



Getting to Know Jainism in the context of a warring 21st. century

Presented by

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The Preparing for Peace Project

In 2000, Westmorland General Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, began a PEACE initiative, called Preparing for Peace, to explore these questions with international experts and witnesses. This is one of the papers.

The themes were:

- Can we demonstrate that war is obsolete?
- Is war successful in achieving its objectives?
- Can war be controlled or contained?
- What are the costs of war?
- What are the causes of war?
- Can the world move forward to another way?



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Acknowledgements

Foremost, I owe a debt to Brian Walker for providing me with this opportunity of writing a paper on relevance of Jainism to the current state of the world tormented by relentless conflicts. Though born in an orthodox Jain family and under strict observance of the rules and rituals up to the age of fifteen years under the eye of my grandfather, I realized I knew or remembered little of Jainism. The preparation of this paper was thus refreshing and rewarding to learn about my own faith, at this age.

In this I am beholden particularly to the four authors whom I have quoted extensively here: Padmanabh S. Jaini, Sagarmal Jain, Vincent Sekhar, S.J and Wm. Theodore de Gary. But for relating the philosophy and practice of Jainism to the agonies of the world around us today, I owe much to my wife Dr. Devaki Jain.

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Contents

- I. Why the world is becoming a killing field
- II. Reinvoking faith: the values of Jainism
- III. The value of tolerance and how to build the capacity to tolerate.
- IV. Building the individual to deal with him/herself: a fundamental basis for building peace
- V. Interpreting ahimsa - from faith to operational values
- VI. To conclude

References

I

Why the world is becoming a killing field

The last century has been the bloodiest in history, with two world wars and numerous conflicts erupting, and re-erupting in practically all the regions of the world. In fact "the twentieth century has witnessed 250 wars and over 100 million casualties. During the 1990s, in an average year about half the population lived in a country that was at war. Over 23 million people have died in more than 160 wars and, after 1945, overwhelmingly in the Third World."¹

In the post World War II era there are more local wars, more intrastate and ethnic wars than "World Wars". Civilians are not merely caught in the crossfire; they are targeted, deliberately and brutally, by certain military strategists or hurt, mutilated, killed and dismissed as "collateral damage." Civilian casualties were 5 percent in World War I, 50 percent in World War II and 90 percent Post World War II, in local wars.

The "advances" in war techniques have resulted in the use, and threat of use of weapons of mass destruction - biological, chemical and nuclear. The wars of today are also characterised by massive displacement of people fleeing ethnic, religious and gendered forms of violence², the mobilization of children as soldiers,³ the use of humans as bombs.

Thus, despite the pledge enshrined in the UN, Charter to 'save succeeding generations from the scourge of war'⁴ the intensification of conflicts, the changes in the nature of conflict, reflected in the growing numbers of local wars, and the extent and type of casualties shows that the scourge of war has not been contained by the structures of international governance: and increasingly women and children have become important actors, apart from victims in conflict.

Responding to this phenomena there have been floods of analysis of why it should have reached this peak even as there is an impression of a movement forward in what can be called "civilization" - using the term to mean behaviours which are controlled, nuanced, understanding, and in some sense mental as different from physical.

There is presumed to be a movement forward from what are called "barbaric" times when killing and hurting seemed to be a necessary condition of survival, to dialogues and legal frameworks which seemed to pre-empt conflict. Literacy rates, apart from other demographic data like mortality and longevity have improved worldwide in leaps and bounds in this century as is brought home to us by the United Nations annual Human Development Report.

Why then with so much advancement in what can be called modernization and modernity should there be such a revival of what looks like uncontrolled killing as a

form of fulfilling either an aspiration or an emotion? Why then this slide back to such violent means of expressing what can be called preference? It is in this quest that there has been an analysis of how conflicts get generated and some of the reasons that have been identified are increases in economic and social disparities, namely rising inequality accompanied by strong vivid imageries of comfort and high standards of consumption.

