
RE-VISITING THE ETHICS OF WAR IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF ST. AUGUSTINE, MAHATMA GANDHI AND THE DALAI LAMA

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ABSTRACT

In the Western imagination, both Gandhi and the Dalai Lama are the icons of non-violence, one a Hindu, the other a Buddhist, and both are pioneers of renewing the bond of one spiritual family of mankind that alone could spread the noble message of, '*vasudha iva kutumbaka*' 'all men our kinsmen'. They are the representatives of some of the best spiritual traditions of Asia. While one followed the footsteps of the Buddha, the other imbibed all noble truths from noble traditions of the world, showing equal reverence for the love of God in Ram-Rahim or Jesus, drawing inspiration from the *Bhagavad Gita* to the *Sermon on the Mount*, from the works of Henry David Thoreau to John Ruskin. Yet one also witnesses events that contradict these idealistic movements. Katherine Young points out that "because of Gandhi, people assumed that Indian was a pacifist society." Yet she writes that the stereotype of Hindu non-violence "was shattered in May 1998 when India tested five nuclear bombs (Young, 2004)."¹ This leads one to ponder the efficacy of these doctrines of non-violence and its implications in the

pragmatic affairs of the world. How can one address the urgent issues of our time; such as war, violence, terrorism and threats of insecurity to life and property? I will cite instances from Gandhi's ethics and then an attempt will be made to provide a distinctively Buddhist perspective. Finally, these two Asian perspectives are to be understood in terms of the contemporary moral perspectives that debate over issues of 'just war', a tradition that was originated in the philosophy of St. Augustine.

Introduction

When the first atomic bomb was tested in New Mexico, Robert Oppenheimer quoted from the Bhagavat Gita: "Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds."² For Gandhi, non-violence is the only antidote to evil, the only precious thing an atomic bomb cannot destroy. With this in mind, Gandhi states, "Unless now the world adopts non-violence, it will spell certain suicide for mankind." (Singh, Jasawant: 1999).³ Singh explains that Indians don't really follow Mahatma Gandhi. "His non-violence was not really a debilitating creed, it was in reality an empowerment. Still, do we really feel empowered by non-violence. We say we are essentially non-violent, but when you look around at India today or in the past six years we are an extremely violent land," he says.⁴ When the first prime minister of independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru, became the first world statesman to plead for universal disarmament, it was still a continuation of the Gandhian legacy of the human dimension of life that alone should restore dignity of dehumanized mankind. Nehru also sought to revive the faith that science and technology could bring benefits to human life. He began by redirecting change in policy in matters of science, and he advocated disarmament so that that 'the atoms for peace' should be the slogan. The death of Nehru in 1962 marked a shift from the acceptance of Gandhian principles of non-violence to a greater acceptance of the use of force for national security. "The continuing conflict with Pakistan over Kashmir and the 1962 border crisis with China, among other factors, had undermined confidence in Nehru's Gandhian-style politics." (Singh,

Jasawant :1999). During these decades, Hindu intellectuals began to make a case for legitimate violence based on the need for self- defense. Arvind Sharma wrote in 1993, “India must maintain military preparedness of strictly defensive nature.”⁵ (Sharma :1993).⁶ Let us now ponder deeply into the nature of this peculiar ethical dilemma confronted by moralists between ‘*ahimsa*’ and justified ‘*himsa*’. Is violence ethically acceptable in some cases?

St. Augustine and the “Just War Tradition in Christianity”:

We have to begin by understanding ethical issues of violence, war and terrorism within the context of both the Christian and the Hindu notions of ethical law (*dharma*) through which we can re-interpret these two contradictory stances on violence. One position is taken by ‘just war’ tradition that is sometimes traced to St Augustine when he sought to legitimize the use of force by Christians to protect the innocent. The innocent are those in no position to defend themselves, to protect them from certain harm. In *The City of God*, Augustine grappled with the idea that Christian teaching can sometimes challenge violence with counter violence or with use of force. He comes to the conclusion that wars of aggression and aggrandizement are never acceptable, but there are occasions when resorting to force may be necessary; not as a normative good, but as tragic necessity. David Hoekema writes:

As the Roman Empire was under attack by invading barbarians, he asked if the Christian could justify taking a human life. Augustine gave a very qualified “yes”. Force could be justified ‘in defense of the vulnerable other.’ Augustine did not even include self-defense in the first list of Just War Principles. It was another Saint, Thomas Aquinas, who added self-defense to the list of possible justifications of war by persons of religious conscience. His list of limitations and justifications of force are still the guiding tenets of Just War Theory. They are: Just Cause (usually taken to mean defense against an attack), Right

