

In favor of non-violent human civilization

Dr. Prem Singh

*Splintered lies the ethics,
In varying degrees which both have bent
The Pandavas less, the Kauravas more
Oh, when will this bloodletting end ...?*

('Andha Yug', Dharamveer Bharati)

1

The Russia-Ukraine war shows no signs of ending. However, there continue to be constant statements, discussions, and write ups from leaders, diplomats, experts, officials, scholars and ordinary citizens on various aspects related to the war.

Whatever the significance of this whole exercise in the discussion of the causes, implications, effects, consequences etc. of war, it has been of little help in exerting any positive influence. It seems that modern violent civilization doesn't appear to have many options, not only by politicians and diplomats, but also by various experts and scholars who have taken their stand on the war. It can also be said that they do not perceive modern civilization as violent. The UN general secretary says that the Russia-Ukraine war is an absurdity, an evil in the modern civilization of the twenty-first century. This presumes as if this absurdity or evil has fallen from the skies and has nothing to do with the world order of which he is the general secretary of its central body!

At the beginning of the war, I wrote an article titled 'Russia-Ukraine War: Why Civil Resistance Doesn't Work?'. A suggestion has been made in the article that civil society should seriously and holistically contemplate a possible alternative to modern violent civilization. People did not pay much attention to that article. Rather, even a magazine like 'Mainstream Weekly' found that article 'outdated'. I write this present article as a sequel to the first one mentioned here.

Civil resistance held world over including Russia against the Russia-Ukraine war has been snuffed out. The course of expressing human concerns/condolences on the deaths, sufferings and displacement of the citizens of Ukraine has also faded.

Russia, America, European countries and NATO, the major players of this war, are making claims to establish a lasting peace after the war. They are trying to explain that the manufacture and purchase of more weapons and the steady expansion of NATO is the guarantee of lasting peace. Russia, on the other hand, continues to believe that it has taught the forces behind Ukraine a lesson for the future. Looking only at the last two decades of the twenty-first century, the hollowness of the claims of achieving lasting peace between the wars and strife in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Armenia-Azerbaijan, Ukraine is axiomatic.

Russia has threatened the countries supporting Ukraine in the war to be prepared to face the consequences. Since the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine war, there are fears ranging from the threat of a third world war to a nuclear Armageddon. As international relations, especially in economic-trade matters turn increasingly competitive, even a peaceful economy seems an impossibility. If after the Russia-Ukraine war the world is actually going to be bi-polar or multi-polar again instead of uni-polar, that is not going to stop wars and the manufacturing and trading of weapons.

Anti-Americans are quite vocal about the Russia-Ukraine war. Most of America's opponents are internally victims of 'Americanism'. Their anti-America stance is driven by a suppressed desire to see some other country as powerful as America. Be America at the top, or Russia, or China - if there are weapons, they will find their wars, and if there are wars, they will find their weapons. In fact, as long as there is supremacy-culture in the world order, there can be no peace at all.

2

It seems that the mind of the masters of modern industrial civilization is unable to comprehend those sincere efforts are the need of the hour to build a non-violent human civilization for lasting peace.

Whether one looks at political, diplomatic, military leadership, or even business leaders or intelligentsia - the ruling-class, living a luxurious life at the cost of the working masses of the world, is willy nilly a vocal or silent supporter of the prevailing violence. Celebrities from different fields like film, sports, fashion, music, dance, literature etc. may also be included in this category. Most celebrities, knowingly or unknowingly, are evolving into the 'ambassadors' of today's violent civilization. The life of modern man would not have been so intensely surrounded from all sides by the competition to produce, sell and use all types of weapons.

In this civilization not only the body but also humankind's soul is strapped with various types of metals and explosives. And unfortunately, we are led to believe it's the best stage of human civilization ever! The parts of the world that are left behind in this race, at whose cost this violent civilization is established, are expected and encouraged to continue racing in the direction of achieving that very stage.

Yet the desire for peace of the inhabitants of this modern violent civilization, which runs on two strong wheels of arms and market, is not all that faltering. People affected by external discord are found to take various measures with the aim of achieving inner peace. It has become a big business, which is thriving in this violent civilization. It is claimed in this peace-business that inner peace will bring outer peace. Inner peace is possible only when you keep yourself unaffected by the outside world. (That is, enjoy it to the fullest, but there is no need to challenge or change it.) In this business, the words of many so-called spiritualists and tele-evangelists, philosophers-writers and even some scientists as well are quoted frequently. Along with this, activities like Peace Day, Peace Prize, Peace Conference, Peace Ambassador are organized under the auspices of global organizations, non-governmental organizations and governments.

The strings of operation of these activities are mainly associated with America, whose foundation, not only existence, is based on violence. In the midst of this whole business of peace, wars, civil wars, guerrilla wars, racial wars, terrorist wars go on in different corners of the world. Needless to say, the violent civilization has spread all this business in its defense. People do not understand that lasting peace cannot be an intrinsic attribute of a violent civilization.

