

# ***A JOURNEY OF AHIMSA***

**[ Bhagwan Mahavir to Mahatma Gandhi ]**

**Kumarpal Desai**

**Shri Jaybhikhkhu Sahitya Trust  
Ahmedabad (India)**

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DEDICATED  
TO  
**VIRENDRA SHAH**  
AND  
**KALPANA SHAH**  
NEW JERSEY, U.S.A.



There was a time, in the past, when the world was confronted with two alternatives — violence or non-violence. Today the two alternatives before the world are – non-violence or humanity's extinction. Man's very existence is in peril today with the wave of violence sweeping globally. Terrorism has become a global phenomenon and nations are at war, resulting in bloodshed and killings. There is violence in each and every society and has percolated down to the domestic life. An individual today is more violent. A schoolboy does not hesitate killing a classmate over a petty matter. Killing a person belonging to another race or community has become the order of the day. Thus at the level of an individual and society, violence has almost become a way of life.

In the Indian scriptures there is the story of Bhasmasur. He worshipped Lord Shiva and through severe penance propitiated Him. Shiva was pleased and granted him a boon - whatever he touches, will turn to ashes. Bhasmasur wanted to test the efficacy of the boon and thought to test it on Bhagwan Shiva.



Shiva, realizing the consequence, was on the run to avoid getting reduced to ashes. Well, the moral is that violence engulfs one and all, spreading its tentacles far and wide. The Bhasmasur story has the same message. At last Bhagwan Shiva assumes the form of Mohini – femme fatale – and Bhasmasur, attracted by the seductive charm began to dance and placed his hand on his head. This resulted in his own destruction. Violence is like Bhasmasur, which ultimately consumes its perpetrator.



Bhagwan Mahavir taught the lesson of non-violence more than two millennium ago and it was the key to turn man into a super being. That lesson of non-violence preached by him was not confined to 'live and let live' for the human beings but it encompassed all the living organisms such as birds and animals and the entire world of nature. Bhagwan Mahavir had said:

तुंगं न मंदराओ, आगासाओ किंसाभयं नत्थि ।  
जह तह जयंमि जाणसु, धम्ममहिंसासमं नत्थि ॥

*[There is nothing in this world higher than Mountain Meru. Similarly there is no religion greater than non-violence.]*

During Mahavir's time, animals were sacrificed in performing *yagna* (sacrificial fire) and mute animals were, thus, subjected to cruelty and torture at the altar. This was done in order to achieve *moksha* or a place in heaven. The kings would not hesitate to fight and kill to satisfy their greed for more lands and to realize their inordinate ambitions. It was believed that those who died fighting on a battlefield would earn a place in heaven and enjoy the proximity of *devkanyas* (divine women). If victory were achieved, then they would relish its fruit – riches and prosperity. In those days innumerable women were widowed and children rendered orphans. In the orgy of violence, innocent lives were lost.

Mahavir said : "You have no right to kill those whom you can not invest with life. Violence begets violence and revenge begets revenge. Non-violence is the supreme *dharma* (religion) and violence is the root of all evils."

He preached the message of non-violence and peace to the kings of his times. It was an all-encompassing creed extending to the entire living world.



*Acharang Sutra* says : आयातुले पयासु – consider all living organisms to be as precious as your own self. Those who can be cruel to animals can be cruel to human beings too. Violence is not external behavior or conduct but inner evil instinct. One who harbors cruelty or violence in the heart will be violent to one and all and one who has the spring of compassion in the heart will be compassionate to all living creatures, including the world of nature.



He also said that the soul happens to be in one *Yoni* (Tortoise like raised birthplace) in this birth and it may be in another in the next birth. If one is a fly today, he is likely to be a human being in the next and hence a human being has no right to cause pain to non-human beings. One must, therefore, treat all creatures with love and compassion. In *Aagam Sutra* (Canonical Literature), Mahavir says; “You are the one whom you intend to kill, the one whom you want to rule over, the one you want to cause harm to. Therefore one who is knowledgeable does not kill anyone or rule over others or cause any harm to others.”

