called in to protect the students.

Realizing that the only way to complete success would be voter registration, King felt that the SCLC should turn its immediate attention to this task. During this time he maintained his job as pastor, was president of the SCLC, organized mass rallies in southern cities, maintained a busy public speaking schedule and tried to finish a book on his Montgomery experience. Even though he was a prominent national figure he continued to endure the prejudice of the South. He was stopped on the courthouse steps in Montgomery while trying to attend a case that Ralph Abernathy was involved in. Unknown to the white policemen, King was regarded as just another “uppity nigger” when he refused to leave. He was kned, choked and kicked by the policemen. The national press witnessed the whole affair and the entire country saw it the next day on the front pages. When it was discovered who they had arrested King was immediately released after being charged with insulting a police officer. He was given the choice of a ten dollar fine or fourteen days in jail. He chose jail and made a lengthy statement about the lack of southern justice.

He narrowly escaped death when stabbed by a deranged black woman while on a book signing tour in New York. King did not press charges. He was unshaken by this incident as he had already come to terms with the idea in Montgomery. Three weeks in hospital were required and a few months convalescence were required. A year before he had been invited to India by Nehru and decided that this would be the time to go. Besieged by reporters at the airport, he spoke:

To other countries I may go as a tourist, but to India I come as a pilgrim. This is because India means to me Mahatma Gandhi, a truly great man of the age. India also means to me Pandit Nehru and his wise statesmanship and intellectuality that are recognized the world over. Perhaps, above all, India is the land where techniques of nonviolent social change were developed, that my people have used... We have found them effective and sustaining--they work!¹¹

When a reporter asked him about the success of the Montgomery boycott he replied that the most important result was a "new sense of dignity and destiny."¹² Since the boycott movement had started in the south, thirty-five cities had voluntarily desegregated their buses.

He travelled extensively in India meeting a wide assortment of people, visiting villages and ashrams and spent time with both J.P. and Vinoba. In Bombay, he was deeply moved by the extensive poverty. In one address that he made, he credited Gandhi for blazing a trail that benefited all of humanity, a trail that when followed led to "enduring justice and enduring peace. In an age of thermonuclear weapons the choice is no longer between violence and nonviolence but between nonviolence and nonexistence."¹³

Martin returned to America with his soul renewed and full of hope. Black America at the time of his return was restless. A realistic assessment of the small gains and general lack of progress was bringing out a previously unknown militancy. In the north, the Nation of Islam under the guidance of Elijah Muhammed and Malcolm X, rejected King's

appeals to the conscience of white America. Another lynching in North Carolina led to the arming of a group of blacks who eventually engaged in a shootout with local authorities. Their attitude was that while the Montgomery bus boycott had worked, it was not the solution to every problem. King knew that the struggle for civil rights was reaching a crisis and knew that he had to take action. He resigned as pastor of his church and the next day issued a statement to the press:

The time has come for a bold, broad advance of the Southern campaign for equality. After prayerful consideration, I am convinced that the psychological moment has come when a concentrated drive against injustice can bring great, tangible gains. We must not let the present strategic opportunity pass. Very soon our new program will be announced. Not only will it include a stepped-up campaign of voter registration, but a full-scale assault will be made on discrimination and segregation of all forms. We must train our youth and adult leaders in the techniques of social change through nonviolent resistance. We must employ new methods of struggle involving the masses of the people.¹⁴

Along with the struggle for voter registration came the freedom rides and sit-ins. The first lunch counter sit in took place at the Woolworth's store in Greensboro, North Carolina, February 1, 1960. A group of black college students refused to move

until they were served. The police dragged them out. The protest spread rapidly. The SCLC trained the students in non-violent techniques.

When called names, they keep quiet. When hit, they do not strike back. Even when hostile white youths pull hair and snuff out burning cigarettes on the backs of the Negro girls, the girls do not retaliate. They pray and take what comes, in dignity.¹⁵

By early 1962 many lunch counters were integrated. This happened partly to avert possible violence, but pressure of economic boycotts led to quick resolutions in many communities.