Another truth - not so palatable, is that increasing disparities also accompanied simultaneously by the reduction in what can be called the size of the economic cake, as well as the withdrawal of the State from providing social and economic security (a result of the dominant 'market' driven economic paradigm), - demands forms of identity affirmation, to claim pieces of the economic or political cake. Thus we see the emergence of narrower and narrower identities amongst social groups in order to make collective claims. The emergence of recognition of minority rights, of indigenous rights; emergence of claims for the balkanization of countries for self rule according to boundaries determined by language and culture in many parts of the world, create enormous conflicts accompanied by killing.

"It is true, particularly since the end of the cold war, that violent conflicts have arisen not so much between states but within them between ethnic groups. But on their causes, there is wide agreement in recent research by scholars that cultural differences by themselves are not the relevant factor. Studies offer several explanations for these wars economic inequalities between the groups as well as struggles over political power, land and other economic assets Cultural identity does have a role in these conflicts - not as a cause but as a driver for political mobilization. Leaders invoke a single identity, its symbols and its history of grievances, to "rally the troops"; and a lack of cultural recognition can trigger violent mobilization.⁵

In one sense, this affirmation of "narrow" identities reflects progression in the expression of rights because of the increasing reverence for human rights in the 20th century. Its accommodation could improve the quality of democracy. But somewhere its outcome seems to have generated violent conflicts.

II

Re invoking faith: the values of Jainism

It is in this 'quest for healing'⁶ that 'faith' seems to reappear and we need to re-invoke it, in its most benign form.

Faith, whether it is accompanied by formal religion or expressed in other more individualistic ways, has played a role in constraining human beings from behaving in "uncontrolled" manners. But faith has also narrowed identities and generated the most

vicious conflicts. The religious bigotry of the dark Middle Ages in Europe, accompanied by ferocious attacks on "the other" reappears in the modern world as conflicts between religious identities.

It seems ultimately that it is the individual and his/her capacity to exercise restraint, to control emotions, to enlarge the notions of human identity, to embrace difference, to level disparities, to see the universal right to exist and be respected across all divides that might provide the healing touch not only between human beings, but between human beings, nature, insects and animals - a kind of all embracing embrace that might prevent such cruel conflict based on difference. It is here that Jainism seems to offer a unique guiding philosophy.

Some of the essential aspects of Jainism can be listed as:⁷

- Affirming "total" equality, a belief that everything, living and 'non living' are equal to each other and so they all have to be treated with the same respect. "But universal love is based on the concept of equality of all beings and firm faith in the doctrine that by nature living beings are made for each other. Parasparopagrahojivanam" [Jain philosopher Umasvati,]
- Another essential element is avoiding discrimination. The preoccupation about discrimination is such that it does not discriminate between living and non living things and again it does not discriminate between self and the other, nor between the body and the soul. And discrimination has been identified as one of the most pungent sources of conflict and violence.
- A third is the argument that "self" embraces the "other"- a merging of identities both physical and spiritual and therefore the quest to strengthen the individual
- A fourth is the location of responsibility for engaging in spiritual evolution entirely on self: there is no mediation through "church" or "minister", images or texts.

In all these areas there seems to be a continuous attempt to show "unity", a welding of what are considered normally to be separate "elements". Once unity is the belief (not merely a goal) but the very beginning of understanding the universe, it is difficult to find a basis for difference, which is the recognized basis of most conflict.

III

The value of tolerance, and how to build the capacity to tolerate

A major source of conflict and violence in societies across the world is intolerance and condemnation of the view point of the others - be it on matters spiritual or material. Jainism clearly foresaw some 2500 years ago the dangers of such bigotry, arrogance and self-righteousness.

Jainism, gives its adherents a unique orientation for recognising and respecting differences at the level of thought itself to avert consequential physical conflict and violence. It offers two kindred doctrines of "Viewpoints" (*nayavada*) and "Maybe" (*syadvada*), which are often called together "the Doctrine of Manysidedness" (*anekantavada*).⁸

We may truthfully affirm a given proposition (*syadvada*). Thus when in winter I come home after a walk in the open air, I may say that my room is warm.