Non-violence as a creed is unique and Mahavir observed : The earth, water, fire, wind and plants - all have life in them and we must accept and respect their existence. If you deny their existence, you deny your own. And that's also a form of violence. If you accept that life exists in these elements, then you are really non-violent and such thinking can become the foundation of modern environment.

Mahavir's non-violence is the result of a supremely compassionate soul that accepts the principle of equality of all living creatures.

He not merely preached or propagated non-violence but practiced it and his life has been its embodiment. His experiment with non-violence turned Vardhaman into Mahavir. He made his body suffer a variety of pains and got rid of the attachment to the body. As a result, no obstacles could come his way during the course of rigorous penance. One who is attached to the body can never be non-violent.

He gave up his abode in the Duijjant Tapas *ashram* near Vaishali when he realized that his penance might







hurt others in the vicinity and he sought refuge in forests or some deserted places. He suffered all types of pains that life offered him without complaining. While in a state of deep meditation nothing touched him as his inner consciousness was aroused. The very thought of violence would result in formation of *Karma* (a form of matter), he believed. Telling lies or to behave in a way which would cause pain to others or to support a violent act is also a form of violence, according to Mahavir. Violence is first born in mind and then is reflected in speech and behavior. It is truly said : "War is born in the mind of men." Non-violence be reflected in thought, speech and action and from the principle of non-violence is born truth, celibacy, non-possessiveness and *anekant* (respecting different viewpoints). Possessiveness and violence are related and therefore without practicing non-possessiveness - *aparigraha* - it is difficult to practice non-violence. *Aparigraha* is not poverty but abdication of inessentials. It can restore economic equality in the world. Greed breeds cruelty and compassion can flow only when one gets rid of greed and develops a sense of treating all as

equals. Thus Bhagwan Mahavir's concept of non-violence is not an external thing but a way of life with a basis in mind and heart.

परस्परोपग्रहो जीवानाम् – Each living creature depends on another living creature. He subjected his concept of non-violence to a very rigorous test. He, along with his disciple Goshalak, visited a region *Radh* inhabited by a ruthless and murderous tribe. There he saw fierce dogs feeding on human flesh, but Mahavir did not use even a stick to ward off the bloodthirsty hounds. He wandered among the violent, barbaric tribe unarmed and spread the message of non-violence.

The moot question is - why are we celebrating this year as a Year- of Non-violence ? The reason is that violent forces today envelop humanity. Violence was there in the times of Mahavir too but then there was no alternative to it. Today we have with us the concept of non-violence and its practice has led to amazing results that are recorded in history. Ironically enough, we still resort to violence to solve our problem when



the results of non-violence are there for all to see. The distortions that have crept into our thinking have led us to take recourse to violence. It is forgotten that non-violence is the only solution to our individual, social and national problems and that it can bring about progress and prosperity in the country and global peace. Instead, aggressive mentality and violent acts are visible all around. People talk through the barrel of a gun. The need for a change in the mindset is far greater today than it was 2600 years ago, as is the need for the creed of non-violence.



Non-violence means fearlessness in the face of death. On seeing Mahavir's mental concentration, endurance, firm perseverance and unflinching forbearance, Indra, the Lord of Gods, paid his obeisance to him and said in voice choked with emotion, "O Revered One, in granting forgiveness you are like the earth, in enduring calamities you are like a mountain, in steadfast persistence in spiritual efforts you are like an ocean and in concentrating the mind you are like a rock. Neither a man, nor a powerful god,

nor a mighty demon can swerve you from the spiritual path you have adopted."

All agreed with Indra in his praise of Mahavira. But a god named Sangama could not tolerate this. He was very proud of his godhood. He wished to prove that man is nothing before god. He believed that a man, however great he might be, would succumb to the lures of wealth and damsels. Obtaining the permission of Indra, he arrived where Mahavira was standing in deep meditation. He thought : "Indra has made a mountain out of a mustard seed. I shall turn that mountain into a mustard seed again."