Authority (established political authorities, not private citizens), Right Intention (not the love of cruelty nor the lust for power), Good Outcome (there must be more good resulting than the evil done by violence), Proportionality (do not use more force than necessary), Reasonable Hope for Success (have a reasonable chance that peace will indeed result), and Last Resort (all non-violent means of diplomacy must have been exhausted). (Hoekema, 2009)⁷

Pacifists and defenders of just war can agree that every life is tainted with sin, and that evil will inevitably arise, but still disagree about how we ought to respond when it does arise. While the advocates of Christian Pacifism take a position of absolute non-violence with their firm conviction that a true Christian should follow a way of life in which violence and division are overcome by sacrificial love.

We must not return evil for evil, Jesus taught, but must return good for evil; we must not hate those who wrong us but must love our enemies and give freely to those who hate us. These themes in Jesus' ministry were deeply rooted in the Hebrew prophetic tradition, and Jesus' ministry and his sacrificial death were a continuation and a fulfillment of that tradition. (Hoekema, 2009)⁸

Christian pacifists insist that followers of Jesus, must follow both his example and his teachings: they must "show love for all in their actions and seek healing and reconciliation in every situation." (Hoekema). Such optimism requires a selective and unrealistic assessment of human behavior and human capacities. Hoekema observes:

If pacifism rests on a trust that people have a natural capacity and an irrepressible tendency to resolve their differences justly and harmoniously, then pacifism is a delusion, and a dangerous one. Such trust is not, however, essential to pacifism. There can be a realistic pacifism, a pacifism that gives due weight to the sinfulness and perversity of human nature." (Hoekema, 2009).⁹

For St. Augustine, the reality of human sinfulness demands a realistic assessment of a situation so that when sustained attempts at nonviolent action fail to protect the innocent against fundamental injustice, then legitimate political authorities are permitted as a last resort to employ limited force to rescue the innocent and establish justice. For Augustine, it is always better for the Christian to suffer harm rather than to commit it, although the fragile human situation at times compels one to accept a lesser evil to avoid a greater evil. The basic moral perspective on which Christian ethics is based demands loyalty to the principle of abstaining from doing harm to others, and that it is “better to suffer wrong than to do wrong.” David Hoekema comments,

In Plato’s *Gorgias* Socrates states metaphorically: ‘it would be better for me that my lyre or a chorus I direct were out of tune and loud with discord, and that most men should not agree with me and contradict me, rather than that I, being one, should be out of tune with myself and contradict myself (482b-c).’ If I harm others, then I will not be able to live with myself. The potential internal discord stops me. It is an internal, spiritual mechanism of restraint. In situations of conflict, our constant commitment ought to be, as far as possible, to strive for justice through nonviolent means.” (Hoekema, 2009) ¹⁰

Hoekema observes that prior to Sept. 11, 2001 official Catholic teaching on the Just War had already evolved as a composite of nonviolent and just-war elements. He continues:

This was a departure from post-Reformation Catholicism, when the Just War alone was the formal Catholic stance. The change, which had begun at Vatican II, accelerated as a result of the successful nonviolent revolutions in Eastern Europe that brought an end to Communist rule in 1989. Reflecting on those events in his 1991 encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, Pope John Paul II offered praise for the nonviolent

activists who toppled the Communist regimes that had ruled Eastern Europe and voiced his opposition to war as a means for resolving conflict”. (Hoekema, 2009).¹¹

Hinduism on Non-violence

As a result, different interpretations of a text are recognized and *dharma* becomes ambiguous, ‘it is difficult to fathom the subtle ways of *dharma*’ (*dharmanam gatim suksmam duranvyam*. Mahabharata 8.49.28)

Dharma ‘holds firm’, or ‘sustains’, and its *dharmic* acts such as vows, offering gifts, and chanting the name of God, create a positive power and make a firm connection between this world and the other. *Dharma* also has traditional meaning, customs, duty, virtue, and it is one of the prime basic goals of human life along with *artha* (governance, politics, economics), *kāma* (leisure, pleasure), and *moksa* (liberation). Dharma is in the first position as it establishes the ethical constraints for *artha* and *kāma*. *Dharma* is both *saāmānya* (general) in that it is universal in nature and is applicable to all mankind, and *visesa* (situational) in that it involves particular duties defined by sex, position, caste, stages in life, occupation etc. The four sources of *dharma* are: transcendent and eternal “heard” scriptures (*sruti*), human i.e. “remembered” scriptures (*smriti*), the behavior of the good people (*sadācāra*) and knowledge based on personal experience (*anubhava*)”. (Young, 2004)¹²