But from another point of view it is possible to negate the same proposition (*syannasti*). Thus someone who has been sitting in the same room for some time may say with equal truth that it is not warm.

Hence it is possible to predicate the truth of a proposition and its negation at one and the same time (*syadastinasti*). The room is both warm and not-warm.

Such logic provides the basis for tolerance, a crucial factor in reducing conflict.

Anekantavada is a recognition that the world is more complex than it seems, that reality is more subtle than we are inclined to believe. Our knowledge is less certain than we think. A given proposition, though generally accepted as true, may only be relatively so, and the absolute and whole truth can only be seen by the perfected soul, the *siddha*, who surveys the whole universe in a single act of timeless knowledge. We need not therefore rush to annihilate, at the first sight, those whose views and perceptions may differ from ours.

There is a famous Indian parable, occurring in many sources, which tells of a king who, in a fit of practical joking, assembled a number of blind men and told them each to touch an elephant and tell him what they felt. The man who touched the trunk declared that it was a snake, he who touched the leg, a tree-trunk, and so on. The story concludes with violent altercations, each blind man maintaining that he knew the whole truth.

So man, incapable of seeing things whole and from all aspects at once, must be satisfied with partial truths. All too often he maintains that he knows the whole truth, and his one-sided approach results in anger; bigotry, and strife. The Jain, trained in the doctrine

of many sidedness, realizes that all ordinary propositions are relative to the aspect from which they are made, and tries to know the objects of his attention as thoroughly as possible by considering them from all points of view.⁹

The experience of true insight is said to save a person from drifting into one-sided views and consequently from regrettable actions which may cause injury even death to others. The non-absolutism of Jainism forbids the individual to be dogmatic and one-sided in approach. It pleads for a broader outlook and an open mindedness, which alone can resolve the conflicts that emerge from differences in ideologies and faiths. Non-absolutism regards the views of the opponent also as true. "All schools of thought are valid when they are understood from their own stand-point and in so far as they do not discard the truth-value of others. The knower of non-absolutism does not divide them into the category of true and false. They become false only when they reject the truth-value of other." Jainisms' theory of *Anekantavada* which challenges absolutism enables Jains to be tolerant.¹⁰

IV

Building the individual to deal with him /herself : a fundamental basis for building peace

Jainism believes that an individual should shed ignorance and acquire knowledge of one's own true nature, which will also fortify tolerance of fellow living beings and non-living objects essential for adherence to nonviolence. Ignorance (*mithyatva*) represents a lack of awareness of one's "true nature" as well as of the factors which cause that nature to be hidden from view. Thus, it follows that elimination of ignorance provides the only key whereby the shackles of bondage, hence of suffering, can be removed.

"Perhaps more than any other Indian religious tradition, Jainism is imbued with an emotional commitment to self-reliance. Thus Jains have found both theistic and fatalistic doctrines repugnant, for these doctrines totally deny the soul's ability to influence its own future. Although Jain philosophers have made much of the burden of karma, this burden is not to be construed as an inescapable, unalterable, externally imposed effect. Jainism gives us a detailed picture of the ladder one must climb as one progresses from the depths of delusion and entrapment to the pinnacle of omniscience and freedom.

