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NON-VIOLENT MOVEMENTS IN SOUTH ASIA: LESSONS LEARNT

Abstract

Millions of people have been killed in violent conflicts going on between the rulers and oppositions in places like Syria, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Sudan, Iraq, and other parts of the world. Different methods including mediation or military intervention have been applied to resolve various conflicts. But, question is how many of them have been successful to resolve deadly conflicts and root out the seeds of conflict? Ongoing violent conflicts are evidence that peaceful resolutions of these conflicts are not easy to achieve, and people including innocent women and children are continuously dying there. Violence leads to more violence. This paper emphasises that non-violent movement can be a significant method in reducing violent conflicts and making the world more peaceful. It is a peaceful method which clearly denies any conflict to occur or gain one's interests at the cost of others. It is a philosophy as well as a technique that rejects the use of physical violence. The major religions also teach non-violence, e.g., forgiveness. Practice of the principles of non-violence can promote a culture of peace in a society. South Asia, currently a conflict-prone region, has a good record of non-violent movements (Ahimsa Andolon). This study attempts to analyse the principles, strength and limitations of non-violent movement in resolving conflicts; why non-violence should be given priority and what lessons can be learnt from such movements for peaceful solution of the ongoing conflicts.

1. Introduction

Millions of people, most of them civilians,¹ have been killed in violent conflicts going on in places like Syria, Iraq, Kashmir, Sudan, Afghanistan, Rwanda, and other parts of the world. Genocides, brutality and war against humanity have been evident in these violent conflicts that have shaken the conscience of the civilised world. According to one argument, violent battle deaths are only a small part of the whole story of the

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¹ Since the World War II, there have been on an average about 30 armed conflicts ongoing every year. According to a source, 90% of casualties in these conflicts have been *civilians*, compared to 50% in the World War II and 10% in the World War I. About 128 armed conflicts since 1989 have resulted in at least 250,000 deaths each year. See, *Statistics of Violent Conflict*, <http://filipsagnoli.wordpress.com/stats-on-human-rights/statistics-on-war-conflict/statistics-on-violent-conflict/>, accessed on 15 May 2013. See also John Davies and Edy Kaufman, "Second Track/Citizen's Diplomacy: An Overview," in John Davies and Edy Kaufman, (eds.), *Second Track/Citizen Diplomacy: Concepts and Techniques for Conflict Transformation*, New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003, p. 1. There is no accurate statistics of the number of civilians killed in the Iraq war. However, according to CBS TV, 115,676 Iraqi civilians were killed in the war, and sourced to Iraq Body Count—still one of the most conservative estimates to be found. See, Rebecca Hellmich, *How Many Iraqis Died in the Iraq War?*, available at <http://www.fair.org/blog/2013/06/07/how-many-iraqis-died-in-the-iraq-war/>, accessed on 15 May 2013.

misery of war: ninety per cent or more of war-related deaths are due to disease and malnutrition rather than direct violence,² the conflicts in Congo and Darfur are two examples in this regard. Conflicts are seen in different forms; for example, between religious/ethnic, majority and minority, repressive ruler and subject, government and opposition, national army and militia/terrorist groups. It is a fact that conflicts continue to exist. A respected scholar, Edward Azar noted that conflict is an inseparable part of all human social relations.³ In order to resolve violent conflicts, different types of conflict resolution methods including third party mediation⁴ and interventions have been applied, but in many cases, a lasting peace has not been established.

Non-violent movement can be a significant strategy in reducing violent conflicts and making the world more peaceful. The idea and practice of non-violence are not new. It is as old as the tenets of Buddhism and as new as the latest initiatives at the United Nations.⁵ Lord Buddha said more than two and a half millennia ago that enmity cannot be put to an end by enmity. Ruby Jaspreet noted, "History provides us with a lot of examples where principles of non-violence not just resolve conflict but also channelise it into positive and varying notions."⁶ The use of the principles of non-violence helped end apartheid in South Africa and racism in USA. It also ended the conflict plaguing those societies and introduced ideas of equality and mutual coexistence.

The major religions teach principles of non-violence, e.g., forgiveness. A famous Islamic scholar, Imam Zayn el-Abidin is quoted as saying: "On the Day of Judgment, Allah the Almighty assembles all the people in one location and then it is announced, "Where are the noble people?" A group of people rise, who are then asked, "What distinguishes you from the rest?" In reply they say: "We used to make bonds with he who broke off with us, we used to give to he who deprived us, we used to forgive he who used to oppress us." They are then told; "You have said the truth, so enter the heaven."⁷ Regarding non-violence, Dr. Martin Luther King, during the civil rights movement in the USA, said, "Non-violence means avoiding not only

² Gareth Evans, "Preventing and Resolving Deadly Conflict: What Have We Learned?", American University of Beirut, 10 November 2008, available at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5773&l=1>, accessed on 10 March 2013.

³ Edward Azar, "Protracted Social Conflicts and Second Track Diplomacy," in Davies and Kaufman, (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp. 15-30. See also "Introduction," in Hugh Miall, Oliver Ramsbotham and Tom Woodhouse, (eds.), *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflict*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999, p. 7.

⁴ For details see, M. Jashim Uddin, "The Role of a State as a Third Party in Managing Conflicts: A Conceptual Analysis," *BIISS Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 2, April 2007.

⁵ The United Nations decided to celebrate 2nd October every year as International Day for Non-Violence. Such initiatives not only aim at promoting principles of non-violence successfully but also institutionalise these principles into socio-cultural set-up, so that conflict gets resolved in its hidden stage itself; available at <http://www.un.org/en/events/nonviolenceday/index.shtml>, accessed on 05 March 2013.