3

It is not that the question of violence has not been contemplated under violent civilization. It has done a lot. In addition to violence related to war, many other types of structural violence have been considered and analyzed by several important thinkers. But as there is no concrete thought of non-violent civilization, violent civilization continues to spread despite serious contemplation on the issue of violence. A considerable amount of the post-critique of capitalism and socialism established by adopting capitalist means and processes, as well as the present-day corporate capitalism. But in spite of that the gaping black hole of violent civilization consumes all objects relentlessly.

Violent civilization is not without achievements. It has deep attractions of its own, which have not been so manifest in earlier civilizations. It provides man with an unprecedented world of consumerism while fueling man's attitudes like greed, hatred, revenge, domination, thrill, adventure etc. It has the expertise that even the oppressed and victim consider themselves to be natural members of violent civilization. They would have hoped that one day they too would dominate/destroy others, and would attain the state of complete consumerism. Capitalism, the leader of violent civilization, descends in the most backward alleyways of the far-flung world in order to cater its public. The roots of modern violent civilization are deep and widespread. Its story is infinite and immense. Perhaps this is the reason that any thinking related to non-violent civilization in the modern or pre-modern eras, does not find fertile ground to grow. Such thinking, as Gandhi said, is one in which economics regulates ethics and ethics regulates economics.

4

There are ample sources of thinking inspired by the creation of non-violent civilizations all over the world. Gandhi's thinking presents a serious and coherent alternative to modern violent civilization among them. Along with presenting the philosophy of a just human civilization, he has also provided the mode of action to achieve it. Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia has described Gandhi's civil disobedience method of resistance to injustice as the greatest revolution in human history so far. Many activists/leaders of the world have used Gandhi's methodology in their struggles.

It is Gandhi's strength, and at the same time weakness, that he was born in a colonized part of the world. Strength, because, despite being born in the colonized country, he could nurture an original thinking opposing colonialism, an initial stage of modern violent civilization. Weakness, because, being a thinker of the colonized land, he could not get the same recognition and importance as the thinkers born in the colonialist countries got.

Along with economic exploitation at the core of colonialism was the belief that it was a divine duty to bring the enslaved populations out of the pit of ignorance. Therefore, Gandhi, a resident of a slave country, could not be accepted as a provider of a perfect alternative civilization. However, several ordinary and prominent people from the colonialist countries accepted Gandhi as an alternative thinker and leader. Many of them also got involved with Gandhi's struggle for independence.

Gandhi took his sources of thinking from all available sources. The bibliography of 'Hind Swaraj' mentions two Indian authors – Dadabhai Naoroji and RC Dutta. The rest of the authors - Tolstoy, Sherard, Carpenter, Taylor, Blount, Thoreau, Ruskin, Mazzini, Plato, Max Nordau - are from outside India. After Gandhi, many important scholars have contemplated towards building a non-violent civilization. There are many neo-Marxists among them. Nandkishore Acharya has written, "Now even the new Marxist thinkers like Meszaros, Leibovitz and Terry Eagleton have started talking about decentralized technology and production system, which is neither controlled by the corporate, nor by the state. Meszaros explains globalization as 'globalization of unemployment'. Its solution can be found only in the choice of the productive forces, which together with production have also contained solutions to the problem of distribution. In fact, due to indigenous technology and non-violent production relations resulting from it, exploitative centralization of capital is not possible and the ideal of equitable distribution of profits, that is, economic equality, is also automatically implemented to a large extent.

"Truth and non-violence, according to Gandhi, should not only be considered as personal virtues, but their socio-economic return should be reflected not only in the aims but also in the process, that is, not only as an end, but also as a means. 'Gandhi Hai Vikalp' (Gandhi is the alternative), Prakrit Bharati Academy, Jaipur, 2021, pp. 49-50)

Therefore, an outline of non-violent civilization can be delineated easily from the thinking of Gandhi's contemporary and later thinkers. But it is a pity that in all the debate about the Russia-Ukraine war, no attention has been given to that crucial task.

India's position in this context is very bad. No modern leader in India believed in Gandhi's critique of modern industrial civilization and his vision of its alternative. They wanted to make India like colonial countries. Even today the situation is more or less the same. Rather, under the rule of the present government, not only blind leaps are being taken in the direction of violent civilization, an entire narrative is being fabricated and spread to justify Gandhi's assassination. Some people take the strange pleasure of killing Gandhi again and again by firing bullets at his photo. There are many such people in the country today who say that had Gandhi been alive today, they would have shot him.

Obviously, all this does not make any difference to the dead Gandhi. However, it remains to be seen that 'Gandhi's India' remains an arena of multi-level violence. Dr. Lohia wrote, "The first half of the twentieth century produced two novel phenomena, atomic bomb and Mahatma Gandhi, and the century's second half will struggle and suffer to make its choice between the two." (Collected Works of Dr. Rammanohar Lohia, volume 3, Anamika Prakashan, Delhi, 2011, p. 246)

Now two decades of the twenty-first century have passed. Has modern man decided to suffer by choosing the atomic bomb? Or is the resolve to establish a non-violent human civilization in one corner of his mind as active as before? If this is so, then there will definitely be victory of life instinct over the death instinct related to violent civilization.

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