Moral dilemmas may occur because of ambiguity; no clear cut guideline is to be found whether *satya* is superior to *ahimsā* as in the case where telling a truth leads to death of a person. Gandhi later emphasized truth as his predecessor Yuddhistira once did. First the *saāmānya* virtues became mandatory for the ascetic tradition, later in the Yuga Sutras it was further developed and in the Arthasastra of Manu they were viewed

as common virtues that are applicable to one and all. Young comments: “This view may have developed to allow Hindus to compete with Buddhists and Jains, who were criticizing the Brahmanical tradition for its legitimization of violence in animal sacrifice.” (Young,2004).¹³

David Fowley calls attention to the classical Hindu teachings that honored defensive war. To quote Fowley:

The Hindu Kshatriya tradition is not one of aggression but of protection, not of forcing conversion to a religion but upholding the Dharma. It is a tradition of holding to truth and creating a culture in which freedom to pursue truth, not only in the outer world, but in the religious realm, is preserved. Is this not what the global age really requires? It is time for that Kshatriya to arise again. (Fowley, 2003).¹⁴

The often quoted “Ahimsa Paramo Dharma” (meaning non-violence is the highest duty) was popularized by Gandhi. But what is not quoted is the latter part of the Sanskrit stanza “Dharma himsa tathaiva cha” meaning “So too is all ‘righteous’ violence.” It should be clearly realized that, apart from the specifics of the situation, the Hindu ethos, as distinguished from the Buddhist and the Jain, provides for both options. Arvind Sharma points out, the saying of the Great Epic *ahimsa paramo dharmah*, that non-violence is the same as supreme dharma, is often quoted; but it is also supplemented by the saying: “*dharmya himsa thaiva ca, that dharmic*” violence is equally so. The million dollar question of course, is: What is *dharmaya*? (Sarma :1993).

Ahimsa paramo dharmaha, dharma himsa tathaiva cha!”
Non-violence is the greatest dharma, so too is all righteous violence. – *Mahabharata*

In line with such observations, Hinduism has distinguished two types of war, ‘just’ and ‘unjust.’ The principles that legitimize just war are establishing justice and combating injustice, following clear cut rules,

restricted its place to avoid civilians harm, restriction to a particular caste, conducting war in a limited time and place, maintaining fairness and equality, following the golden rule ‘one should not do harm to others that which is unpleasant to oneself,’ and limiting war to self-defense.

M.A. Mahendale observes that the Ramayana represents the just war tradition in clear cut terms, as there is no moral ambiguity about the fact that Ravana abducted Sita, the legitimate wife of Rama and this moral transgression is to be punished for the preservation of righteousness. However, in the Mahabharata, the other great epic of the Hindus, there are occasions when there are occasional transgressions and just war rules are violated. That way the Mahabharata depicts a deeper narrative that transcends the duality of good-evil, right and wrong.

In the Mahabharata, war has been dramatized as a cosmic sacrifice analogous to the destruction of the worlds at the ‘end of the *yuga*’ (*yugānta*). The weapons of war are compared to the fire at the end of a *yuga*... The destruction is represented as a gigantic funeral pyre in which the old order of the world, Pandavas and Kauravas alike, must perish to a new order established with the assistance of the divine incarnation Krsna (Krishna) from the remnant represented by Pariksit, the perfect monarch embodying the qualities of both Arjuna and Krsna.” (Woods, 2001)¹⁵

Ahimsa is mentioned many times in different scriptures ranging from the Vedas (Upanishads), Itihaasas like the Mahabharata, Dharma Shastras like the Manu Smriti, The Patanjali Yogasutra (2-35) says “Ahimsa pratisthayam tatsannidhau vairatyagah” meaning “In the presence of one firmly established in ahimsa, all hostilities cease”. This is the case in the Boudhayana Dharmasutra and various other dharmic texts. In the Holy Gita it occurs in the list of rules prescribed for all human beings.

The Bhagavad Gita depicts the dilemma between just war and unjust war and it praises just war as a heroic act that can prevent injustice and counter tyranny.