⁶ Ruby Jaspreet, "Principle of non-violence can be calming balm", in *Promoting Principles of Non-violence for Conflict Resolution*, New Delhi: National Foundation for Communal Harmony (NFCH), 2012, p. 2.

⁷ Imam Mohammad Shirazi, *War, Peace and Non-violence: An Islamic Perspective*, London: Fountain Books, 2003, p. 105.

external physical violence but also internal violence of spirit. You not only refuse to shoot a man, but refuse to hate him.”⁸

Practice of non-violence has been evident in South Asia since ancient times. The ancient India was the birthplace of three great religions: Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. The core belief of Jainism is *Ahimsa Paramo Dharma*, meaning non-violence is the supreme religion. Lord Buddha and Emperor Ashoka are remembered for their non-violent philosophy and actions.⁹ During the British colonial era, Mahatma Gandhi, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and their followers took the path of non-violence to fight their colonial master. Their movements were significant against the British rule in India, which eventually helped India to win its independence in 1947.

Although South Asia has a good record of non-violent movements, now it is one of the most conflict-prone regions in the world. The objective of this study is to analyse the strength of non-violence movement in resolving conflicts; why non-violence should be given priority, what lessons can be learnt from such movements for peaceful solution of the ongoing conflicts in South Asia and beyond and how to promote the principles of non-violence. This paper consists of five sections including introduction. Section two focuses on the conceptual analysis of non-violence including its principles, significance and limitation. Section three sheds some light on the leading non-violent movements in South Asia and the underlying causes behind their success, Section four describes the lessons learnt. The final section provides some concluding remarks.

2. Conceptual Analysis of Non-violence

Conflict of interests between two people or groups is as old as the civilisation itself. But, where a society is rooted in principles of non-violence, resolving conflict at its incipient stage and controlling it in its escalated state become easier. It is a self-conscious philosophy or organised practice of avoiding or overcoming violence. Unlike clandestine strategies, self-conscious non-violence has usually intended to follow religious virtues and, in many cases, to create a moral spectacle for a broader audience. Non-violence as a way of life and a technique, denies the use of violence to secure one's interests and rights. Its methods may include persuasion, peaceful campaigns, boycotts, strikes, civil disobedience, purposeful agitation and so on. There is an established view among political scientists that opposition movements

⁸ Quoted in Bijay Ketan Upadhyaya, “We Need Non-violence as the Supreme Law of Life” in *Promoting Principles of Non-violence for Conflict Resolution*, NFCH, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

⁹ Legend has that although Ashoka made far-flung military conquests in his early reign, after a bloody war against Kalinga—present day Orissa—underwent a change of heart and became an ardent Buddhist. It is said that he accepted the principle of non-violence, denounced caste, and banned Brahmanical rituals. See Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture and Political Economy*, New York: Routledge, 1998. See also http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Ashoka#Conversion_to_Buddhism, accessed on 5 March 2013.

select violent methods because such means are more effective than non-violent strategies for achieving policy goals. Despite the view, it is found that from 2000 to 2006, organised civilian populations successfully employed non-violent methods to challenge authoritarian/undemocratic regimes in Serbia (2000), Madagascar (2002), Georgia (2003), Nepal (2006) and other countries.¹⁰ Now, this section will focus on definitions, principles, significance and limitations of non-violence movements.

2.1 *Definitions of Non-violence*

Various definitions of non-violence are found. Some of the key definitions are mentioned below:

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi noted, "Non-violent resistance implies the very opposite of weakness. Defiance combined with non-retaliatory acceptance of repression from one's opponents is active, not passive. It requires strength, and there is nothing automatic or intuitive about the resoluteness required for using non-violent methods in political struggle and the quest for Truth."¹¹

Bernard Haring argued, non-violence never attempts to destroy another person's feeling or self worth, even an opponent's.¹²

Dalai Lama said, "Non-violence does not mean that we remain indifferent to a problem. On the contrary, it is important to be fully engaged. However, we must behave in a way that does not benefit us alone. We must not harm the interests of others. Nonviolence therefore is not merely the absence of violence. It involves a sense of compassion and caring. It is almost the manifestation of compassion."¹³

Wally Nelson argued, "Nonviolence is the constant awareness of the dignity and the humanity of oneself and others; it seeks truth and justice; it renounces violence both in method and in attitude; it is a courageous acceptance of active love and goodwill as the instrument with which to overcome evil and transform both oneself and to others. It is the willingness to undergo suffering rather than inflict it. It excludes retaliation and flight."¹⁴

¹⁰ Maria J. Stephan and Erica Chenoweth, "Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Non-violent Conflict", *International Security*, Summer 2008, Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 7-8.

¹¹ Mary King, *Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.: The Power of Nonviolent Action*, Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1999, p. 245.

¹² "Non-violence Quotes", thinkexist.com, available at <http://www.thinkexist.com/quotations/nonviolence/2.html>, accessed on 15 May 2013.

¹³ "Quotations on Ahimsa and Non-violence", A View on Buddhism, available at <http://viewonbuddhism.org/dharma-quotes-quotations-buddhist/non-violence-ahimsa.htm>, accessed on 15 May 2013.