"In addition to the transformation of consciousness and behaviour, Jains set forth the practice of *astanga*, "eight limbs" to be cultivated to the point of perfection. For example, *nihkamksita*: freedom from anticipation. This means that one entertains no desire with regard to the future. The ordinary person retains a deep attachment for things which please the senses and an aversion for those which do not. In one who has

gained true insight, however, there arises a quality called *nirvicikitsa*: freedom from disgust, which entails overcoming of such dualities. Next is *amudhadrsti*: freedom from delusive notions, which refers to the abandonment of three particular types of false belief. The first of these for example is *devamudhata*, delusion pertaining to gods; this indicates the common tendency towards indiscriminate worship of any god claimed to lead human beings to salvation."¹¹

Jain doctrine of self-realization may sound individualistic from a particular point of view. The extreme ascetic tendency of the Jains, the meticulous following of the ascetic rules suggest that it is individualistic in its approach and does not concern society as a whole. The doctrine of self-realization suggests that the highest good of the self is for the sake of the highest social good. Since each individual is organically related to the Jain community (*sangha*), one can realize one's self only in and through it. The common moral or spiritual principle for the community to emulate is: self-realization for the sake of the whole.¹²

We may ask: what is the motivating factor for a Jain towards self-realization? Is it pleasure or reason? The hardships involved in these do not suggest that it is a path of pleasure. The Jain *Acaryas* have taken into consideration these motives, so natural to all living beings and have enunciated the ethical principle of *Ahimsa*. Life is dear to everybody is the foundational creed for restraining one from violence to any living being. Ultimately it is the feeling that gives one the will to do. Although the act is guided by a feeling, it seeks a good, reflecting the rationality of the system. Thus, reason and passion go hand in hand and not that, as Rousseau reminds us, "Reason is and ought to be the slave of passions."¹³

V

Interpreting ahimsa - from faith to operational values

In the rainbow of religions that adorn the Indian lifescape, Jainism has been able to add its own colour. While Jainism as a religion seeks and searches the answers to the forever questions - the purpose and cycle of life, the mystery of the soul and the path for its liberation from bondage marked by birth after birth, the core of virtue for the Jains is in *ahimsa*, loosely interpreted as non-violence. For Jainism, non-violence is not merely a negative concept i.e. not to kill; but it has a strong positive side also i.e. service to mankind. For them non-violence is a wider term comprehending all the virtues. It is not. For Jainism, non-violence is not merely a negative concept i.e. not to kill; but it has a strong positive side also i.e. service to mankind. For them non-violence is a wider term comprehending all the virtues. It is not a single virtue but a group of virtues: "all moral practices such as truthfulness etc. are included in *Ahimsa* similarly all the vices are

comprehended in Himsa because virtues do not vitiate the real nature of self while vices do vitiate the real nature of self." Not a single virtue but a group of virtues.¹⁴

A Jain has to earn this virtue by practice in daily life. The individual has to prepare himself/herself vigorously - day to day, and step by step - both in thought and action. Without such preparation they can neither preserve this virtue - even if acquired - nor put it to effective duty to even curb, let alone combat, violence.

It is for these reasons that those who are seeking ways other than violence to resolve conflicts need to take a close look at Jainism - its beliefs, practices and rigorous discipline which prepares Jains to 'live' non-violence at all times.

First, Jainism relies on promoting an understanding of the world around us - how to relate to those who inhabit it and what are the principles to live by. It instructs its followers in gaining a unique and exhaustive view of all living-beings and non-living objects and then inculcates in them a devotion to respect them.

Jainism believes that there is soul even in non living objects such as plants and 'the very elementary themselves'.¹⁵ It classifies all living beings in five categories according to the number of senses they possess. For instance, "The highest group, possessing five senses, includes men, gods, the higher animals, and beings in hell. Of these men, gods, and infernal beings together with certain animals (notably monkeys, cattle, horses, elephants, parrots, pigeons, and snakes) possess intelligence. The second class contains creatures thought to have four senses only - touch, taste, smell and sight; this class includes most larger insects such as flies, wasps, and butterflies. The class of three-sensed beings, which are thought to be devoid of sight and hearing, contains small insects such as ants, fleas, and bugs, as well as moths, which are believed to be blind because of their unfortunate habit of flying into lighted lamps. Two-sensed creatures, with only the sense of taste and touch, include worms, leeches, shellfish, and various animalcules. It is in the final class of one-sensed beings, which have only the sense of touch, that the Jain classification shows its most original feature. This great class is in turn divided into five sub-classes; vegetable bodies, which may be simple, as a tree, containing only one soul, or complex as a turnip, which contains countless souls; earth-bodies, which include earth itself and all things derived from the earth, such as stones, clay, minerals, and jewels; water-bodies, found in all forms of water - in rivers, ponds, seas, and rain; fire-bodies, in all lights and flames, including lightning; and wind-bodies, in all sorts of gases and winds.