He put his plans into action. He played his tricks one by one on Mahavira. He inflicted innumerable favorable and unfavorable calamities on Mahavira in quick succession. In one night he created twenty dreadful calamities on Mahavira. For about six months, Bhagwan Mahavir did not get food worth consumption and the body suffered but it withstood the ordeal caused by Sangam. At last Sangam stood, defeated and bowed at his feet.



Two drops of tears welled up in Mahavir's eyes. This had happened for the first time in Mahavir's life-tears in eyes - for Sangam had formed many *karma* in his efforts to harass Mahavir. This shows that a truly compassionate soul will show compassion even to enemies. One who recognizes enemy as an enemy is *Vir*, but one who considers an enemy a friend is Mahavir.



Bhagwan Mahavir's non-violence is based on two strong pillars - fearlessness and friendship. He said : Violence is a mental complex, a state of mind. It is death personified and leads one to hell. It serves no useful purpose and destroys one and all. His life and message led to new thinking and a new way of life. Living based on non-violence finally gave birth to the philosophy of equality and of *anekant* (the doctrine of manifold aspects). Thus it fostered peaceful co-existence and became a foundation for social life and awakening of human consciousness.

During pre-historic period, the first Jain Trithankar Bhagwan Rishabhdev had given the message of non-violence, in the famous center of pilgrimage,

Shatrunjay, sitting under the *rayan* tree. Therefore the first temple in Jain religion is a tree temple. The 22nd Trithankar Neminath, who was prince Nem, was to marry princess Rajul and at that time he heard painful cries of animals. On inquiry, he learnt from his charioteer that the animals were being killed to be served during the marriage feast. Prince Nemkumar was shocked and returned without getting married. Bhagwan Parshwanath retrieved a snake from a pile of wood to be used for the sacrificial fire - *Yagna*. This incident shows his concern for the life of a living creature and his innate sense of non-violence. King Shrenik, during Bhagwan Mahavir's time, had forbidden killing in any form and even women had played significant role in preventing war. Queen Mrigavati had prevented war by making a request to Bhagwan Mahavir. King Chandrayatha of Sudarshanpur and Namikumar of Mithila were at war and Madanrekha preached them non-violence on the battlefield and succeeded in preventing killings and bloodshed. King Ashok realized the futility of war after the battle of Kalinga and took to the path of non-violence, established relations with other states based on the principle of non-



violence, mutual trust and tolerance. He, in a spirit of accommodation, returned the caves of Barabara to *aajivak* cult that was in opposition to the Buddhist cult. The rock edicts of emperor Ashoka are found at many places in India in which one finds the provision he had made for the treatment of human beings and animals. He had planted trees for shelter for human beings and animals and birds and had dug wells for drinking water.



In the year 186, before Vikram Samvat, Ashoka had framed rules for the protection of life in any form and one who violated the rules was severely punished. He had proclaimed a ban on animal killing and there were strict laws governing the killing of animals for meat consumption. Animal killing was not allowed for about fifty-six days in a year, and special supervisors were appointed for the purpose. Ashok, thus, was an advocate of non-violence, and if practiced, it can augur well for one and all. The grandson of Ashoka was Samprati, who occupies a pride of place among great kings. There was joy writ large on his face after his victory in war but his mother was sadness incarnate.

She told him that it would have been better if he had built temples to purify souls than having fought war and such an act would have made her happy. Emperor Samprati built Jina temple to respect his mother's wishes.