¹⁴ Cited in Juanita Nelson, Ruth Benn, Ed Hedemann, "Wally Nelson", *The Non-violent Activist*, July-August 2002, available at <http://www.warresisters.org/nva/nva0702-4.htm>, accessed on 20 June 2013.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said,

The philosophy and practice of nonviolence has six basic elements. First, nonviolence is resistance to evil and oppression. It is a human way to fight. Second, it does not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponent, but to win her/his friendship and understanding. Third, the non-violent method is an attack on the forces of evil rather than against persons doing the evil. It seeks to defeat the evil and not the persons doing the evil and injustice. Fourth, it is the willingness to accept suffering without retaliation. Fifth, a non-violent resister avoids both external physical and internal spiritual violence - not only refuses to shoot, but also to hate an opponent. The ethic of real love is at the center of nonviolence. Sixth, the believer in nonviolence has a deep faith in the future and the forces in the universe are seen to be on the side of justice.¹⁵

Analysing the definitions, it can be seen that proponents of non-violence straightway deny any kind of force or violence against their opponents, but at the same time, it is clearly mentioned that non-violence must not be equated with weakness or cowardice; rather it is a weapon of the strong (morale). It is the constant awareness of the dignity and the humanity of oneself and others. It is the willingness to undergo suffering rather than inflict it. It excludes retaliation and fight. Non-violence is a humane way to fight; it is a method of attack on the forces of evil rather than attacking the people doing evil. Therefore, this may be said that while following the principles of non-violence, the followers must stick to these, but that should not mark them as weak or coward. They should always face the problem or opposition rather than fleeing. If tortured or harassed, they should go for stricter methods of non-violence, but not of violence anyway. In pursuing their goals, they should not only try to assure own success but also be mindful of others' well-being. This movement does not nurture the seeds of antagonism. To bring positive change in a society, it touches the minds and hearts of all; spreading a culture of peace teaching not to kill for kill, and strike for strike.

The idea of non-violence can be found in religious values and teachings. In various major religions and scriptures, examples of forgiveness and non-violent attitudes to enemies or tyrants are evident. Prophet of Islam, Mohammed (S), Jesus and Buddha's forgiveness are found in the history. Many times, they were persecuted by their enemies, but they begged and cried to Almighty to forgive them. In the colonial period, Quakers in USA tried to promote the ideas of non-violence through pluralism and cultural harmony. Nineteenth-century non-resistance led by William Lloyd Garrison, identified violence connected to the injustice of slavery. The connections between peace and justice were revitalised in the decades after the First World War. Religious non-violence was also at the centre of the campaign to end the Vietnam War.¹⁶

¹⁵ "Nonviolence Quotes", available at <http://www.nonviolencetraining.org/Training/quotes.htm>, accessed on 10 May 2013.

¹⁶ Joseph Kip Kosek, "Religion and Nonviolence in American History", *Religion Compass*, Vol. 6, No. 8, 2012.

2.2 Principles of Non-violence

The fundamental principles/bases of non-violence are Ahimsa, truth, love for the enemy and God's creation, compassion, tolerance, forgiveness, justice etc. *Ahimsa* as Gandhi believed is the most effective principle for social action, since it is in deep accord with the truth of man's nature and corresponds to his innate desire for peace, justice, order, freedom, and personal dignity. *Himsa* (violence) degrades and corrupts man, whereas non-violence heals and restores man's nature while helping him to restore social order and justice. Similarly, truth is one of the essences of non-violence. Those who have adopted non-violence should not base their demands or movements on falsehood or injustice, rather hold on what is rightful, equal and just.

Love for the enemy and God's creation can be an important basis of non-violence. Jesus said, 'love thine enemy', which establishes mutual harmony in a society. Regarding love for God's creation, a Turkish Muslim scholar Nursi argues that in the Qur'anic words, all humans are the supreme creations of God. The simple but fundamental fact is that they are created by God and thus possess a sacred nature, which does not permit any violence against humans, not even those who deny God. *Violence against humans would ultimately mean a denial and rejection of God's beautiful art.* Regardless of ethnicity, nationality, or religion, every human being is a mirror of the Creator and cannot be subject to violence.¹⁷ Forgiveness is another supreme virtue essential for those following non-violence. Regarding this non-violent principle, the Prophet Muhammad (S) is quoted as saying, "Shall I inform you the best morals of this world and the hereafter? (They are) To forgive he who oppresses you, to be kind to he who insults you, and to give to he who deprives you."¹⁸ Tolerance and compassion are the qualities without which a non-violent movement cannot be sustained and will become violent instead. In Dr. King's words, people with tolerance and compassion will accept pain without taking vengeance.

Another crucial element of non-violence as advocated by Nursi is justice. He mentioned the recurring Qur'anic verse, "No soul shall bear the burden of another soul."¹⁹ According to him, none is allowed to judge anybody for another person's shortcomings. He alludes to this principle by drawing an example of a ship. If there are, for instance, nine passengers on the ship who committed serious crimes and one person who is innocent, this would not justify burning or sinking the ship. The end does not justify the means of killing an innocent person. Within this context, Nursi closed the doors particularly for self-declared militant jihadists who unleash violence against innocent civilians. Based on this Qur'anic prohibition, neighbours, relatives, and fellow human beings in general cannot be accountable for another person's evil acts.

¹⁷ Zeynab Sayilgan and Salih Sayilgan, "Bedizzaman Said Nursi's Ethics of Non-violence: Implications for Christian-Muslim Relations Today," *Dialogue: A Journal of Theology*, Fall 2011, Vol. 50, Issue 3, p. 9.

¹⁸ Imam Mohammad Shirazi, *op. cit.*

¹⁹ Qur'an 17: 15; Qur'an 6:164. See also *Ibid.*

Interpretations may differ, but these principles could build a society where violence and in turn, conflict is less, if not totally absent. Non-violence does not just reject the use of violence but is an ideology and a tool also presupposing the end of conflict and bringing about social change. Its principles have more significantly been used as a tool and counterforce in ending conflict in society. Dr. King during the civil rights movement in USA said that one must refrain from shooting a man, and refuse to hate him too. The principles thereby included tolerance and mutual love as well.