Besides, "In every stone on the highway a soul is locked, so tightly enchained by matter that it cannot escape the careless foot that kicks it or cry out in pain, but capable of suffering nevertheless. When a match is struck a fire-being, with a soul which may one day be reborn in a human body, is born, only to die a few moments afterwards. In every drop of rain, in every breath of wind, in every lump of clay, is a living soul."¹⁶

Here then enters ahimsa (non-violence). The Jains' belief in ahimsa emanates from the imperative of avoidance of giving injury to or harming any living being or non-living object. Great importance is attached to this concept by every Indian school, but none has carried it to the extreme as has been done by the Jains. For them it is not simply the first among virtues but the virtue; all other restraints are simply elaborations of this central one.

Jainism has evolved elaborate rules and practices called *Vratas* (restraints) which provide the means for all its followers whereby they can place karmic influx within certain limits thus ensuring that the worldly activities inevitable for the householder do not lead to passions which deepen his involvement in *samsara*. Jains have set forth twelve "partial" *vratas* (those appropriate for the layman).¹⁷

The first of the *anuvratas* is called *ahimsa*. One here vows to undertake a set of restraints which deepen commitment to this most central concept of Jain ethics. Himsa refers to any action accompanied by the giving of pain or the rise of passions. Recognizing that total avoidance of such actions would be impossible for a householder, Jain teachers have drawn a distinction between injurious activities which are totally forbidden and those which may be tolerated within strict guidelines. The first of these categories is designated as *samkalpaja-himsa* (premeditated violence), and includes all deeds involving intentional, premeditated violence. Such deeds are contrasted with those of the *arambhaja-himsa* variety, which either occur accidentally or may result from the performance of an "acceptable" occupation. A murderer, for example, clearly sets out to end the life of his victim, hence commits *samkalpaja-himsa*. Surgeons, on the other hand, may cause pain or even death during a delicate operation, but are guilty only of the much less serious *arambhaja-himsa*. As for occupations, Jains are advised not to choose one involving intentional destruction, such as that of a hunter or a fisherman. Though even a farmer may destroy insects during the course of his work, such harm is done unwittingly and so does not render this means of livelihood unacceptable.¹⁸

During the performance of any task, one who has taken the vow of noninjury must exercise a high degree of care in order to minimize even *arambhaja-himsa*. This becomes especially important when caste duties demand violent action, as in the case of a *ksatriya* (warrior) whose country becomes involved in warfare. Jains have not been blind to the importance of resisting injustice and aggression. Hence they have considered even killing, when done in self-defence or during a purely defensive war, to involve not *samkalpaja-himsa* but a less serious variety called *virodhi-himsa* (injury generated by standing in opposition). Under more ordinary circumstances, however, the lay Jaina would not have found himself confronted by the necessity for such drastic behaviour.

Non-violence to Jains is nothing but to treat all living beings as equal. **The concept of equality is the core of the theory of non-violence.** The observance of non-violence is to honour each and every form of life. Jainism does **not discriminate** between human

beings on the basis of their caste, creed and colour; all the barriers of caste, creed and colour are considered artificial. All the human beings are to have equal rights to lead a peaceful life. The principle of equality propounds that every one has the right to live. The directive principle of living is not 'Living on other' or 'Living by killing' but 'Living with other' or 'Live for others'. Though, complete non-violence may not be possible the motto it is argued should be 'Lesser killing is better Living'. Not struggle but co-operation as the law of life, as dependence is necessary for survival also.¹⁹

