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Applied Jain Non-violence: Meditation as a Remedial Approach

– Dr Samani Shashi Prajñā

One of the world's oldest religions, Jainism has as its primary philosophy '*Ahiṃsā*' or 'reverence for all living beings'. Its latest prophet (*Tirthaṅkara*), *Mahāvīra*, was born in 599 BC in North East India. He was the 24th in the line of prophets and thus Jainism is a dharma of unique antiquity. His entire life is an example of how to live in perfect harmony with the natureand not to cause any pain to any living being in words, in thoughts, and in actions. He has had a major influence on the spread of non-violent values and practises in entire history of India.The prime maxim of Jains is 'non-violence is the supreme religion'. The development of human race is founded on non-violent conduct and behaviour. The vows of truthfulness, non-stealing etc. are nothing but the nurturing factors of non-violence. In Jain religion, non-violence is believed to be *Savvabhūyakhemankari* (good for all living beings) and *mātṛisthāniyā (it is* like a mother). All moral rules and disciplines are in inclusive in this single principle. From the time immemorial it is thought that man is a social being who respects his fellow human-beings but looking into the global violence today one fails to understand how man got into grip of violence or to be more precise how violence got over him. The world is torn by tension, strife, crimes, terrorismand regional conflicts.The present paper is an endeavour towards highlighting non-violence as an antidote for solving the burning problems of today. It deals with the roots of violence and its wayout through the practice of meditation.

Various Facets of Root Causes of Violence

In the case of every problem man wants to search its root and is not content until his search succeeds. Today's major issue for which almost all

the nations of the world endeavour to find a solution is, raising violence. According to my view, there are many factors responsible for violence. We will go in to them later. The violence prevalent in the society cannot put to an end without developing spiritual non-violence and basing our life on it.Let us then discuss what is meant by spiritual non-violence. It is based on the unity and equality of all souls–souls of all sentiments. Once we know that every living being is subject to pain and pleasure in the same manner as we and therefore we must never inflict pain on them, never oppress and exploit them, never rob them of their rights, then we are on our way to realizing the meaning of spiritual non-violence. And it is this non-violence that can prevent the arson, loot, rioting and killings going on in society.

I believe that practising meditation is a step towards spiritual excellence. To meditate is to see oneself, which in turn means seeing and searching real base of non-violence. It is geneticists, who will locate its root in the genes inherited from one's forefathers. It would mean that man is helpless in the matter since he cannot control his heredity. Psychologists trace violence to one of the basic instincts. Environmental scientists blame it on the general atmosphere or circumstances surrounding a human being since his childhood. Some philosophers attribute it to *karma*-s. Thus we have confronted with a plethora of views on the subject.

If we pause and think for a moment we find that each one of them is partial or one-sided, though none of them can be termed as wholly untrue. We must take a holistic view. But even this might not provide the ultimate solution. More serious thinking is needed. Each of the theories based on genes, prime instincts, environment and *karma*-s has a more or less deterministic ring about it, which leaves one both pessimistic and helpless in the face of the inevitable. However, the doctrine of *karma* also suggests the possibility of changing the *karma*-s. The possibility of change kindles new hope in the heart. After all we can change; violence can change.

Meditation as a Remedial Approach to Violence

The key to change is the development of non-violence. Both violence and nonviolence are inherent in us. Our mind also works in two ways: one dictates anger; the other counsels' patience, puts the brakes on the anger. Both the instigating and the restraining tendencies are there. Good and evil are both present in us. The real question is which of the two we shall develop. Which one shall we awaken and which one shall we put to sleep? It is here that meditation has its role. Through it we can awaken non-violence and put violence to sleep. It is then a question of proper awakening. Unfortunately

we are fully conscious of material things but totally unconscious of ourselves. Meditation makes us conscious of ourselves. It develops self-awareness. Once self -awareness has dawned, nonviolence develops.

We have read the earlier mentioned views of genes, instincts, environment and *karmas*. Of these four, environment or the general atmosphere has an immediate impact on us and so it deserves our attention first. In this connection, it is noteworthy that right from childhood man is exposed to violence, crime and immorality through the mass media-radio, television, cinema, internet and newspapers. No wonder crime and violence permeate modern society. Sex, greed, fear, suspicion and anger– they all breed violence and very little is heard of non-violence in general. It is said that genes and instincts cannot be changed but karmas can certainly be, else there will be no relevance of penance, austerity and the like. The need to change remains crucial. Both the root and the branches have to be changed. And as stated earlier,the most important and powerful means of bringing complete change is meditation. It alone has the power to develop non-violence, self-realization and the sense of unity and equality of all sentiments.

Non-violence and Meditation

As social beings, all humans like non-violence since it guarantees peace which in turn is the prerequisite for happiness. The roots of violence are deep and extensive therefore to destroy them is difficult. However it is not impossible. The best way to do is meditation. Before discovering the relation between the meditation and non-violence, it is necessary to find out the root cause of violence, and also the factors which provide substance to violence.