Acharya Haribhadrasuri, in a fit of rage, contemplated the destruction of his opponents - the guru and his disciples - as his own disciples were killed. He was about to kill 1444 people when Yakini Mahattara persuaded him not to indulge in any violent act. His anger then turned into forgiveness. Instead of killing 1444 persons, he composed 1444 volumes, which reflected the synthesis of diverse philosophies, and this attracted the attention of the contemporary historian Abul Fazal of the Moghul period. Moghul Emperor Akbar, born in the year 1542 did deeds that reflected his non-violent spirit. He got acquainted with Jain religion and non-violence in peculiar circumstances. Champa, an ordinary householder, had fasted for six months and her procession aroused Akbar's curiosity. In the beginning he was not ready to believe that a person could survive on boiled water for six months, without any food. He tested her and





Champa came through successfully and Akbar was curious to know more about Jainism. He invited Acharya Hirvijaysurishwarji to his court. Acharya, set out from Gandhar port on the 7th day of Margshish Sud in Samvat 1638 and reached Fatehpur Sikri on Friday, Jyestha Vad 13th, of Vikram Samvat 1639.



Emperor Akbar got up from his seat on seeing the Acharya and welcomed him and the three princes Shaikh Salim, Murad and Dhaniyal too offered obeisance to the Acharya. In the palace were laid royal carpets but Suriiji refused to walk on it and this surprised Akbar to no end. The *muni* explained that Jainism prohibited walking on covered flooring, lest insects or ants beneath get killed. Akbar got the carpet removed and found countless ants and insects under it. Akbar learnt that the Acharya had walked the long distance and to compensate for the labor, he offered him gold and silver. The *muni* refused to take anything but demanded that if at all the emperor wanted to give something, he should release the imprisoned birds and animals, prevent killing of fish in the Dabor lake, to

prohibit killing of any type during Paryushan and to set free the prisoners languishing in jails for years. Akbar accepted all his demands and instead of eight days of Paryushan, he prohibited killing of animals for 12 days in Gujarat, Malva, Ajmer, Delhi Fatehpur, Lahore and Multan and also in pilgrim centers in and around Girnar, Taranga, Shatrunjay, Kesariyaji, Abu, Rajgrihi and Sametshikhar. He was so impressed by the Acharya's concern for human welfare that he conferred the title of *Jagadguru* (world teacher) on him.

Hemchandracharya, a Jain Acharya who is known as *kalikalsarvagna* - one who is omniscient - occupies a place of pride in the spiritual history of India. King Kumarpal, inspired by his guru, performed many a deed for which he is justly remembered. In Vikram Samvat 1199, at the age of fifty, he was crowned the king of Gujarat. Inspired by Hemchandracharya, he issued a proclamation - first of its kind - in favor of non-violence. He declared : "Many people live by the sword and kill each other. It's an affront to the king. Lying is evil, extra-marital relationship is a greater evil. But of all the evils,



violence - killing a living organism - is the worst. Therefore give up violence and professionals who depend on it will get free food grains for three years from the state's granary." He stopped the practice of offering animal sacrifice to goddess *Kantakeshwari*. Under his proclamation, known as *Amari Proclamation*, he closed down slaughterhouses and put a stop to animal torture. The fact that, by and large, the people of Gujarat are non-violent and show love for animals is due, in large measure, to the deeds of king Kumarpal under the inspiration of Hemchandracharya.



During the period of Sheth Jagdusha, 108 buffaloes were sacrificed to propitiate the goddess. Jagdusha found the practice abhorrent and he placed himself on the first step leading to the temple and his son on the second step, for sacrifice instead of the buffaloes to see whether the goddess would be in rage or not. The goddess was not and his belief in non-violence triumphed. He fed the people of Gujarat, Sindh, Mewar, Delhi and Kandhar during three successive droughts. About 5 lakh people were fed daily in the 115

relief camps set up by him. He distributed enormous amount of grains among the people and roughly spent around Rs. 4 crore. The contemporary kings called him 'the savior of people'. He was not only generous but also full of compassion that is the other name for non-violence.

Sheth Motisha, born in 1838, set up a cattle shed in Mumbai for stray animals, cows, dogs, oxen, goats and sheep and birds who were kept there for treatment and were fed. Stray dogs were killed but he set up kennels for them where they were taken care of.