There is another and a deeper aspect of Jains' preoccupation with avoidance of himsa i.e. the opposite of ahimsa. Himsa has ordinarily been understood in India as harm done to others: for a Jain, however, it refers primarily to injuring oneself - to behavior which inhibits the soul's ability to attain moksha. Thus the killing of animals, for example, is reprehensible not only for the suffering produced in the victims, but even more so because it involves intense passions on the part of the killer, passions which bind him more firmly in the grip of *samsara*. The Jain concept of himsa, then, is very broad in terms of the actions to which it refers; and the need for abandonment of such actions becomes of paramount importance to the spiritual aspirant.²⁰

According to Jainism, violence not only involves the killing or causing harm to other beings but it is also related to oneself. To hurt the vitalities of others' beings is called para-himsa, i.e. violence to others while to entertain impure thought activity or ill-will is the violence towards oneself. Impure thought activity or ill-will injures the real nature of this soul by disturbing its equanimity. The evil thought activity vitiates the purity and equanimity of the soul hence called sva-himsa i.e. violence of over oneself and this violence is more than the violence on others, because the later may only be possible when the former had taken place; the two are not only interdependent but equally hurtful.²¹

Bhaktaparijna (text) mentions "killing of other beings is killing one's ownself and compassion for others is the compassion for one's ownself." Thus, will is the mother of activity. It is will which causes sinful activity. The violence towards others can only be committed after committing violence towards one's ownself. Acaranga (text) says, "he who ignores or negates other beings, ignores or negates one's own self. He whom you wish to kill or control, or on whom you wish to inflict suffering, is yourself." It is the attachment and hatred which make violence possible. In the state of equanimity i.e. non-attachment and non-hatred commission of violence is an impossibility.²²

Yet another protection wall for ahimsa proposed by Jainism is that the Jains are encouraged to enter those professions which have the least potential for violence; hence statecraft and agriculture have come to be considered somewhat less desirable occupations, while the career of a merchant is seen as most appropriate. Even within the context of commercial activity, certain varieties of trade have been specifically prohibited for one who has entered upon the path of restraint. These include dealing in charcoal; selling timber; selling or driving oxcarts; charging fees for transport by oxcart;

excavation, ploughing, and quarrying; dealing in animal by-products, for example, ivory; trading in lac; manufacturing or selling alcohol or other substances prohibited under the *mulaguna*; trading in slaves or livestock; dealing in poisons or weapons; operating mills or oilpresses; gelding and branding animals; burning fields to encourage subsequent agricultural production; draping water so that crops can be planted; breeding destructive animals.²³

Acceptance of the first *vrata* entails much more than simply an expansion of the basic commitment to *ahimsa*. Once a layman has taken this vow, he must scrupulously avoid all practices in violation thereof. Whereas the restrictions of the first *pratima* operate mainly on the level of attitude - generating a tendency to avoid certain activities - those of the *vratapratima* constitute a lifelong code of conduct to which one must pay meticulous attention at every moment. With full awareness of the obligation involved, the aspirant approaches a Jain mendicant and begs to be given the vow. In the presence of the holy person he repeats the ancient formula:²⁴

I will desist from the knowing or intentional destruction of all great lives [frasa, souls embodied with two or more senses]. As long as I live, I will neither kill nor cause others to kill. I shall strive to refrain from all such activities, whether of body, speech, or mind.

Vows for each of the other lay or partial *vratas*, whenever these are undertaken, involve a similar declaration. Immediately after administering the vow, the teacher instructs the aspirant concerning related infractions which he must be careful to avoid, as well as on the proper means of expiation should such transgressions occur. A further distinction is made, in terms of seriousness and expiatory procedure, between infractions committed intentionally (*bhanga*) and those which take place by accident (*aticara*). Five infractions are listed with regard to the *ahimsa-vrata*; these pertain mainly to the treatment of humans and animals in one's care and include holding beings in captivity, beating, mutilating or branding, loading an excessive weight on the back or head, and providing insufficient food or water. The great Jain concern with protection of animals is seen clearly in these prohibitions. Indeed, one who has taken the first *vrata* asserts the inviolability of all life, aligning himself with this principle to an extent probably unmatched by laymen of any other religious tradition.²⁵