2.3 *Significance and Limitations of Non-violence*

Significance of Non-violence

For many years, there was an assumption that autocratic regimes could be overthrown only through popular armed struggle or foreign military intervention. Yet there is an increasing awareness that non-violent action can actually be more powerful. A recent academic study of 323 major insurrections in support of self-determination and freedom from autocratic rule over the past century revealed that major non-violent campaigns were successful 53 per cent of the time, whereas primarily violent resistance campaigns were successful only 26 per cent of the time.²⁰ There are several causes why non-violent action is preferred to armed struggles:

I) A growing awareness of the increasing costs of insurgency warfare is one of the key causes motivating the oppressed to choose non-violence. It can be argued that technological advantage has given status quo powers an upper hand in recent years against armed insurgencies. When an armed movement becomes victorious, that is not without heavy damages. Hence, a realisation is growing that the costs are heavier than the gains in waging an armed revolution.

II) Once victorious armed insurgents are in power, their trend of failure in establishing effective democratic rule is another factor endorsing nonviolence. These failures often result in part from counterrevolution, foreign intervention, trade embargoes, and so on. Armed struggle often promotes the ethos of a secret elite vanguard, downplaying democracy and showing less tolerance for diversity. Often, disagreements are resolved violently. Some countries experienced military coups or civil wars not long after armed revolutionary movements ousted colonialists or indigenous dictators. Others became overly dependent on foreign powers for weapons to hold on to power.

III) When facing a violent uprising, a government can easily justify its repression e.g. Kashmir, Syria but against unarmed resistance movements, such tactics may be fatal. For example, South Africa during the apartheid era.

²⁰ Maria J. Stephan and Erica Chenoweth, *op. cit.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

IV) Armed struggle often backfires by legitimising the use of repressive tactics. Violence from the opposition is often welcomed by authoritarian governments and even encouraged through the use of agents provocateur, because it then justifies state repression. But this may lead to the government's own downfall if used on unarmed dissidents or non-violent struggles.²² A government attack against peaceful demonstrators can turn periodic protests into a full-scale insurrection.

V) Peaceful movements involve larger participants from various segments of a society taking advantage of a popular movement's majority support. Civil resistance movement of Tunisia in December 2010 could be an example in this regard. It also encourages the creation of alternative institutions, which further undermine the repressive status quo and form the basis for a new independent and democratic order.

VI) Disagreements within pro-government circles regarding how to deal effectively with the resistance help non-violent movements sow divisions among them. Few governments are well prepared to deal with unarmed revolts. Violent repression of a peaceful movement can often put into question or endanger the legitimacy of power, which is why state officials usually use less repression against non-violent movements.

VII) Unarmed movements also increase the likelihood of defections and non-cooperation by unmotivated state officials, whereas armed revolts legitimise the role of the government's coercion, enhancing its self-perception as the protector of civil society. The moral power of non-violence is crucial in the ability of an opposition movement to reframe the key organs of the state, most of whom strongly support the use of violence against violent insurrections.

IIX) Non-violent resistance effectively divides supporters of the status quo by rendering government troops less effective, challenges the attitudes of an entire nation and even foreign actors, as in the South African struggle against apartheid.

Although there is a growing awareness that non-violence can be more effective than violent struggle, such movement is not beyond criticism. It has limitations too.

Limitations of Non-violence

I) The ethical foundations of non-violent philosophy for rejecting violence are questionable. The moral character of a violent act or armed movement must be judged in light of circumstances and the particular choices available.

II) The relationship between means and ends is more complex than most non-violent theorists have recognised. By framing some armed revolutions as examples of violence begetting violence, non-violent analysts oversimplify history and extract means and ends from wider contexts.

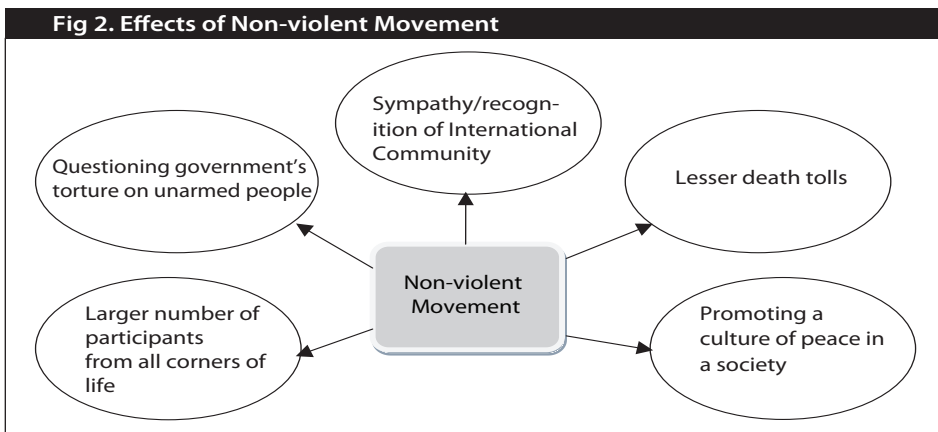
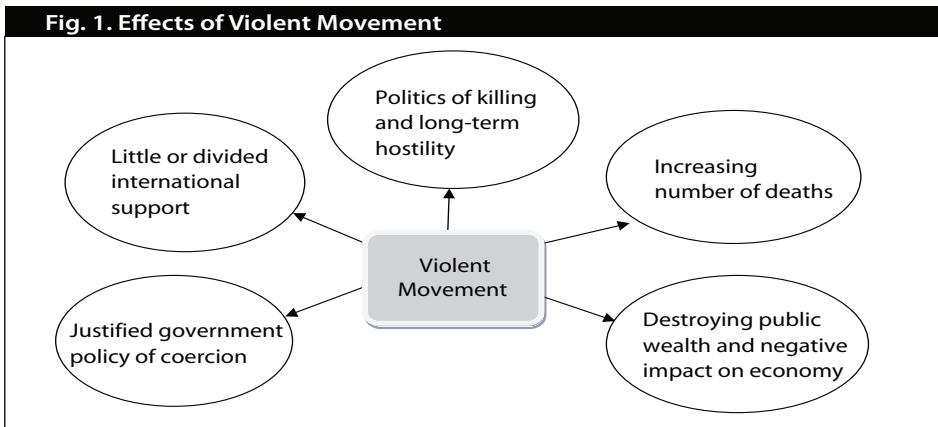
²² *Ibid.*

III) Non-violent proponents overestimate the ability of protesters to suffer government repression peacefully, especially over long periods.