The Gita's solution for the conflict between *ahimsa* and *himsa* is to insist that warriors do their military duty but with a new yogic perspective. This is called 'renunciation in action' (*nais-kamyakarma-yoga*). God himself both manifests violence (*himsa*) and non violence (*ahimsa*) in the cosmic cycles, but also transcends them. (Woods, 2001).¹⁶

However, it should be understood that this is no sanction for violence. It is imperative to correctly understand the word 'dharma' before we even talk about violence and non-violence. Without fully understanding and imbibing dharma there simply is no justification for any harm.

Though Gandhi was not the inventor of '*Ahimsa*', this was the very principle behind his style of struggle against injustice. Ultimately *ahimsa* is based on right cause, righteousness and *dharma* – devoid of any selfish motivation.¹⁷

The Jain granth 'Acaranga Sutra' supports non-violence by saying: "All beings are fond of life; they like pleasure and hate pain, shun destruction and like to live, they long to live. To all, life is dear". So what Gandhi did successfully was to incorporate *ahimsa* in his philosophy called '*satyagraha*' which was the way of non-retaliation, civil disobedience, non-payment of inhuman taxes, non-cooperation, fasts etc. According to Gandhi, the objective of this philosophy was to convert, not to coerce the wrong-doer. His idea was to convince his opponents of their injustice and demonstrate the brutality of oppression. Thus Gandhi promoted the principle of *ahimsa* particularly to politics, for the very first time. But Gandhi's version of *ahimsa* also has its critics who blame him for taking it too far. Like in Jainism, Gandhi believed that *ahimsa* is the standard by which all actions are judged."¹⁸ *Ahimsa* is confused with the Gandhi's 'Satyagraha' which some said was nothing but 'passive resistance'. To which Gandhi clarifies "Satyagraha is as far away from passive resistance as the North Pole is from the South Pole. Passive resistance is the weapon of the weak and, therefore, the application of physical pressure or violence

are not ruled out in the efforts to reach its aims. In contrast, Satyagraha is the weapon of the strongest. The use of force of any kind is ruled out.... This law of love is nothing other than the love of truth. Without truth there is no love”.

The Gita interprets *ahimsa* also in a positive sense when it denotes protecting acts of soldiers, military and *ksatriyas* when it emphasizes that warfare is restricted to *ksatriyas* only who are prohibited from acts of renunciation. However the Gita re-interpreted renunciation with the doctrine of disinterested action, *himsa* and violence no longer remains violence when the motivation is changed to a Yogic perspective, as an unpleasant duty one must perform for the sake of protecting the many. We have also seen that at times the human act is more dependent on divine plan (*daiva*) than human efforts (*purusartha*) as the confusion that leads to proper understanding of the just war status of the Mahabharata. What appears to be deviation from the rules of *dharma yuddha* at times, is sanctioned from a divine and a wider perspective that it is bound to happen that way irrespective of individual human’s restricted goals, aspirations, motivations, etc. The war unfolds cosmic events that are destined to happen for the greater good, which humans fail to understand.

Gandhi on Non-violence

When we compare Mahatma Gandhi’s distinctive position here we find that the Gita has remained one of his major sources of inspiration on his experiments with truth and non-violence. Ironically, according to Mehendale, the most important Hindu source for Gandhi was the Bhagavad Gita.¹⁹ Gandhi admitted that the Gita was not written as a treatise on nonviolence but argued that its meaning could be “extended” by interpreting it as an allegory-the eternal duel between the “forces of darkness and of light”, because Hinduism is always evolving as living religion. His own interpretation, Gandhi said, emerged from his study of Hindu texts, other religions, and his own experience. Gandhi focused his commentary on the second chapter, which is about disinterested action

(*naiskarmya-karma-yoga*), but limited his understanding of action to no-violent action.” (Young, 2004).²⁰

Gandhi’s basic values were closely allied to the *samanya* principles, but he politicized and modernized them. “He made no distinction among types of war (defensive vs. offensive, just vs. unjust) or types of person (ascetic vs. non ascetic). Killing, he often argued, is inherently wrong for anyone in any situation.” (Young, 2004). Gandhi’s position is more extreme than traditional Hindu ethics when he advocates *ahimsa* both as a means and as an end. Although such optimism requires a selective, and at times, unrealistic assessment of human behavior and human capacities, Gandhi’s pragmatic and down to earth approach to life allowed him to understand the hard realities of life and human nature, that people sometimes do not resolve their differences justly and harmoniously, that evil is very much there as part and parcel of goodness, that *himsa* is also an unavoidable part of *ahimsa*. There are occasions when it appeared to Gandhi that some wars are inevitable and justified when war becomes a tool for empowering the weaker and the powerless advocates of love and non-violence. Gandhi identified *ahimsa* and non-violence with supreme moral courage rather than as acts of cowardice, and he would rather call the use of *himsa* an act of cowardice. *Himsa* is, according to him, an injustice, and therefore a wrong act. At times war is undertaken to give strength to those who oppose violence; it empowers non-violence if there is need for it. “Gandhi himself supported the British war effort in the World War, “arguing that he was opposed to war, but if there had to be war, then it should be on the side of the justice.” (Sharma, 1993).²¹ Is this not an acceptance of the just war tradition? How do we reconcile the common Gandhian stance which, in principle, opposes all kinds of war, with his statements which leave room for some kinds of war?