One of the most important factors is **stress.** Violence is not possible in the absence of stress. A relaxed person cannot commit violence. The muscles get tense, the mind becomes tense, feelings turn tense too. Violence is the natural outcome. Basically, of course most tension is born of an agitated or uncontrolled passionate mind. There are two types of stress: that which is born of uncontrolled passions and that born of the sense of depression. To the former, belong cases of stress arising out of anger, ego and greed; to the latter those caused by despair, defeat and indolence. A man undergoing depression many a times commits suicide.Whatever the provenance, all types of tensions generate violence.

Against the backdrop of tension is stress, it becomes meaningful to talk about meditation and non-violence. As noted above, the most potent antidote to stress of all kinds is meditation. In fact the main aim of meditation is to free a man from stress.For physical stress, the practice of *Kāyotsarga*

(abandonment of the body), a motionless form of meditation and for mental stress exercise of long breathing and for emotional stress the practice of *Anitya Anuprekṣā* (contemplation of impermanence) and *Ekatva Anuprekṣā* (contemplation of solitariness) and concentration on *Jyoti* Kendra is recommended which cures specific types of emotional tension. The main things being emphasized here is the efficacy of meditation as a complete cure for all varieties of stress and tension.

Another factor involved in violence is **chemical imbalance.** When there is an imbalance of glandular secretions in the body, people become violent. Every endocrine gland has its specific functions. The function of pituitary gland is different from what the pineal does and similarly the thyroid and adrenal glands have their particular functions. A harmonious functioning of these glands keep man balanced. Any imbalance in the former results in an imbalance in the latter. Meditation can restore the lost balance. As per Ācārya Mahāprajñā, *Chaitanya Kendra Prekṣā* (practice of perception of psychic centres on the endocrine system) is an effective means of curing the imbalance. Concentration on the *Jyoti Kendra* (the pineal), *Darśana Kendra* (the pituitary), *Vishddhi Kendra* (the thyroid) and *Tejasa Kendra* (the adrenals) balances the flow of the hormones of the pineal, pituitary, thyroid, and the adrenal glands respectively. Such an understanding is duly backed by the findings of modern bio-chemistry. Since violence can be ascribed to hormonal imbalances in the body, meditation turns out to be their best therapy.

The third factor responsible for violence is an **imbalance in the *NādiTantra*** (nervous system). Occasionally we come across cases of motiveless or unintentional violence. When policemen questioned, the agents of such violence, they simply say that they resort to violence for no reason other than deriving joy. This type of violence is due to the imbalance of the nervous system and its cure lies in *Samavṛtti Śvāsa Prekṣā* (exhaling breath through one nostril and inhaling through the other). It requires alternate breathing through the two nostrils-inhaling through the left and exhaling through the right nostril and then in the reverse order, and repetition of the cycle. Hatha Yoga recognizes two parts of the nervous system, the right being called the *Piṅgalā* and the left *Īdā*. In the language of medical science, *Piṅgalā* is the sympathetic nervous system and *Īdā* is the para-sympathetic nervous system. By practising *Samavṛitti Śvāsa Prekṣā*, a balance between the two systems is created. Besides this, the practice of an internal trip (travel of the conscious mind from the bottom to the top of the spinal cord) also helps to restore the central nervous system balance. Once the three parts of the nervous system–

central, sympathetic and Para-sympathetic-start functioning in a balanced manner, violence automatically disappears.

Another way of looking at the problem is in terms of the two attitudes – **positive and negative.** Ordinarily man has a preponderance of the latter. Hatred, jealousy, fear, and lust are all symptoms of a negative attitude and they are also factors that contribute to violence. Racism, casteism and all other forms of discrimination generate violence due to the presence of negative attitude. There is a need to think positively making it impossible for the mind to harbour bad feelings for others. Meditation develops positive thinking by insisting on practising perception of the self. One, who meditates on the self, reduces negative feelings and develops positive feelings. Seeing oneself, regular practice of introspection, *Anitya Anuprekṣā* (contemplation of impermanence), etc. are the sure means of developing positive thinking and eliminating negative thinking, the fourth factor responsible for the violence.

In the words of Ācārya Mahāprajñā, this era is an era of **intolerance.** The fifth element is being the disease of intolerance has speedily spread in all walks of life far and wide. The world is torn by tension, strife, divorces, crime, terrorists attach, ethno-religious, linguistic and regional conflicts. Everybody is suffering from uncertainty about the future and from lack of peace of mind. It is obvious that man has become intolerant and does not want to respect the sentiments of others. Even for, as small a matter as crossing the road as a pedestrian or driving a vehicle or standing in a queue to procure something, how impatient he became? When we could notice such intolerant behaviour in the day to day life of an individual then the cases of a group behaving intolerantly with another group, a community to another community, a nation to another nation –after all only these individuals from the group, the community, or the country can easily be justified giving the same reason of state of impatience, intolerance and insolence. The very well researched practice of contemplation of tolerance for 30 minutes every day proved to be the sure means of developing the power of tolerance.