Buses would be used in the next protest to test Supreme Court rulings that banned segregation on interstate trains and buses. Interracial groups boarded buses in Washington and headed south. They also planned to use the segregated waiting rooms at the stations. The first Freedom Ride bus was stopped in Anniston Alabama on May 14, 1961 and set on fire. As the riders escaped they were beaten by Klansmen with lead pipes, bicycle chains and baseball bats. The police did nothing for 15 minutes. In spite of this the Freedom Rides continued. More of the buses were bombed, people beaten, in some cases murdered, hundreds arrested but they continued the buses.

After a major failure in Albany that resulted in violence, King turned his attention to the Birmingham. Volunteers in the Birmingham Movement signed a pledge card that read in part:

**I HEREBY PLEDGE MYSELF-MY PERSON AND BODY-TO
THE NONVIOLENT MOVEMENT. THEREFORE I WILL KEEP
THE FOLLOWING TEN COMMANDMENTS:**

- 1. MEDITATE** daily on the life of Jesus.
- 2. REMEMBER** always that the nonviolent movement in Birmingham seeks justice and reconciliation-not victory.
- 3. WALK and TALK** in the manner of love, for God is love.
- 4. PRAY** daily to be used by God in order that all men might be free.
- 5. SACRIFICE** personal wishes in order that all men might be free.
- 6. OBSERVE** with both friend and foe the ordinary rules of courtesy.
- 7. SEEK** to perform regular service for others and for the world.
- 8. REFRAIN** from the violence of fist, tongue, or heart.
- 9. STRIVE** to be in good spiritual and bodily health.
- 10. FOLLOW** the directions of the movement and of the captain on a demonstration.¹⁶

Whether or not the idea came from Gandhi he had also made his Satyagrahis take a personal vow of non-violence embodying a similar philosophy.

Birmingham's reputation for vicious segregation was not unwarranted. Blacks were regularly maimed, beaten and murdered. The police chief, Eugene "Bull" Connor was an avowed racist. He proclaimed that blood would run in the streets of Birmingham

before the city would be integrated. Through April and May there were marches and protests. On May 1, 1000 young people marched into downtown Birmingham, clapping and singing. They were going to the court house, to pray outside. Nine hundred were arrested. The next day they went again to pray. There were 2500, carrying signs that said "Freedom." Bull Connor told them to stop their march but they refused. He had high powered hoses turned on the young people, some as young as six. They were battered into walls, smashed to the ground, and had clothing ripped from their bodies by the force of the water. Dogs were turned on them. Several people were badly bitten. America was deeply shaken that night when it saw these images on their late night news. Within the next 24 hours the whole world had seen America's brutality. Eventually the jails were full. They could hold no more. Over 3000 people were in jail. On Sunday, May 5 thousands marched to the jail to pray. Ranks of fireman and police with high powered hoses were waiting for them. Connor screamed at his men to stop them but slowly the ranks opened and let the marchers through. Several fireman were seen with tears rolling down their cheeks.¹⁷ King saw this as one of the most powerful evidences of the use of non-violence. The next day the city began serious negotiations with the SCLC for fear of serious financial upheaval. Things were quiet for the next several months and sporadic violence against the black community continued but in the end Birmingham turned the tide for civil rights legislation.

August 28, 1963, Martin was scheduled as the final speaker at the mass Washington rally. Organizers had hoped for perhaps 100,000 people to show their support for civil rights. They were overwhelmed at the final turnout of over 250,000 from

all over America. It was here that King delivered his famous “I Have A Dream” speech. The latter part, the best known was delivered after he put aside his prepared speech.¹⁸

The “I Have A Dream Speech” epitomizes King’s hopes and goals, his belief in God and search for justice, his search for truth and justice. He was interested in justice for all, not just black justice. He spoke of a new age, an age where “men will live together as brothers...a world in which all men will respect the dignity and worth of the human personality.” His hope and sustaining faith is echoed in the latter part:

When we let freedom ring...we will be able to speed up that day when all of God’s children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestant and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, “Free at Last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!”

In 1964 King was awarded the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize. His acceptance speech was inspired by his religious beliefs and showed his hopes for the future.