Who gave the mantra of non-violence to Mohandas K. Gandhi, the barrister, who had just returned from England ? How did he come to place so much trust in non-violence and who instilled in him love for truth, sense of spirituality and a strong belief in *anekant* philosophy ? It was none other than the spiritual guru Shrimad Rajchandra who was born in a small village Vavania in Saurashtra. In Vikram Samvat 1947 Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi returned to India from England trained as a barrister. He arrived at the house



of Dr. Pranjivan Mehta, a relation of Shrimad Rajchandra. He also arrived there at the same time and both met for the first time. Dr. Mehta and Gandhiji had met earlier in England and they both managed to hit off well. Gandhiji was greatly impressed by Rajchandra's nobility of nature and his deep knowledge. What a coincidence that Shrimad Rajchandra imbibed the essence of non-violence from Mahavir and it got implanted from him into Mahatma Gandhi ! Gandhi experimented with truth, non-violence and the philosophy of *anekant* and this saw the dawn of a new era in world history.



Gandhi, under the influence of Rajchandra, brought about political, social and spiritual revolution of a sort in the country. He admitted that during a spiritual crisis, he sought guidance from Shrimad. He said : "I met many religious leaders but the impression that Shrimad Rajchandra left on me, no other leader had been able to leave. Whatever he said had a lasting effect on me." He called him his spiritual Guru. He further said : "I admired his intellect and honesty. I know he would not

mislead me and would put me on the right path. Hence my submission to him.” Some doubts arose in Gandhi’s mind about Hindu religion. It was at that time he met Rajchandra and he dispelled his doubts. Said Gandhi : “My meeting with him resulted in mental peace. He restored my confidence in Hindu religion saying that I would get from it what I wanted..... I cannot describe the kind of impression he created on me. I have not come across a religious leader of his stature. I considered Tolstoy a great philosopher in Europe, followed by Ruskin but Rajchandra has been a cut above these two.” It is said that if Gandhi had not met Rajchandra, he would have converted to some other religion.

Gandhiji, on a train journey, had the occasion to read Ruskin’s *‘Unto this Last’* and it also influenced him profoundly. He then entered into correspondence with Tolstoy and got more strength to pursue his movement. But more than this, it was his meeting with Rajchandra that had launched him on the right path. He often discussed with him matters like non-violence, truth, compassion, existence of God, *moksha*, rebirth, Christ etc and sought his guidance on matters that



baffled him. Shrimad answered all his questions to his entire satisfaction. It was indeed a happy co-incidence, and a historical event that such great souls were born in Saurashtra in Gujarat in the same century. Gandhi's correspondence with Shrimad had been extensive but unfortunately only three letters are extant today.



Gandhi fought injustice meted out to him in South Africa with non-violence and this was due to Shrimad's influence. He forgave those who treated him cruelly for he had learnt the virtue of forgiveness from Shrimad. Shrimad, thus, showed Gandhi the right path and Gandhi, on his part, reflected what he learnt from him in his actions. He considered non-violence to be more potent than lethal weapons and made truth and non-violence his two most powerful weapons. Gandhiji's concept of non-violence is no ordinary one. It encompasses a whole gamut of qualities and virtues - sacrifice, justice, compassion, mortification, tolerance, and love for one and all. A person needs inner strength to practice non-violence. A votary of non-violence, he said, would be prepared to face any consequences,

including death. Fearlessness is what he should have. Mahavir, Buddha, Ram, Jesus were all fearless souls. If you are prepared to die and if you have no desire to kill, then that leads to love and compassion. Compassion, he believed, can effect change of heart in other person.