IV) The predominant Gandhian school of non-violence places too great trust in ruling elites and their potential for conversion. It ignores or minimises the importance of interests—linked to class or other social status factors—in determining people’s political behaviour.

V) Non-violent movements cannot be very effective if the autocratic or undemocratic regime has popular support at home or strong external support base.

Comparison of the Effects between Violent and Non-violent Movements²³



²³ Based on Author’s own analysis.

Fig 1 reveals that violent conflicts result in the death of a number of people, and destruction of huge public property which can severely affect national economy. The government can justify its policy of coercion if the oppositions start violent movement for their rights, and these kinds of movements receive little or divided international support as it is difficult for the governments/international community to support the violence causing mass killing and brutality. Violence leads to more violence, and cultivates seeds of hostility for long time. On the other hand, *Fig 2* shows that non-violent movement causes less death. In the movement which is non-violent in nature, a large number of people participate from all corners of life. Conversely, repression and brutality of government question its legitimacy. Activists of non-violent movement receive more international sympathy and recognition for their just demand and by applying this method, a culture of peace can be promoted in a society.

3. Leading Non-violent Movements in South Asia

South Asia, one of the greatest ancient civilisations, has a long, colourful and rich history, which stretches back five millennia. The region is the birthplace of some great religions: Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. On the other hand, the two other great Abrahamic faiths, e.g., Islam and Christianity have also been widely practiced in South Asia. The basis of principled or philosophical non-violence is found in the teachings of all these great religions that have taught morality, humanity, equality, to love the enemy, be kind to all beings, and be non-violent and compassionate to others. The goal of this type of non-violence is not to defeat the enemies, but to win them over and create love and understanding among all. Leaders and advocates of non-violent movements have utilised diverse religious principles for non-violence within their respective struggles. Buddha, Mahavira, Gandhi, Ghaffar Khan are some of the key figures in the history of non-violent movements in South Asia. However, for the convenience of the paper, this section will analyse the non-violent movements led by Gandhi and Abdul Ghaffar Khan against the British Colonial rule in India.

3.1 Gandhi and Non-violent Movements in South Asia

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was the first person to apply non-violence in political field. His non-violent tactics of protest had moral superiority in formulating support for peaceful means to bring an end to British rule in India. When Mahatma Gandhi propagated and practiced non-violence he not only ended an imperial rule, but from this conflict situation emerged principles that an independent India inherited.

Mahatma Gandhi was the main preacher of non-violent movements in colonial South Asia. From very earlier days of his life, he chose non-violence. His native region of Porbandar, Gujarat has a strong tradition of Jainism, a religion which stresses heavily on non-violence. His study of ancient Indian sacred texts and folktales,

Buddhist and Hindu literature, and later his development of interest in Hindu and Christian scriptures related to non-violence may have deep influence on him. His non-violence movement had profound impact on this region. Gandhi, in fact, began non-violence method in the colonial South Africa in the form of civil disobedience with the view to securing the civil rights of the Indian community there. He was working as a lawyer there. In 1897, when he was attacked by some white settlers in Durban, even then he refused to file complaint against the culprits, saying he did not believe in taking assistance from the court for a personal misdeed done to him by others.²⁴ In 1906, the Transvaal government passed a new law which made registration of the Indians as mandatory. To protest against this law, Gandhi initiated the "Satyagraha" movement.

Satyagraha means giving up interests/fascination about worldly possessions in preference of truth/spirituality and morality and struggle to free a community, society, nation from injustice. When applied in political perspectives, then there must be a strong connection between politics and religious moral principles as said by Gandhi who believed that the notion of "no linkage between politics and religion" was not correct.²⁵ He opined that political activities must be guided by moral principles. He also said that his participation into politics was inspired by his love for truth and ahimsa.²⁶ Gandhi himself was a deeply religious person. Yet, he believed that the creed of nonviolence was not reserved for saints/sages alone but for common people too.

He advised the Indians in South Africa to protest against this law and suffer punishments for that, but avoid violent means. Numerous Indians including Gandhi himself were persecuted and arrested, but they held on to non-violent means of protest. The Transvaal government ultimately came to a compromise with Gandhi.

In 1915, he returned to India where his first initiatives of non-violent movement were the satyagrahas in Champaran in Bihar and Kheda in Gujarat. Both these areas were victims of devastating famine and marred by other socio-economic problems. In Chamapran, Gandhi and his fellows built schools and hospitals, led clean up of villages, opened an Ashram also. But Gandhi was arrested for his engagement with local community and for the social activities. People protested his arrest and demanded his release, which ultimately happened. He led organised protests against the landlords, who later, granted compensation and more control over the land for poor farmers. In Kheda, (though famine struck, the government set full taxes along with an additional 23%), Gandhi's close associates led by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

²⁴ D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma, Volume 1*, Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1951.

²⁵ Sankar Ghose, *Modern Indian Political Thoughts*, New Delhi: Allied Publishers Private Limited, 1984, p.142.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

organised a tax revolt with strong mass support. The government warned of severe consequences if protests went on, including permanent confiscation of properties and lands, which they in deed, did. But the farmers did not resist, nor did they protest violently. They continued to staunchly support Patel. The government finally agreed to the demands of Gandhi. The farmers were returned their lands and properties, tax rate was reduced and the additional tax was suspended.