I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits. I believe that what self-centred have torn down men other centred can build up. I still believe that one day mankind will bow down before the altars of God

and be crowned triumphant over war and bloodshed, and nonviolent redemptive goodwill will proclaim the rule of the land. “And the lion and the lamb shall lie down together and every man shall sit under his own vine and fig tree and none shall be afraid.” I still believe that we shall overcome.¹⁹

The Civil Rights Act, ensuring integration of all public facilities and schools was signed into law the same year. Throughout 1964 and 1965 King led the campaign for voting rights in Alabama. They were constantly thwarted by Governor Wallace another avowed segregationist. Finally with the help of the Federal Government and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 voter registration became a reality.

King began to turn his attention to two other matters that poverty and the war in Vietnam. As well as challenging segregation he told blacks that they had to work together to improve their situation. He spoke of Gandhi who had encouraged local craft work, spinning and weaving. This he said had allowed some economic independence to the local community. He reminded blacks that “all labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence.”²⁰ He told people of the need to work hard to raise their own standards of conduct.

We know that there are many things wrong in the white world. But there are many things wrong in the black world too. We can't keep

on blaming the white man. There are many things that we must do for ourselves.²¹

The SCLC put a plan into action that they called Operation Breadbasket. The idea was that because white owned businesses in black areas made money from blacks, they should hire black people. If not they would be boycotted. The most successful operation was in Chicago, run by a young man known as Jesse Jackson. King also wanted the federal government to do more for poor people. Gandhi had embarked on similar programs in India by encouraging local villagers to become more self-sufficient and less dependent on imported British goods.

The more involved the United States became involved in Vietnam, a war that King considered immoral, the more he felt that he had to speak out. The enormous economic cost and cost of human lives was deeply troubling to him.

We were taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them 8,000 miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in Southwest Georgia and East Harlem. So we have been repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools. So we watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village but we realize that they would never live on the

same block in Detroit. I could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor.²²

King began to plan for a bold new strategy that would alert the country to the plight of the poor, especially the poor blacks. There was massive unemployment among blacks. However he wanted to form a coalition with other poor groups such as Native Americans, Hispanics and Appalachian whites. This situation comprised a “depression more staggering than the depression of the thirties... We have developed an underclass in this nation, and unless this underclass is made a working class, we are going to continue having problems.”²³

In 1968 on Lincoln’s birthday, an all-day meeting decided on the strategy for the Poor People’s Campaign. Groups would set off from ten cities and five rural districts. They would march from black ghettos in Boston, Chicago, Newark, Philadelphia, Louisville, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Mississippi, Savannah and Charleston. The exact details would still have to be worked out. Everyone on the SCLC planning committee was excited and re-invigorated by this planned action. Planning was well under way when King got a phone call from a pastor who was a friend of his in Memphis. A sanitation worker’s strike had resulted in some police brutality, and refusal by the city to negotiate with them. His staff did not want him to go for fear of distraction from the task at hand. He reasoned that as he was going to Mississippi to recruit marchers that he could easily stop over in Memphis.

He spoke at a church in Memphis the night before the rally, and spoke of the progress made and the struggle yet to come. It was as if he foresaw his death as he spoke:

We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop. I won't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over, and I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the promised land. So I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. 'Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord' ”²⁴

The next evening after he had prepared for the rally he stood on the balcony of the motel chatting with workers. An assassin's bullet struck him down and he was pronounced dead shortly after his arrival at the hospital.

Like the death of Gandhi, the death of King marked the end of an era. Gandhi had seen the political independence of a great nation from start to finish. King had led the most significant phase of the modern civil rights movement. Non-violence was not a cure-all for King but it was a means to an end that would allow people to live in peace and

dignity. He knew that conflict in the search for equality was inevitable and that violence would never solve the problem.

King was in harmony with Gandhi on most secular and religious issues. Like Gandhi, King knew of their unifying power and strength of love. It enabled him to see beyond the boundaries of colour, race, religion, class and origin. Without God, for King, this was not possible. There is no human situation that cannot be resolved by respect for the infinite worth of all human beings and the belief that we are better served in a community without barriers. When people lose sight of this perspective, they lose sight of the transcendent love of God. All things were possible with a belief in the Divine. God was indispensable to their causes.