We have to understand that while Mahatma Gandhi was also strongly nurtured by the religious traditions of the country, including Vaishnavism and Jainism, besides drawing inspiration from all world religions with selective assimilation of various noble principles. War, in principle, is to be avoided because nonviolence is an inner principle

of man. Humans are not herd of animals or robotic machines that are to be controlled by force or compulsion. Violence mechanically begets violence but the spiritual dimension of non-violence can transcend this mechanical and causal dimension as long as the spirit rules over flesh! With this basic understanding, the Mahatma takes recourse to war, as a last alternative, in order to prevent erosion of the loving and spiritual dimension of life that alone would humanize life. Gandhi's religious and spiritual position was sustained by a deep faith in the goodness of human nature, a goodness he thought nonviolent action could call forth. "If love or non-violence be not the law of our being," he wrote, "the whole of my argument falls to pieces"²²

With this tremendous faith in the basic goodness of all human beings, Gandhi once tried to see if he could kindle that divine spark which is in all. Gandhi firmly believed that love and tolerance are supreme principles that should rule and that should humanize life. One acting out of non-violence should try to change the hearts of those willing to use violence for just causes over those who use it for unjust ones. Gandhi never gave up his faith in the basic goodness of man. Gandhi believed that it is possible to revitalize the hardness of heart. On December 24, 1940, Gandhi wrote to Adolf Hitler addressing him as a friend:

That I address you as a friend is no formality. I owe no foes. My business in life has been for the past 33 years to enlist the friendship of the whole of humanity by befriending mankind, irrespective of race, color or creed. I hope you will have the time and desire to know how a good portion of humanity who have been living under the influence of that doctrine of universal friendship view your action. We have no doubt about your bravery or devotion to your fatherland, nor do we believe that you are the monster described by your opponents. But your own writings and pronouncements and your friends and admirers leave no room for doubt that many of your acts are monstrous and unbecoming of human dignity, especially in the estimation of men like me who believe in universal friendliness... Hence we can not possibly wish success to your arms."²³

David A. Hoekema writes: “Nazism would surely have been destroyed by sustained nonviolent resistance had Christians and others not averted their gaze from its evil for so long. But whether Nazism could have been destroyed by nonviolent means in 1939 is a far more difficult question.”²⁴

The Buddhist Perspective on War and Terrorism:

It is not an easy task to define a Buddhist perspective on war and terrorism. To quote Prof. Chandra Wikramagamage: “Buddhism can respond to individual, national or global terrorism at two levels, namely the level of the Buddha and the Bodhisattva. The level of Buddha is applicable to people of intellectual advancement and the level of Bodhisattva is applicable to the public.” (Wikramagamage, online 2008).²⁵

The Dalai Lama, living in exile since the Chinese Communists brutally took over his hereditary kingdom of Tibet, revered for his wisdom and adherence to peace and non-violence, puts it this way:

In principle, any resort to violence is wrong. Initially, terrorism was a certain mixture of politics, economics, and religion. Now, it seems that terrorism is more individual and done to avenge personal grudges. So there are two kinds of terrorism. Countermeasures for such things are not easy. We need two levels. One level—the immediate—various governments are taking, including some violent methods, right or wrong. (*The Dalai Lama Interview, online 2006*).²⁶

The Dalai Lama cites instances of Buddhist monks and Buddhist rulers who often confuse these two realms of *dharmic* and political solution to the evils of the time and in turn took recourse to violence in order to combat violence.