The non-cooperation movement of 1921 was Gandhi's first initiative to end British rule in India. One of his non-violent methods was the Swadeshi policy. He said about boycotting foreign textile goods, especially British and start wearing Khadi (Indian homemade cloth); he also urged the Indians to give up British honours and titles. The non-cooperation movement had great support and success, but Gandhi ultimately had to suspend it when it tended to turn violent.²⁷ The Salt satyagraha of 1930 was another non-violent movement he led. He launched this movement to protest against the Salt Law imposed by the government. Many Indians joined him on his long march. The government was disturbed enough and arrested numerous people. In 1931, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed. The government agreed to set free all political prisoners in return of end to civil disobedience. The Quit India movement was launched in the midst of the World War II. It was also a non-violent one. The main theme of this movement was that Britain would have to grant full independence to India, or massive civil disobedience would be launched. In fact, this movement contributed a lot to end British rule in India.

Following the ongoing political instabilities in British India, Hindu-Muslim relations were at loggerheads. Gandhi spoke to both Hindu and Muslim leaders in Northern India and in Bengal. Despite his sincere efforts, he was deeply hurt when demands arose for all Muslims to be deported to Pakistan,²⁸ a demand fueled by Hindu leaders like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel when India's partition process was going on. Despite the Indo-Pak war of 1947, he urged that the Indian government should pay Pakistan the 550 million Indian Rupees as set by the Partition Council, but his demand was not met. He visited Delhi in January 1948 to try to end communal riots; he visited Muslim areas there and then launched a long fast to see the end of rioting.²⁹ He feared that these riots might evolve into a civil war. After his long fast, the government ultimately paid Pakistan their due. Hindu, Muslim, Sikh leaders, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangha (RSS) and the Hindu Mahasabha all agreed to end violence and go for peace. Upon their promise, Gandhi broke his fast.³⁰ He dared to place his life on the line of purpose.³¹

²⁷ Rajmohan Gandhi, *Patel: A Life*, Gujarat: Navajivan Publishing House, 1990, p.105.

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 462.

²⁹ Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories*, New York: Columbia University Press. 2007, pp. 37-38.

³⁰ Rajmohan Gandhi, *op.cit.*, pp. 464-466.

³¹ John F Marques, "On Impassioned Leadership: A Comparison between Leaders from Divergent Walks of Life," available at http://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/ijls/new/vol3iss1/marques/Marques_IJLS_V3Is1.pdf, accessed on 5 May 2013.

Gandhi is considered as an icon in the ideology of non-violence. His movement has gained widespread recognition. But like everything, his ideas have criticism—both negative and positive. Gandhi's philosophy and satyagraha campaigns became indomitable after World War I, and on 15 August 1947, India won its independence. His philosophy of non-violence has had deep influence on US civil right workers Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and James Lawson. Even Dr. King in 1955 said—"Jesus Christ gave us the goals and Mahatma Gandhi the tactics."³² He was not the creator of non-violence, but was the first person to apply non-violence successfully and on a mass scale, for political purposes. His non-violent tactics of protest had moral superiority in formulating support for peaceful means to bring an end to British rule in India. South African leader, Nelson Mandela had great influence of Gandhi on himself.³³ Other leaders said to have significantly been influenced by Gandhi may be mentioned as Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Aung San Suu Kyi, Benigno Aquino Jr. etc. The Indian government introduced the Mahatma Gandhi Peace Prize for distinguished social workers, citizens and world leaders. The UN General Assembly in 2007 adopted Gandhi's birthday of 2nd October as the international day of non-violence.³⁴

However, disciples of Gandhi such as Bhagat Singh, Udham Singh, Shivaram Rajguru, Sukhdev Thapar and others criticised him for being too passive.³⁵ Subhas Chandra Bose believed that Gandhi's non-violence tactics would never be able to grant India freedom from British rule. Gandhi's proposed solution of non-violence for the Jews against the Nazi German persecution drew negative remarks from many.³⁶ His opposition to the partition of India complicated and hastened partition causing massive anarchy.

The great leader of Dalits, B. R. Ambedkar said that Gandhi undermined the political rights of the untouchables. He himself had to suspend his non-cooperation movement following a bloody clash in Chauri Chaura, Uttar Pradesh fearing that might give rise to more violence. On the other hand, although the Quit India movement proposed to be non-violent, people turned violent. The Hindu Mahasabha and the Indian National Congress resorted to countrywide violence. The British government did not grant India full independence as demanded by the movement. It is said that Gandhi himself was a supporter of armed struggle; this is evident in his attempts to recruit people in support of the British Empire during the First World War.³⁷ But when he adopted nonviolence after the war and encouraged his followers as well to espouse it, this did not go unopposed. Communist revolutionary M N Roy condemned

³² Life Magazine: Remembering Martin Luther King Jr. 40 Years Later, *Time Inc*, 2008, p. 12.

³³ Nelson Mandela, "The Sacred Warrior: The Liberator of South Africa Looks at the Seminal Works of the Liberator of India", *Time Magazine*, 3 January 2000.

³⁴ Niloya Chaudhury, "October 2 is the Global Non-violence Day", *Hindustan Times*, 15 June 2007.

³⁵ "Mahatma Gandhi on Bhagat Singh", available at www.kamat.com/mmgandhi/on_bhagatsingh.htm, accessed on 13 June 2013.

³⁶ David Lewis Schaefer, "What did Gandhi do?" *National Review*, 28 April 2003.