Both King and Gandhi were able to overcome fear due to their belief in God. Neither were afraid to die. They had an unfailing belief in the equality of all of humanity. The basis for King's belief was that all human beings have dignity and worth, and that God created all people in His image. All people are sacred because of their origins from the Divine source. Gandhi's belief stemmed from his belief in the rich religious traditions of India and also that all human beings originate from the Divine source.

Racism of any kind was a denial of this Divine origin. An enduring legacy is his philosophy and use of non-violence for moral and social change. To challenge violence with non-violence was a radical move in a society where violence has historically been met with violence. For King non-violence was the only solution. "Nonviolence is a powerful and just weapon which cuts without wounding and ennoble the man who wields it. It is a sword that heals."²⁵

His legacy is not only in his contribution to civil rights but in other significant areas such as politics, education, housing and the general betterment and advancement of African-Americans. Much of the work now being done by Operation Push, the National Urban League, the NAACP, the SCLC, the United Farm Workers and other organizations is built on King's leadership and ethic of non-violence.²⁶

His strategy of non-violence for social change was never meant to replace the work being done by such organizations as the SCLC and the NAACP but he knew from past lessons in history good intentions do not necessarily bring about change. Laws, to help remedy injustice may be passed with good intentions, but if they are not obeyed, and not enforced they do not help those that they were intended to help. As Gandhi said, "Privileged groups rarely give up their privileges without strong resistance." King followed much the same path as Gandhi in his resolution to accomplishing his cause.

The first was the coward's way according to both King and Gandhi, to submit passively and cooperate with the system. King said that this was wrong that one is simply sanctioning the evil. The second option is physical violence. This sometimes brings results but they are never lasting. Violence thrives on hate and often makes any reconciliation or love impossible. Last and most effective is non-violent resistance. Richard Gregg in his book. "The Power of Non-Violence," states, "The conduct of the nonviolent resister is not one of mere passive waiting or endurance. Toward his opponent he is not aggressive physically, but his mind and emotions are active." In a footnote, King wrote:

For while the nonviolent resister is passive in the sense that he is not physically aggressive toward his opponent, his mind and emotions are always active, constantly seeking to persuade his opponent that he is wrong. The method is passive physically, but strongly active spiritually. It is not passive nonresistance to evil, it is active nonviolent resistance to evil.²⁷

The power of King's belief in non-violence lay in two areas. First was the overwhelming influence of Gandhi's actions and writings. The freedom and independence of India was an historical proof. The other was, like Gandhi, in his powerful belief in God. Non-violence was grounded for King in the Christian tradition. It was the way of Jesus, who proclaimed it in the Sermon on the Mount, and who died for his belief in the truth. "Non-violence derives its power from its participation in ultimate truth, because it is in harmony with the moral laws of the universe."²⁸ He recognized the power of non-violence and knew from Gandhi before him that truth will always endure. He agreed with Gandhi's view of truth, that truth was the very breath of life. Without truth there is no true knowledge.

King's nonviolent leadership remains a legacy because he rightly perceived nonviolence to contain elements of universal truth. Means and ends cohere. Violent means will not produce just or peaceful

ends in the long run. Hate begets hate; violence begets violence. In the long run only truth will endure.²⁹

At the time of the Montgomery boycott King's concern was simply to redress the grievances of the black citizens unable to ride the buses with equality. Because of who he was, King wanted to handle the protest in a Christian way. With Thoreau in mind he used the term noncooperation with the thought that to "cooperate with an evil system is to acquiesce in it."³⁰ The bus boycott was a protest against an evil system. King concluded that non-violence was the only practical way to win. As his personal philosophy matured non-violence of Gandhi, became the core of all his planning and action. King had begun to study Gandhi in greater detail and saw a similarity in their struggles. He continuously wrote about and talked about how the Mahatma had accomplished independence and an amount of social justice by non-violent means.

Gandhi had begun his fight for social justice in South Africa on several issues: indentured labour, the discriminatory pass laws, low wages, child marriages, poor sanitation and more. Like Gandhi, King refused to separate the spiritual and the secular world. He constantly appealed to the Christian churches to help in the fight against segregation, poverty, poor living conditions in both the rural south and big city ghettos, high unemployment and more.