What an individual should do is also determined by each individual’s karmic relation to the event.” He continues, “In the 1930s, one Mongolian leader became a very, very brutal dictator and eventually became a

murderer. Previously, he was a monk, I am told, and then he became a revolutionary. Under the influence of his new ideology, he actually killed his own teacher. Pol Pot's family background was Buddhist. Whether he himself was a Buddhist at a young age, I do not know. Even Chairman Mao's family background was Buddhist." (*The Dalai Lama Interview, 2006*).²⁷

Contrary to this political solution to the problems of evil, the *dharmic* strategy on war and terrorism is to adhere to the principles of non-violence knowing well the constraints put by the 'individual *karmic* limitations of an individual. Like Jainism, Buddhism too allows provisions for absolute non-violence for monks and renouncers and pragmatic application of the principle of *ahimsa* for worldly people. At the level of individual enlightenment, one is on the path of spiritual progress through constant practice of meditation, prayer, ethical conduct, suffering sensitivity etc. That way a true Buddhist is one who takes refuge in the "Triple Gem" (*Tissrana*), namely the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. The Triple Gem is also described as follows:

The Buddha - The acme of universal wisdom

The Dhamma - The perfect code of discipline

The Sangha - The exemplary model for a layman²⁸

It must be asserted that the Five Precepts (*Pancha Sila*) do not necessarily make a person a Buddhist, but to be a real Buddhist, one has to rigorously practice and observe the five precepts. Buddhist sermons have a therapeutic note as well, the very practice of non-violence will not only heal the wounds of war, conflict and violence, as well as relieve all human and social sorrows; but it can also create a peaceful and joyful society, tightly tied to the esteemed values of equality, fraternity and liberty. The Dhammapada's prohibition against killing, that "All tremble at punishment; to everyone life is dear. Taking oneself as an example, one should neither strike nor kill," This is a true reflection of the way of the Buddha. The Buddha reportedly told his followers:

All are afraid of the rod.
Of death, all are afraid.
Having made oneself the example.
One should neither slay nor cause to slay.
(*Dhammapada*: chi. 10)²⁹

The first of the five precepts (*Pancha Sila*) admonishes one to refrain from taking life, and early monastic codes list the taking of life as one of the four grave offenses. Mahayana texts carry this rejection of violence forward; for example, the Daśabhūmika-sūtra proclaims that Buddhists “must not hate any being and cannot kill a living creature even in thought.” (*Dhammapada*: chi. 10)

Historically, Buddhists have formulated institutional and ritual supports for this ideal, as seen in the *uposatha* ceremony when Theravada monks twice a month recite the precepts and confess transgressions. But the important question is how best to apply the most important Buddhist teachings to our present situation. How to combat terrorism in these two levels, both politically and religiously and thereby therapeutically? It is an unfortunate fact, well documented by eminent scholars such as Edward Conze and Trevor Ling, that not only have Buddhist rulers undertaken violence and killing, but also monks of all traditions in Buddhism. Nonetheless, Buddhism has no history of specifically *religious wars*, that is, wars fought to impose Buddhism upon reluctant believers. Violence and killing are deeply corrupting in their effect upon all involved, and Buddhists will therefore try to avoid direct involvement in violent action or in earning their living in a way that, directly or indirectly, does violence. The Buddha specifically mentioned the trade in arms, in living beings and flesh.³⁰

In our complicated social situation today, where the majority is often more corrupt than the minority, when terrorism becomes a way of the world, one should explore practical strategies to deliver the Buddhist message of non-violence to all, including the terrorist. The question remains: in the face of the social situations today, how do we deal with the so-called material challenges? How do we maintain traditions, human dignity, and social order?

A Buddhist activist would firstly give persuasive explanations and typical evidences of gravely social and human damage resulting from war, violence and terrorist actions; and then skillfully encourages and guide humans toward practicing Buddhist non-violence (aims) by cultivating compassion and sympathy for true peace, happiness and welfare for oneself and all sentient beings. Even then, one finds that in its treatment of violence, however, the Buddhist tradition sometimes offers mixed messages. Buddhism prescribes the short-term goal of correcting a perverted situation, while the main objective is the eradication of suffering and violence and existential anxiety. In principle, the Buddhist texts, doctrines, and ritual practices advocate not-harming or nonviolence, yet there are occasional exceptions in extreme cases, such as one's need for self-defense, or for protecting the helpless and the weak from the tyranny of the oppressor.