For Gandhi righteous behavior and sense of justice lead to non-violence. Justice means absence of exploitation. Tolerance can bring about a change of heart, not wielding a sword. On 8th October, 1931, he wrote in '*Navjivan*' that man's true legacy is tolerance; fighting with weapons is a jungle law. Soul force is the true source of non-violence and soul is immortal, universal. Strength derived from soul can make a person fearless and non-violent. Once a person realizes the strength of his soul, he becomes non-violent. Thus, his non-violence is not the virtue of a coward but of a truly brave person. He has observed in the issue of '*Harijanbandhu*' of October 13, 1938 in connection with his association with General Smutts : "He began as my bitterest and fiercest opponent and critic but today he is my dearest friend." To be non-violent does





not mean to love one whom we like but to love whom we like to hate. On 7th July 1940, he wrote in *Harijanbandhu* after atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima : “The moral of this bombing – the most tragic event in History – is that violence can not be destroyed through violence and one bomb can not be destroyed with another more powerful one. For mankind to survive, non-violence is the only way open to it. Love is the antidote to violence, for violence leads to more violence.”



If a person can follow and practice his religion with least violence in any form, then he / she should avoid it completely. Gandhiji would not permit plucking a flower for worship, if one can worship without offering a flower. He drew our attention to a very important fact, namely, the presence of violence in every religion and sect. To hurt the religious feelings of people of a particular sect, to hold their beliefs to ridicule are also subtle forms of violence. This inevitably leads to enmity and hatred. To behave in a way which one's religion does not permit or to impose one's religion, on the strength of power and money, on others against their

wishes also tantamount to violence, according to Gandhiji. This resultant violence, says Gandhi, leads to so called holy wars causing untold suffering to the people and the nations as a whole. Therefore, one must learn to respect other's religion and develop a spirit of tolerance and accommodation. One must practice the basic tenets of one's own religion and not indulge in religion conversion.

Gandhiji advocated the building of a political empire on the foundation of non-violence and which alone could make the state stable, strong and people-friendly. A political system should be such which gives priority to the welfare of its own people and is not aimed at destroying another weak state or country. If a state or country prospers at the cost of another country, than it is nothing but violence, asserts Gandhi and if this mindset does not change, world peace will remain on unfulfilled dream. Any system based on one's own selfish interests harms others interests and this will result in conflict of interests and violent clashes. A system based on the principle of non-violence always protects the interests of other nations. Narrow



outlook, desire to exploit and establish hegemony are the chief causes of one nation attacking another nation. If these are removed, then the question of invading another country will not arise.

If a nation is at all attacked, it has the right to defend itself and has to decide to what extent non-violence will be desirable. But a nation that believes in non-violence should not indulge in wholesale violence to defend itself and see to it that minimum of human lives are lost; and that there is no mass killing. At the time of the last world war, Gandhi had issued direction as to how to deal with the aggressor countries. It is a duty to defend one's own country but there must be a limit to what extent one should go to defend oneself. The destruction of another country should not be, in any case, the intention, said Gandhi. It is clear that he had a clear vision of what warring countries should do and his views on non-violence, even during war or conflict are clear-cut.



Gandhi also advocated practicing non-violence at the individual level as well as in social and family life. Let's not harm even the tiniest creature, he

said; Jain philosophy says *parigraha* - possessiveness - is the mother of violence. Gandhi also said the same thing. One who hoards things more than required, resorts to violence. What is, therefore, needed is self-restraint and a sense of sacrifice coupled with compassion. Man must realize that there are other means - not violence - through which man can overcome his innate weaknesses and evils lying buried deep into consciousness. This was Gandhi's message to humanity and he succeeded in his experiment not only with truth but with non-violence too. His is an example worth emulating in the present violent-prone society.

He considered non-violence to be a powerful force. It does not mean that one should not resist evil or injustice. He told the villagers, who had fled the village Betiya when the police attacked them and raped the women, that they had not done the right thing. It was an act of cowardice. They should have stayed on and offered resistance without the thought of revenge. Those who are prepared to die, can only teach the lessons of non-violence, not those who are afraid of death. Once a Pathan





attacked him in 1908. His elder son, who was not with him at that time, wanted to know what was expected of him if he had been at that time. He asked : "I could not have behaved the way you wanted me to for I would not tolerate someone attacking you. What should be done ? Should I attack the person, or stand and watch the man attacking you or run away leaving you to your fate ?" Gandhi said: "If you run away, or do not defend me, then it is cowardice. It is better to use brute force than to be a coward. You should defend by fighting the attackers, if you cannot defend by imperiling your own life." This is the reason why Gandhiji joined the Boar war. He had helped the government at the time of Julu rebellion and also helped the British Government during the war. He believed that evil or wickedness be fought with non-violence and is more effective way. He said : "Killing every Englishman will not result in any good for the country or bring about our independence. Let us reform a person than do evil unto him."