³⁷ Sankar Ghose, *op.cit.* p.151.

his change in stance.³⁸ Nationalist leaders like Bipin Chandra Pal, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Chittaranjan Das all were enraged also.³⁹ Though Gandhi adopted nonviolence, neither the British Empire nor the extremist elements in the Indian National Congress was ready to listen to him. Even though Gandhi's spiritual philosophy of ahimsa rejects violence, it permits the use of violent force if a person is not courageous and disciplined enough to use nonviolence.⁴⁰ He allowed violence in certain cases.⁴¹ In most Western countries, nonviolent action is mostly the "negative" mode, involving rallies, sit-ins, boycotts or obstruction in an attempt to apply pressure to opponents. Actions which could be categorised as "positive" nonviolent action certainly occur, but this is not the focus of organised training and action. Satyagraha was underpinned by a religious tradition, and this raised the question of whether there was something else that could underpin nonviolence for the non-believer.⁴²

3.2 ***Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan's Non-violent Movement in South Asia***

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan was a Pashtun political and spiritual leader. He was a lifelong pacifist and a devout Muslim. His non-violent movement against the British Rule in India received a lot of attention. He is known as "Frontier Gandhi". It is important to note that he raised history's first "non-violent army" of 100,000 men, who through non-violent means courageously stood up unarmed against injustice.

Having witnessed the repeated failure of revolts against the British Raj, he believed social activism and reform would be more beneficial for Pashtun. He developed his own perception of adopting non-violence since early 1910s. He was convinced that the armed resistance would bring disaster and ruin upon the Pashtun, who were already facing lot of miseries being the inhabitants of a politically and strategically sensitive area. This ultimately led to the formation of the *Khudai Khidmatgar Movement (Servants of God)*. The Khudai Khidmatgar was founded on a belief in the power of non-violence. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan told its members:

I am going to give you such a weapon that the police and the army will not be able to stand against it. It is the weapon of the Prophet, but you are not aware of it. That weapon is patience and righteousness. No power on earth can stand against it.⁴³

³⁸ M N Roy and Evelyn Roy, "One year of Non Cooperation: From Ahmedabad to Gaya", Communist Party of India, Calcutta, 1923, pp. 40-41.

³⁹ Sankar Ghose, *op.cit.*, p.153.

⁴⁰ Ladd Everitt, *op cit.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² "Non violent Action: Some Dilemmas", available at <http://www.mkgandhi.org/nonviolence/dilemmas.htm>, accessed on 15 March 2013.

⁴³ Mohammed Abu Nimer, "Non-violence in the Islamic Context", *Fellowship*, September/October 2005, available at <http://www.forusa.org/fellowship/sept-oct-04/abu-nimer.html>, accessed on 15 March 2013.

The British Indian government made extensive propaganda against the Khudai Khidmatgars, tried to equate them with the Bolsheviks, and even dubbed them as Russian agents, who intended to create anarchy and chaos in the country to destabilise the government. The most significant feature of the Khudai Khidmatgars was their adoption of non-violence and strict adherence to it. The volunteers were taught not to resort to violence and also not to carry weapons. More emphasis was given on forbearance and tolerance. They were told not to retaliate, even if humiliated. Giving examples from the lives of Holy Prophet and His Companions provided inspiration. They were reminded of the atrocities of Makkans over Muslims during the initial days of Islam and how Holy Prophet and His Companions faced it with forbearance. After the conquest of Makkah, the Muslims could take revenge but following the true path of non-violence, Holy Prophet advised them to leave them unmolested.

The Khudai Khidmatgars movement had received a tremendous response from people. Ghaffar Khan also emphasised the communal harmony in the province. Therefore, the membership was kept open to all, irrespective of caste, community or religion. Hence, a large number of non-Muslims were in the rank and file of Khudai Khidmatgar organisation. Ghaffar Khan was accused by some of his close associates for merging the Khudai Khidmatgars with the Hindu-dominated Congress. They were indignant over it as they saw the Khudai Khidmatgars losing their separate identity in their merger with the Congress. He gave examples from the life of the Holy Prophet, who made alliances even with Jews and Christians to protect and safeguard the interests of the Muslims. The Khudai Khidmatgars, after their merger with the Congress, got popularity all over the undivided India.

The movement's success triggered a harsh crackdown against Ghaffar Khan and his supporters and he was sent into exile. It was at this stage in the late 1920s that he formed an alliance with Gandhi and the Indian National Congress. This alliance was to last till the 1947 partition of India. The two had a deep admiration towards each other and worked together closely till 1947. On several occasions, when the Congress seemed to disagree with Gandhi on policy, Ghaffar Khan remained his staunchest ally. In 1931, the Congress offered him the presidency of the party, but he refused saying, *"I am a simple soldier and Khudai Khidmatgar, and I only want to serve."*⁴⁴ He remained a member of the Congress Working Committee for many years, resigning only in 1939 because of his differences with the Party's War Policy. He rejoined the Congress Party when the War Policy was revised. On 23 April 1930, Ghaffar Khan was arrested during protests arising out of the Salt Satyagraha. A crowd of Khudai Khidmatgar gathered in Peshawar's Kissa Khwani Bazaar. The British ordered troops to open fire with machine guns on the unarmed crowd, killing an estimated 200-250. The Khudai Khidmatgar members acted in accordance with their training in non-violence under Ghaffar Khan, facing bullets as the troops fired on them. Throughout his life, he never lost faith in

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

his non-violent methods or in the compatibility of Islam and nonviolence. He viewed his struggle as a jihad with only the enemy holding swords. Ghaffar Khan spent 52 years of his life imprisoned or in exile. He died in Peshawar under house arrest in 1988 and was buried in Jalalabad, Afghanistan according to his wishes. However, it is not an exaggeration to say that his non-violent movement did not have much effect in changing British atrocity towards Afghanistan.