The second *anuvrata* is that of *satya*, truth; it involves the vow to abstain from lying (*asatya*) of any sort. Jains see a close connection between *asatya* and *himsa*, since all lying is volitional and tainted by some operation of the passions; thus the soul is injured by such activity. In its broader sense, the *satya vrata* requires great care with regard to all acts of speech, lest they have destructive consequences; thus even a truthful statement cannot be uttered if it will lead to the destruction of a living being. The requirement would seem to create the possibility of a double-bind situation for one who has undertaken the *satya* restraint. When, for example, he is asked the direction that a

deer has gone by someone hunting the creature, pointing elsewhere, on the other hand, involves a deliberate untruth.²⁶

Once again, the Jain teachers have taken the exigencies of worldly existence into account, functionally defining *asatya* for the layman as a lie for one's own sake. The hypothetical situation described above, therefore, should ordinarily be resolved by misleading the hunter; since the untruth has been spoken purely for the sake of the deer, injury to the soul of the speaker will be minimal. In the case of a monk, however, the vow applies in its "complete" form; hence no such expedient solution is available. Faced by a choice between lying and abetting the destruction of another being, he must simply maintain silence, even if this behaviour brings the wrath of the questioner down upon him.²⁷

A layman who undertakes the *satya* restraint is specifically cautioned against untruths pertaining to ownership, the quality of goods, or the repayment of debts. Avoidance of such infractions plus those of a more general sort (bearing false witness, spreading unkind rumours, divulging confidences, using harsh language, and so on) comprises the everyday discipline entailed by the *satya* vow. The third of the *anuvratas* is *asteya*, not stealing; this has been more broadly defined as *adattadana-virati* (refraining from taking anything that is not given). "Given" is generally understood here to mean "acquired in a legitimate transaction" or "received through inheritance." Thus, for one who embraces this restraint, it is not allowed even to pick up goods which have been lost or forgotten. The fourth *anuvrata* is the *brahmavrata*, in accord with which an aspirant refrains from all "illicit" sexual activities (those which occur outside of marriage). It is common knowledge that illicit acts of this nature can lead to fracas and even murder apart from destroying equanimity of the one who indulges in it.²⁸

The most celebrated and successful example of application of non-violence to real life situation on a substantial scale is furnished by India's struggle for freedom from colonial rule. Mahatma Gandhi who led that struggle, deliberately chose non-violence as the primary instrument for India's freedom struggle. For, the aim, he said, is 'to convert the opponent and not kill him'. It is this approach which made non-violence the preferred weapon, inspite of a gurgling sea of scepticism.

But Gandhi also stressed that non-violence is not the weapon of the weak, 'it is not for cowards'. The soldiers of non-violence, he insisted, had to be trained even more thoroughly and prepared mentally to resist violence without losing self-control no matter how severe the injuries inflicted on them. Attenborough's film on Gandhi captured this poignantly while depicting the Salt Satyagraha led by Gandhi. Satyagrahis (volunteers for peace) were brutally beaten by the police but they did not flinch nor retort nor retreat. They suffered the blows in silence. In the end they succeeded. It bent the authorities.

Jainism, systematically inculcates non-violence as a virtue in millions of its followers. It does not stop with preaching of non-violence as a religious doctrine or philosophy of life. Jainism prepares its followers for practice of non-violence as they breathe - not just for an event or as a strategy in a specific situation of conflict. It is for life. Jainism binds its followers mentally and spiritually to care for, and not harm, another living being and even non-living objects. The aim is to make non-violent behaviour by its followers almost their second nature. Without such deep foundations it cannot be ensured that in the face of conflict or worse - say war, an individual would not slip into 'eye for an eye' response, which as Gandhi warned will make us all blind.