He was wedded to non-violence and said he would prefer to die than to deviate from its path. His non-violence

was not confined to religion or to the progress of the soul but, he said, it should permeate one's life and be reflected in every field of activity. Children and the young, women and the old can practice it. There are two conditions necessary. Love for all and a steadfast belief in God, who is love personified. It should become a way of life, he emphasized, and be used for achieving world peace.

Gandhi's concept of non-violence was influenced by *anekant* philosophy. In 1925, he observed in '*Young India*' : "I believed that I was always right and my honest critics wrong. But now I realize that we both were right in our own ways. Then I stopped criticizing my opponents or critics. I learnt that I must try to look at the situation or a problem from a Muslim's or a Sikh's point of view." He later said , "My principle of *anekant* is based on two things-- truth and non-violence."

Gandhi protested against the practice of animal killing either for making drugs or in the name of religion. If one's thoughts or action is guided by



violent ideas, then it be constructed as violence but to speak out bitter truth is not violence. He advocated non-violent struggle against injustice and violence in any form. On October 15, 1931, he wrote in '*Navjivan*': "You say non-violent struggle is not possible and have not known a non-violent revolution in history. But my ambition is to provide such an example. My dream is that my country should achieve independence through non-violence and want the world to know that I will not want to make my country independent at the cost of non-violence."



During the time of Mahavir, animal killing, for religious rituals and for food, was resorted to. And during Gandhiji's time too, violence was visible everywhere as a result of industrialization. It was at that time that he strongly advocated practice of non-violence in every field of human activity – economic, political and social. He proved that non-violent struggle could lead to victory. The war-weary world, steeped in violence and afflicted with terrorism, looks up to Gandhi for inspiration and guidance. How to fight injustice ? By non-violent struggle or *satyagraha*, said Gandhi. It is his atom

bomb to meet the challenge posed by destructive atom bombs.

In 1949 winter, on a Sunday, an African American student, in Philadelphia, had come to listen about Mahatma Gandhi. He knew that Gandhi had fought a long non-violent struggle for India's independence. His weapon was *satyagraha*. Gandhi's non-violent movement favorably impressed the young man, Martin Luther King Jr.. Six years later, he raised his voice against apartheid. He led peace rally. He was attacked but he stuck to the path of non-violence. Both he and Gandhi did not deviate from the chosen path and violence claimed them both.

Gandhiji's autobiography had a great impact on Adolfo P'erez Esquirel, who won the Nobel Prize in 1980, who put into practice Gandhi's concept of village self-sufficiency. Gandhi's autobiography also influenced Aung San Sun Kyi of Burma - Myanmar - who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991. Suu Kyi has studied in a private school in Delhi in 1960. She, at that time examined Gandhi's method of fighting against all evils the non-violent way. 25 years later,





she adopted the same method and fought for restoration of democracy in Burma.

Non-violence recognizes neither east nor west - it's for the whole world to adopt. The people of the world must unite and establish peace in the world and make it a livable place. We must strive for progress and spiritual development, and that too through non-violent means. It is not a synonym for cowardice or timidity. It's a powerful force that can fight against even terrorism. The opponent be reformed and the trace of violence from the heart removed. This alone can usher in peace in the world. It is not a negative force. It is positive and its foundation is based on universal love and brotherhood. It is a solid force; and unites one soul with another. From Mahavir to Gandhi to Martin Luther King, non-violence has continued to hold beacon light. Let us make twenty-first century a non-violent one and save the world from war, bloodshed and terrorism. The panacea lies in non-violence alone.