If we look for the Buddha's attitude toward violence in the Buddhist Texts including the Pali Nikayas, we find that in many cases violence and punishment are described as a kind of lesser evil, an unfortunately unavoidable part of the life of the householder or within civil society. James Stroble comments:

The fact that these are for the most part descriptions rather than normative statements is to be stressed, however. When there is occasion for the Buddha himself to deal with one who is deserving of punishment, the method he uses is manifestly one of non-violence. The difference between the descriptive portrayal of violence and the normative example of the Buddha then establishes a distance between the world of the civil authorities and that of the Sangha. (Stroble, 2010)³¹

In the Dalai Lama's attitude, we find the basic commitment to Buddhist non-violence at all costs when he condemns hardness of heart and dictatorship of Buddhist kings, rulers and also of monks turned activists. In order to prevent violence one should not transform oneself

into the role model of the enemy. However, there is also some concession made for counter attack in case of self-defense etc. In his book *Instinct for Freedom* the contemporary dharma activist Alan Clements, a former Buddhist monk in the Burmese tradition of Mahashi Sayadaw, puts the constraints that make the path of love and *ahimsa* almost ineffective when one faces a murderer or a psychopath who becomes killer machine. “How can one mediate for peace when brothers and sisters are being killed and to love when a gun is pointed on your head...?”³²

Is there any way to correct the situation within Buddhist scheme? To what extent can one leave open options for dialogue with the one who has fallen from the path? When this dialogue seems to be an impossibility and the terrorist and the dictator needs to be addressed by force and manipulation than by religious and therapeutic means? Here the Dalai Lama gives some hints when the Buddhist monk faces an extreme situation while facing a terrorist whose mind is closed, to all kinds of dialogue.

The Buddha’s pragmatic and therapeutic approach to the human suffering leaves room for healing the wounds of one and all, the one who is caught in the vicious circle of past *karmas* and the wrong and evil effects of those *karmas* are often victims of wrong acts, wrong intentions, wrong mindfulness etc. which are to be corrected by Buddhist guidance. But is the terrorist a victim or a victor? Buddhism will prescribe a special treatment for one who inflicts suffering on others, a terrorist. He is more a victim and his case is diagnosed pathetically. No ordinary dialogue is possible in extreme cases when the terrorist is closed to all such humanitarian appeals simply because his mind is closed to dialogue. Once there is no hope for dialogue and all kinds of interpersonal communication fail, there is no other way but to identify the situation as needing urgent intervention for restoring a human dimension.

The Dalai Lama, a lifelong champion of non-violence, councils utmost restraint and expresses doubts if sheer good will and optimism would suffice. When the so-called partners in peace dialogue do not stand on equal footing and when there is no reciprocity between the one and the other, between the one who talks and the one who listens. In such

situations, dialogue becomes monologue and situation becomes dehumanized. Dialogue is only feasible when there is openness from both sides and that way terrorism cannot be addressed if the minds of terrorists are closed and non-communicative.

“The Tibetan spiritual leader termed terrorism as the worst kind of violence, which is not carried by a few mad people but by those who are very brilliant and educated... but a strong ill feeling is bred in them. Their minds are closed,” the Dalai Lama said. ‘Terrorism is the worst kind of violence, so we have to check it, we have to take counter measures.’ With terrorists, the Dalai Lama said, applying a Buddhist analysis, ‘their whole mind is dominated by negative emotions.’ But he emphasized that ‘the real antidote’ to terrorism in the long run is ‘compassion, dialogue -- peaceful means’ even with terrorists. ‘We have to deal with their motivation,’ he said’. Terrorism comes out of hatred, and also short-sightedness.³³

However Buddhism offers a framework for exploring psychological causes of violence. (*pratītya-samutpāda* or *śūnyatā*). Man should explore his inner dimension and its strengths and weaknesses, and seek to curb the roots of all passions and hatred. All these spring from the human’s Threefold Defilements (desire, hatred and ignorance). Central to the Buddhist analysis of the cause of *duhkha* (suffering) is the doctrine of the Three Poisons: greed or craving, anger or hatred, and ignorance. Buddhism asks us to look at these defilements in ourselves and those who might confront us, and how, in each of us as both perpetrator and victim of violence. These hindrances derive from certain conditions and cause certain actions. The second of these defilements, anger and hatred, relates most directly to violence.³⁴

Due to the desires for fame and wealth, social position, mammon, personal property, promotion, man has become a slave of lust, anger and delusion. Even though he has been able to win and subdue nature with all sorts of advanced scientific inventions, he has still failed and is tied down with the sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death.³⁵

Even though recognition is made of the vicious circle of *karmic* chain of greed, delusion, shortsightedness, temptation and insensitivity,

that are the root causes of violent activities on earth, the circle continues unless there is opening in human nature and human mind to receive spiritual light. Once the mind is completely closed, even the best spiritual and healing aids becomes ineffective. In such cases, Buddhism offers pragmatic solution to terrorism by pointing out both short term and long term strategies to humanize an inhuman situation.