VI

To conclude

It is said that Gandhi's understanding and practice of Ahimsa was drawn from his mother who was a devout practicing Jain. We have here the most striking illustration of the value of Jainism to modern situations of liberation from oppression.

Gandhi's satyagraha greatly influenced by Jainism, may seem to be an ineffectual answer to the gigantic displays of brute force but there is something more formidable than force, the immortal spirit of man which will not be subdued by noise or numbers. It will break all fetters which tyrants seek to river on it. In an interview with a New York Times correspondent who asked him in the March 1938 crisis for a message to the world, Gandhi recommended simultaneous disarmament on the part of the democratic powers as the solution. "I am certain," he said, "as I am sitting here, that this would open Hitler's eyes and disarm him." The interviewer asked, "Would not that be a miracle?" Gandhi replied: "Perhaps. But it would save the world from the butchery which seems impending.. The hardest metal yields to sufficient heat; even so must the hardest heart melt before the sufficiency of the heat of non-violence. And there is no limit to the capacity of non-violence to generate heat."²⁹

Once he wrote: "Satyagraha is the vindication of truth not by infliction of suffering on the opponent but on one's self'. The enemy was not to be touched by human hands, but "weaned from error by patience and sympathy". But as usual - for he made many definitions - this was only a part of the whole. There were forms of Satyagraha which involved at least the hint of violence, and when Poland defended herself valiantly against German army in the early days of World War II, Gandhi, who had been deeply touched by an imploring message from Paderewski, went to the length of characterizing Polish armed resistance as "almost non-violent."³⁰

For the Poles to stand valiantly against the German hordes vastly superior in numbers, military equipment and strength, was almost non-violence. I should not mind repeating that statement over and over again. You must give its full value to the word "almost".⁵¹

Pyarelal, Gandhi's Secretary and associate records:³²

"Wars of independence are generally associated with an aftermath of bitterness - hatred and revenge, indemnities and reparations, victimization and reprisals, hanging of traitors and Nuremberg trials of "collaborators" and "war criminals". But the conclusion of India's freedom struggle saw instead the erstwhile antagonists forget old scores and join hands together in amity and friendship, to work for the advancement of their common ideals.

"Transfer of power from the British into Indian hands was an event unique in history. A British peer in Parliament described the independence of India Bill as "a treaty of peace and without a war".

".... The problem of ends and means - the nature of ideals and the methods employed for their realization, has from the beginning of time baffled idealists, philosophers and men of action alike confronted by the choice between acquiescence in evil and compromise with wrong means to attain just ends."³³

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Westmorland General Meeting

Westmorland General Meeting is a Meeting for Worship and Business of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), comprising Friends from the Swarthmoor, Kendal and Sedbergh, Lancaster and Preston areas in the north-west corner of England. George Fox, founder of the Society, made his first visit to these towns, villages and dales in 1652, and the region continues to be known among Friends as the birthplace of Quakerism.

Quakers seek "that of God" in everyone, worshipping together in silence without doctrine or creed. For three hundred and fifty years Friends' Peace Testimony has been at the centre of a corporate witness against war and violence, through conscientious objection, conflict resolution, service in the Friends' Ambulance Unit or alternative paths of conscience. In the 21st Century we face fundamental changes to the 'engines of war', and new social and international challenges in a changing world, yet the Peace Testimony of 17th Century Friends still bears powerful witness.

In 1660 Friends declared:

All bloody principles and practices we do utterly deny, with all outward wars, and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatsoever, and this is our testimony to the whole world.

Today the Society's book of 'Advices and Queries' advises members:

We are called to live 'in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of wars'. Do you faithfully maintain our testimony that war and the preparation for war are inconsistent with the spirit of Christ? Search out whatever in your own way of life may contain the seeds of war. Stand firm in our testimony, even when others commit or prepare to commit acts of violence, yet always remember that they too are children of God.