The sixth element is being **over busyness or over exertion** of mental, vocal, and physical activities. Being busy and exerting are undoubtedly essential for life, but there should be a limit to them. Today man has broken all limits and has become over busy-a victim of over exertion. The result again is violence. Nature ordains a balance between work and rest, both mental and physical, and between speech and silence. To stop unnecessary exertion of the body and the mind, as also of speech is to lead a disciplined life. Observing silence just for an hour in the day will be a great boost to a

balanced living. Likewise useless and unceasing thinking can prove unhinging. So once again resting the mind for an hour during the day–keeping it free from all thoughts or concentrating one's mind on the single subject can prove immensely useful. Physical discipline, vocal discipline and mental discipline are intrinsic to meditation.

Violence originates in limbic system and then it comes at the level of thoughts and then in action. The first principle of non-violence is purification of emotions and for that our body and the mind has to be trained. The body should be trained through the different *āsanas* and the practice of relaxation. The training of mind is undertaken through, prāṇāyāma, deep breathing and alternate breathing. The training of emotions is done through the practice of meditation on psychic centres and colour meditation. By practising all the three of them, we can severely restrain violence. Thus meditation puts the breaks on the over-busyness of the body and the mind and thus prevents violence. Once the above truth is properly understood, the way will be clear to adopt measures best calculated to put an end to the crimes and violence in the society.

Forty Minutes Capsule Course for Developing Non-violent Personality

Training is prerequisite for developing a non-violent personality. We have to recognize the fact that today negative ideas hold sway in life and positive ideas are at a discount. Let me here suggest just one method of replacing negative ideas to positive ideas. Sit down adopting the posture of *kāyotsarga* (total relaxation of the body) for ten minutes and then practice making mind free from all thoughts. It implies the absence of both the memory and imagination, for both the past and future is fetter of the mind. Attaining such a placid state of mind is an art that one learns through long and constant practice. It amounts to cleansing of mind. After remaining in the state of thoughtlessness for ten minutes, a conscious effort should be made to probe the mind with a view to finding out the negative ideas harboured by it. This should go on for the same period i.e. ten minutes. Then give yourself with awareness the positive suggestions and repeating them for the same length of time. Thus forty minutes of training in non-violence as recommended by Ācārya Mahāprajñā will be the first lesson of developing a non-violent personality. Any discussion on non-violence without an accompanying programme of training is meaningless.

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15.	JVB & JVBU Research Work	Samani Agam Prajna/Dr. Vandana Mehta	100
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19.	आचार्य महाप्रज्ञ का संस्कृत साहित्य	डॉ. हरिशंकर पाण्डेय	550
20.	युग को आचार्य महाप्रज्ञ का योगदान	डॉ. हरिशंकर पाण्डेय/डॉ. जे.पी.एन. मिश्रा	100
21.	अंगुत्तर निकाय भाग-1	श्री श्रीचंद रामपुरिया	50
22.	अंगुतर निकाय भाग-2	श्री श्रीचंद रामपुरिया	60
23.	महाभारत परिक्रमा	श्री श्रीचंद रामपुरिया	60
24.	श्रमण सूक्त	श्री श्रीचंद रामपुरिया	150
25.	तीर्थंकर वर्द्धमान जीवन प्रसंग	श्री श्रीचंद रामपुरिया	80
26.	आवश्यक निर्युक्ति खण्ड-1	डॉ. समणी कुसुम प्रज्ञा	400
27.	आचारांग और महावीर	साध्वी शुभ्रयशा	150
28.	सम्बोधि का समीक्षात्मक अनुशीलन	समणी स्थित प्रज्ञा	100
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30.	दूरस्थ शिक्षा की उपयोगिता	डॉ. आनन्दप्रकाश त्रिपाठी	100
31.	नई सुबह	डॉ. आनन्दप्रकाश त्रिपाठी	100
32.	जैन संस्कृति और जीवन मूल्य भाग-1,2,3	डॉ. समणी ऋजु प्रज्ञा	75
33.	भिक्षु न्यायकर्णिका	पं. विश्वनाथ मिश्र	120
34.	जीवन विज्ञान और स्वास्थ्य	डॉ. समणी ऋजु प्रज्ञा/समणी श्रेयस प्रज्ञा	120
35.	योग वैशिष्ट्य	डॉ. जे.पी.एन. मिश्रा	400
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37.	जैन पारिभाषिक शब्दकोश	मुख्य नियोजिका साध्वी विश्रुतविभा	995
38.	जैन दर्शन के प्रमुख सिद्धान्त	डॉ. समणी ऋजु प्रज्ञा	110
39.	शिक्षा दर्शन एवं मूल्य विकास	डॉ. समणी मल्लि प्रज्ञा/डॉ. हेमलता जोशी	160
40.	प्रेक्षाध्यान और योग	डॉ. समणी ऋजु प्रज्ञा	150

प्रकाशक - सम्पादक - डॉ. अनिल धर द्वारा जैन विश्वभारती संस्थान
लाडनूँ के लिए प्रकाशित एवं गिरधर ऑफसेट प्रिन्टर्स, लाडनूं द्वारा मुद्रित