For King, the Christian idea of love was part of his non-violent action. He knew that a true Christian must not bring harm on another human being.

The phrase most often heard was "Christian love." It was the Sermon on the Mount, rather than a doctrine of passive resistance, that initially inspired the Negroes of Montgomery to dignified social action. It was Jesus of Nazareth that stirred the Negroes to protest with the creative weapon of love.³¹

There was no question about the relationship of spirituality and non-violence in King's beliefs. "Perhaps even more vital in the Negro's resistance to violence was the force of his deeply rooted spiritual beliefs."³² This was the reason that the black churches almost without exception were involved in the fight for racial justice.³³

The doctrine they preached was a nonviolent doctrine. It was not a doctrine that made their followers yearn for revenge but one that called upon them to champion change. It was not a doctrine that asked an eye for an eye but one that summoned men to seek to open the eyes of blind prejudice. The Negro turned his back on force because he knew he could not win his freedom through physical force but also because he believed that through physical force he could lose his soul.³⁴

The religious tradition of the Negro had shown him that the nonviolent resistance of the early Christians had constituted a moral

offensive of such overriding power that it shook the Roman Empire...The non-violent ethic of Mahatma Gandhi...freed more than three hundred and fifty million people.³⁵

Belief in God by Gandhi and King was pivotal in their accomplishments. As stated in chapter six, publicly Gandhi's aim was to liberate India, but his private aim was to meet God face to face. Belief in God was an indispensable qualification for a Satyagrahi. One could not be a true Satyagrahi without faith in God.³⁶ His ultimate mainstay was his belief in God. It was impossible to suffer quietly without a murmur, without the strength that comes only from God. All the strength that he received, and maintained was from God. One of his quotes at the time of the Vykom Satyagraha³⁷ was a Tamil proverb. "God is the only help for the helpless." Human beings are able to fail people, but God will never fail them. Gandhi never pushed his beliefs on anyone. Even though there was but one God, he appreciated that there were different definitions. Whatever the type of belief or definition, that belief should be the ultimate mainstay of the believer.

It was King's faith in God that sustained him throughout the entire civil right's struggle. This is evidenced in his addresses and speeches. The references increased as time went on. In his student days he concluded that intellectual certainty about God was impossible. It was a process that was ongoing, but was unreachable. By the time he was fully immersed in the civil rights struggle, God had become a very personal God. He was his constant companion and someone that he communicated with and asked constantly asked for guidance and protection.

It was his belief in God, and his commitment to non-violence that allowed Martin Luther King Jr., to accomplish what he did in his lifetime. In writing his own epitaph he said that it should not be mentioned that he won the Nobel Peace Prize, nor that he had 400 other awards. This was not important. What was important was for someone to say that he tried to love somebody, that he tried to feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, and that he visited those in prison. "I want you to say that I tried to love and serve humanity."³⁸

Many individuals and organizations were influenced by Martin Luther King Jr. Certainly he delivered and left a liberating message for all Blacks. He was a man full of dignity and honour, who left a new sense of worth, and self-esteem to black America. King constantly spoke out against racism, militarism and poverty. His moral vision, like Gandhi's was for the world.

Endnotes Chapter 8

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- ¹ Nancy Shuker, Martin Luther King (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1985) 26.
- ² William Robert Miller, Martin Luther King Jr. (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1968) 6.
- ³ Miller 9.
- ⁴ Shuker 37.
- ⁵ Miller 12.
- ⁶ Miller 20.
- ⁷ Martin Luther King Jr. Stride Toward Freedom (New York: Perennial Library, 1964) 73.
- ⁸ In the case Brown vs. The Board of Education the court overturned Plessy vs. Ferguson. It ruled that separate black schools did not provide an equal education for blacks and that public schools should integrate.
- ⁹ Shuker 53.
- ¹⁰ Shuker 45.
- ¹¹ Miller 73.
- ¹² Miller 74.
- ¹³ Miller 78.
- ¹⁴ Miller 84-85.
- ¹⁵ Miller 89.
- ¹⁶ John J. Ansbro, Martin Luther King, Jr. The Making of a Mind (New York: Orbis Books, 1982) vi.
- ¹⁷ Shuker 85-88.

