



Afflatus Creations

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Dr. Lalit Mohan Sharma: On Being Non-Violent

A consistent belief in non-violence is an interesting claim for any sane society to make. Beckoned by greats like Buddha and Gandhi, a host of sages having done penance for the well-being of humanity, for us non-violence navigates any script of international peace and coexistence, its symbol is significantly first mentioned in Maha Upanishad, and later in Hitopadesha as well: *Vasudhaivkatumbkam*. The World is one family. Obviously, no violence could hold it together as One Family. At different times, Prime Ministers, Rajiv Gandhi, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Man Mohan Singh used this phrase to emphasize India's world-view. Shri Narendra Modi made it the motto of India's presidency of G20. And every leader worth his salt has spoken high of non-violence whenever the occasion rose, or while paying tributes to Mahatma Gandhi on his birth or death anniversary, how the truth of non-violence was enshrined in his concept of Satyagrah.

Now, the question begs no description as, Are we not violent? Looking at literature and history, one gets conflicting impressions. Mahabharat may have given us The Bhagvad Gita, which, besides philosophical and psychological truths, leads Arjun to take up arms against his cousins and elders. A special case can be made of it. Still, how does one recall the epic but with such incidents and episodes as the game of dice leading to the disrobing of the daughter in law of the Kuru dynasty, the battle ground littered with blood and limbs of soldiers, the Wax House—Lakshagrih conspiracy, long tales of battles between Vashishtha and Vishwamitra, and so on.

Ramayan has well known episodes of war and violence, there's also Sharupnakha, guilty of offering herself to the princes already married, but to cut her nose as a punishment is not of negligible violence even if she attacked Sita, there could always be other means to decapitate her. Let's keep in mind that violence is not just physical bloodbath but can also be cruel psychological hurts.

Looking at history, of recent times, it was Gandhi who could choose to withdraw his non-violent campaign after the Chaurichaura violence. Most of the leaders and the people did not agree with the Mahatma. The great momentum was lost, and country's freedom was as a result delayed. How quick and sharp our people take to violence?

How much provocation to target a whole community? Look at Delhi 1984, Godhra 2002, a whole people shed non-violent inhibitions, and astutely practiced the violence of civilized barbarians. Remember Hashimpura? Twenty seven years after that incident, the Court sent sixteen policemen to life imprisonment for the crime. Forget about commissions of enquiry appointed, their reports filed, politics of camouflage, that's almost after every riot, let's leave names of the cities. The most galling thing is that persons convicted of rape and riots are released on parole or on relaxation of jail term. And the greater violence lies in their public garlanding, and honour of such convicted persons.

Violence is indeed a kind of insanity. Once a while, one could be provoked into such a mood. In his book, 'The Continent of Circe'*, Nirad C. Chaudhari observes that insanity can strike a whole race for short periods of time. Like, it did in Germany, when Hitler came up with the Nazi Party and the Jews fell to that insanity. In case of India, he finds a permanent state of insanity, but it affects one tenth, nine tenths—artisans and farmers, they remain free. That's why violent insanity has not engulfed or wiped us. We are staying on. Staying put! You hear various incidents of lynching over beef, later finding the meat wasn't actually 'beef'. You hear of a person beaten to death for stealing, or even suspected of theft. For a whole year, Manipur is a

dramatized metaphor for violence, you hear of no action, or any national outpouring of shock at the incidents. Women were paraded naked, the video goes viral. More people take note of it. Parliament suffers lack of cohesion on when to debate such matters.

Our Shock- Absorbers of violence are made of tougher metal. Sonam Wangchuk walks from Leh to Delhi, non- violent, not even raising slogans, anxious about ecology and administration in Lakdhak. Not given a hearing! His associates are dragged away by the police, the new 163 or the old famous 144 has been dishonoured. Violence to law? We are a non- violent people. But only a baby which cries loud gets the feed!

*Nirad C. Chaudhari, *The Continent of Circe*, Jaico Impression (1966), 2021, pp123-5.

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