But the hope remains that one day mankind will peruse the path of non-violence and love. Therefore, at the general public level we must cultivate the notion of not just one religion, one truth, but pluralism and many truths. We can change the atmosphere, and we can modify certain ways of thinking. second, there should be a spirit of dialogue. Whenever we see any disagreements, we must think how to solve them on the basis of recognition of oneness of the entire humanity. This is the modern reality. Whenever a community is destroyed, in reality it destroys a part of all of us. So there should be a clear recognition that the entirety of humanity is just one family. Any conflict within humanity should be considered as a family conflict. We must find a solution within this atmosphere.³⁶

What is required is a well-thought-out, long-term strategy to promote globally a political culture of non-violence and dialogue. The international community must assume a responsibility to give strong and effective support to non-violent movements committed to peaceful changes. We must draw lessons from the experiences we gained. If we look back at the last century, the most devastating cause of human suffering has been the culture of violence in resolving differences and conflicts. The challenge before us, therefore, is to make this new 21st century a century of dialogue when conflicts are resolved non-violently.³⁷

Conclusion

One striking similarity between St. Augustine, Mahatma Gandhi and the Dalai Lama is their strong faith in the religious dimension of life and their recognition of the basic goodness of all men despite their straying from the ideal through materialism, greed and temptation. They allow for

a certain concession for war and use of force when these become lesser evils to combat a greater evil. In such a *dharmic* or religious solution to the evils of our time, there is hope for restoring the lost and dehumanized dimension of life and the hope for salvation from sin. Hoekema writes,

An essential companion to the doctrine of sin is the doctrine of grace. Though human nature is corrupted by sin, it is also illuminated by God's presence and guidance; God's grace shows itself in countless ways in the lives of Christians and non-Christians alike. In light of this fact, evil demands a response that overcomes rather than compounds evil.” (Hoekema, 2009)³⁸

While the just war tradition associated with St. Augustine is a war for self-defense, in Hinduism, the warriors or the Ksatriyas were entrusted with the duty of protecting the Brahmins as the custodians of 'dharma', who at a later phase of history, would become as powerful as 'gods on earth.' Gandhi made no provision for taking recourse to war or violence even for protecting dharma, nor does Dalai Lama. Despite their basic faith in absolute *ahimsa*, there is tragic realization of the fact that terrorism cannot be addressed by applying the principle of *ahimsa* alone because the minds of terrorists are closed. The Just War tradition too admits its own defeat if, its recourse to violence intended for good is turned to evil purposes. While the just-war theory can widen its scope by accommodating the non-violent principles into its fold, religious pacifism can engage in constructive dialogue with the political, military and civil institutions for evolving meaningful solutions to common concerns. In light of what is quoted below, the article concludes with an optimistic note that despite some differences in basic philosophy and theology, there is hope for more meaningful dialogue in the near future not only for dialogue among diverse religious traditions that still cherish some common minimum goals, there is hope for bridging the gap between the worldly and the otherworldly spheres of life in an amicable manner.

The following statements from the U.S. Bishops are relevant balancing the just war tradition of Christianity with non-violence in order to preserve its truly *dharmic* dimension.

While the just-war teaching has clearly been in possession for the past 1,500 years of Catholic thought, the “new moment” in which we find ourselves sees the just-war teaching and nonviolence as distinct but interdependent methods of evaluating warfare. They diverge on some specific conclusions, but they share a common presumption against the use of force as a means of settling disputes. Both find their roots in the Christian theological tradition; each contributes to the full moral vision we need in pursuit of a human peace. We believe the two perspectives support and complement one another, each preserving the other from distortion.” (U.S. pastoral on war and peace, 208).”³⁹

The Dalai Lama is equally optimistic that both the religious and political perspectives will set some common goals for empowering the non-violent traditions of humankind to eradicate suffering as well as for restoring peace and security of all forms of life. He writes,

What is required is a well-thought-out, long-term strategy to promote globally a political culture of non-violence and dialogue. The international community must assume a responsibility to give strong and effective support to non-violent movements committed to peaceful changes. We must draw lessons from the experiences we gained. If we look back at the last century, the most devastating cause of human suffering has been the culture of violence in resolving differences and conflicts. The challenge before us, therefore, is to make this new 21st century a century of dialogue when conflicts are resolved non-violently.”⁴⁰

END NOTES

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