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- ¹⁸ Shuker 18.
- ¹⁹ Zepp 219.
- ²⁰ Ansbro 143.
- ²¹ Ansbro 143-144.
- ²² Shuker 102.
- ²³ Miller 263.
- ²⁴ Miller 277.
- ²⁵ Martin Luther King, Jr. Why We Can't Wait (New York: Mentor Books, 1964) I.
- ²⁶ Ervin Smith, The Ethics of Martin Luther King, Jr. (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1981) 156.
- ²⁷ Ira G. Zepp, Jr. The Social Vision of Martin Luther King, Jr. (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, 1971) 101.
- ²⁸ Smith 156.
- ²⁹ Smith 155.
- ³⁰ Smith 98.
- ³¹ Smith 99.
- ³² King 35.
- ³³ It is worth mentioning that King was always deeply distressed by the lack of action by much of the Christian church in the early days of the struggle and also prior to that. He also saw in weakness in their lack of response to social problems. Criticism was not only reserved for the white churches he said of some black churches "that its members may have more religion in their hands and feet than in their hearts and souls."
- ³⁴ King 35.
- ³⁵ King 37.
- ³⁶ M.K. Gandhi, Non-Violent Resistance (New York: Schocken Books, 1961) 365.

³⁷ The Vykom Satyagraha was one that Gandhi did not lead. He only became involved when things did not go well. It was to allow Untouchables access to roads and paths that went by and near Hindu temples and possibly even access to the temples to worship.

³⁸ Ansbro 1.

Conclusion

The term non-violence includes not only non-killing, but a negation of any form of injury by words, deeds or thoughts. As such non-violence becomes the very basis of all moral qualities. Lying for instance, is a kind of violence to another. Such forms of negative behaviour are also included in the concept of non-violence. In the religious traditions of India non-violence or ahimsa is the foremost virtue mentioned for the moral and spiritual discipline.

Non-violence is not simply a moral principle figuring in the Indian religious traditions, but it was backed by sound philosophical reasons and life world views. Those traditions are holistic in their life—and world view. They envisage the entire world as one organic structure in which all the diverse components are vitally interconnected, constituting a cosmic web of life. Actually non-violence extends not only to human beings, but to all forms, even the tiniest and most insignificant of sub-human life. Jainism for instance says ahimsa is the highest virtue. Our world is such an organic inter-related phenomenon, that an imbalance, an injury, or disruption in one aspect has the potential to affect the ecology of the entire world.

In the previous chapters the history of non-violence in the Indian religious traditions has been traced and their underpinnings examined. Direct references to non-violence were not found in the earliest text of the Vedas. However, the Vedic writings clearly illustrated life affirming principles and a sense of unity and harmony within the

society. The seeds of non-violence were sown that time and began to emerge clearly, later in the Upanishads.

Each of the three religious traditions contributed their own philosophy to the ethic of non-violence. Hinduism nurtured the principles of organicity of the world and immanence of life which constitute the basis of all the later practices of non-violence.

Buddhism stresses the principle of inter-relatedness, and inter-dependence of all phenomena. Buddhism and Jainism rebelled against the ritualism of the early Vedic tradition involving sacrificial killing of the animals, thus eventually bringing forth another emphasis on non-violence. The ethical system of Jainism gave paramount importance to non-violence and placed it at the core of its entire doctrine.

The emergence of non-violence as a system of a social, political and economic way of life was something new in the sixth century BCE, but remained as part of one's religious way of life until one man enlarged it into a social movement into which all the members of the society participated. It was Mahatma Gandhi, who was perhaps the first powerful exponent of non-violence as a means for political and social change. According to Gandhi, non-violence was not simply a virtue for individual inner development. Gandhi's non-violence was wedded to the concept of truth. What was truth, must be accomplished through non-violence. He was the first one who implemented non-violence and peaceful resistance for what was regarded as just in the political and social spheres. Gandhi was an epoch maker who represented a synthesis of the past and the present by virtue of his being rooted in the religious tradition of India, his legal acumen and political

sagacity. He was thus able to formulate a practical science of Satyagraha or truth-force for the purpose of reform.

In India Gandhi triggered Vinoba Bhave, his spiritual successor, who continued Gandhi's non-violent approach for the purpose of land reform and social change. His work was directed to making land available for the landless through voluntary gifts by the landowners. Jayaprakash Narayan, an intellectual who started out as a revolutionary fighter of the freedom movement, was later on convinced to join the sarvodaya, (universal well-being), movement after independence. Both Vinoba and J.P., as he was endearingly called, carried on the tradition of non-violence in India after the death of Gandhi. Today the followers of Gandhi and Bhave continue the work from their organizations and centres of activity in a silent, but positive reconstruction.

The contribution of Gandhi to non-violence was not limited to India. It slowly spread throughout the world. No wonder the effectiveness of Gandhi's ideas and work for the political independence of India became an unfailing source of inspiration and learning for the great, western liberator of the American blacks, Martin Luther King, Jr. He helped to free the blacks from the white racial prejudices and persecution. Both men recognized that truth and non-violence go hand in hand. They had an intellectual realization of what was right and just. It was put into practice by the use of the non-violent method, which alone can render service to truth and maintain its integrity and dignity. Non-violence is preservation of truth without defiling it by violence and destruction. Thus one maintains the sanctity and spirit of truth. Gandhi and his followers always insisted on the consistency and purity of ends and means.

Gandhi was the channel through which the tradition of non-violence was disseminated to the rest of the world. He combined both the religious ideal of non-violence, and practical action orientedness of the west. His adherence to Truth, Ahimsa and Satyagraha reinforced King's own understanding of the teachings of Christian non-violence and love through the Sermon on the Mount. The latter was an essential part of both men's philosophy of non-violence.

An important result of how the long tradition of non-violence in India really worked, was realized by King on his visit to India in 1959. He saw that the relationship between Britain and India was free of almost all acrimony. He marvelled at this and saw in a new important light that non-violence was the route to follow to achieve social change and liberation of his people. What he found in India's experience was what he hoped to achieve between whites and blacks in America by non-violent means.

There were so many things in common between Gandhi and King. When a law is unjust and violated the dignity of the person, both men knew that a Satyagraha or non-violent opposition was called for. Both men were concerned with the social dimension of life and were determined to change existing social structures. They both believed in the goodness of humanity and said that through non-violence and love, society could begin to change in a positive and permanent manner. The utilization of Gandhi's philosophy, and non-violent techniques by King, helped him to make huge strides with the cause of civil rights in America.

It is remarkable that Gandhi's own traditionally derived view of non-violence was complimented, and strengthened by the western religious writings of the Bible and writers

such as Thoreau, Ruskin and Tolstoy. Gandhi synthesized all these ideas in his own view since he was intent upon finding confirmation of the principle of non-violence.

The rich religious tradition of India that originated at least 4000 years ago, made its way to America, and the west through Mahatma Gandhi in the civil rights movement launched by Martin Luther King, Jr. Through the legacy of these two great individuals the way of non-violence exerts a world-wide influence today. While equality is far from perfect in America today, the social and economic situation is greatly improved with regard to the black community due to the successful civil rights progress that King initiated.

There is a large black middle class that did not exist in his times. Many southern states have black governors, senators, mayors, judges, sheriffs and police officers, something that did not exist in those days. To ensure opportunities for blacks in academia and employment, policies of affirmative action and employment equity have been instituted. They were sometimes controversial and were met with resistance but they indicated the recognition of the need for change in the civil life of black people

The impact of both of Gandhi and King is still prominent in the world today. In a recent demonstration in Spain, over the murder of a local politician by the terrorist group E.T.A. almost one million people marched peacefully in the street. Not even one window was broken. It is virtually a basic assumption of democratic countries that resolutions of conflict situations and conciliation be handled in a non-violent manner. Demonstrations for peace and social justice in many countries of the world are quiet orderly marches.

They often consist of thousands of people marching in the street quietly carrying candles at twilight, or carrying signs calling for peace.

Thus it would not be much of an exaggeration to say that Gandhi and King have been major, potent figures, who have by virtue of their non-violent and peaceful revolutions, and their ultimate martyrdom, modified, and given a definite direction to our approach to the resolution of the problems. Nothing could be a more important legacy to the Indian religious tradition.

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