4. Lessons Learnt

The non-violent movements led by Gandhi and Ghaffar Khan against the British colonial master were remarkable to remind the world that violence is not the only way to resolve a conflict; peaceful techniques can also be useful to establish one's fundamental rights if they are based on truth. Examples of non-violent methods are found in the history of ancient India, but applying it at a mass level or politically, Gandhi was the first person in the known modern history. Both Mahatma Gandhi and Ghaffar Khan showed the world how unarmed people can fight against a powerful enemy for their basic rights. Tolerance, compassion and love for God's creature are the weapons used in these struggles. Their peaceful movements against the British Raj to quit India received attention to build opinion against colonialism and racism worldwide. It is evident that the great men like Dr. King and Nelson Mandela took lessons from and were immensely influenced by the non-violent methods applied in South Asia to uphold their civil rights movements against racism; hence, it would not be an exaggeration to say that for ending racism against Black Africans in the US and in South Africa, a crime against humanity, the South Asian non-violent struggles played an important role indirectly. All over the world, when people desire to resolve a problem with non-violent technique, Gandhi in particular has been remembered for his amazing contribution. These movements show us how a simple man became a charismatic leader remembered forever, how millions of people motivated not to kill or harm their enemy while receiving brutal torture. It is learnt from the movements that mass people have a weapon at their disposal to resolve a conflict and that is strong morale to adopt the ingredients or principles of non-violence.

Looking at the violence going on across the world, the lessons of Gandhi and Khan have become more relevant today. South Asia, the birthplace of some great religions teaching Ahimsa, Sarbodoya (well being for all), and some exemplary non-violent movements during the British colonial period, has now become a conflict-prone region. Inter- and intra-state conflicts may question its great civilisation, religious teachings and the non-violent movements. Although the light of non-violent movements led by Gandhi and Ghaffar Khan spread to many parts of the world, this region continues to experience violence to resolve conflicts, for instances, conflicts in Kashmir, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka (recently resolved but distrust between Sinhalese and Tamil is still there), communal conflicts and political turmoil in many parts of India, terrorism and political violence in Pakistan, intolerance and hostility between and among the political parties in Bangladesh contribute to growing instability and insecurity.

In terms of casualties and destruction, the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and Kashmir remain two pressing concerns in South Asia. The Frontier (North-West Frontier Province) area itself has become a place of constant bloodshed whereas it was the birthplace of non-violent movements of Ghaffar Khan who is also known as Frontier Gandhi. But now, question can be raised here what the Taliban or common Afghan people have learnt from their great leader. When non-violent movements are found in the Middle East (recently in Tunisia and Egypt) and elsewhere to change oppressive or unpopular regimes, it is hardly seen in Afghanistan. Rather, the country and its society are divided into many ethnic and militias led by several warlords. One may claim that the Taliban could have achieved its goals had they followed the path of non-violence. Their violent resistance and terrorist activities continue to receive criticism at home and beyond. If they took non-violent measures for protesting the presence of NATO forces on their soil, they might get more support/sympathy from the rest of the world; thus the massive losses might have been avoided. Though it is assumed that the US-led NATO forces will be withdrawn from Afghanistan, and the US continues to show interest in holding dialogues with the Taliban, but a durable peace is still far away to achieve, and no guarantee can be pledged that only the departure of the Western forces would bring peace in this country.

The Kashmir conflict, on the other hand, between India and Pakistan has not only claimed thousands of lives but also been a driver of two global security concerns: nuclear proliferation and cross-border terrorism. In addition, directly or indirectly, it impedes South Asian regionalism. The ongoing peace process has yet to bear any feasible solution of the conflict. Again, lessons can be taken from Gandhi and Ghaffar Khan's non-violent paths to establish peace and justice. Kashmiri people who have been the main victims of this conflict may choose non-violence though it is difficult and can take a long time, but this is also a fact that violence of the last 60 years could not bring in their autonomy. From another perspective, going deeper, the key cause of the Kashmir conflict is based on religious discord and hatred. But, according to Gandhi, "If man reaches the heart of his religion he has reached the heart of others too." These words provide the way for understanding others and an integrative solution of the conflict. Non-violence teaches us that all religions deserve equal respect, grounding the seed of unity, fraternity and tolerance.

In global context, it is claimed that conflict resolution or regime change through non-violent movements was more successful than violent means. In this regard, Dr. Erica Chenoweth, political scientist, University of Denver, opines that civil resistance campaigns have been twice more successful when compared to violent insurgencies during the last century (from 1900 to 2006).⁴⁵ Even in many situations where nonviolent resistance was assumed to be not succeeding—like in highly repressive, authoritarian countries, has been effective. And countries that experienced a major nonviolent

⁴⁵ "Civil Resistance Beats Violence: The Verdict is In", *Peace Magazine*, Vol. 29, No.1, Jan-Mar 2013.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

uprising were more likely to become stable democracies after the conflict was over.⁴⁶ But it should be noted that there are exceptions, e.g., Egypt. President Mubarak was removed from power mainly by non-violent uprising led by the Brotherhood, but when this party assumed power, a stable democracy was not observed there. Rather, the elected President Mursi from Brotherhood was deposed by the military and now Brotherhood began peaceful demonstration again against the military move. Had it turned violent, Egypt could become another Syria. A non-violent way for restoring democracy can be the only way to minimise the casualties and destruction of wealth. In addition, such a movement can include larger number of participants and receive sympathy from the international community impeding the autocrat government to use coercive force against peaceful demonstration. As it was seen when the military junta government cracked down on the peaceful demonstration of Brotherhood, the whole world including the US condemned the Egyptian government. Hence, the lessons are there from the South Asian non-violent movements for the Egyptian people to show tolerance and compassion and forgiveness.

There are examples of non-violent movements becoming violent. Lack of patience and tolerance may push the people towards violence when they face too much repression. This can be witnessed in Syria where protests began in nonviolent manner; with times passing and harsh measures adopted by Syrian government forces compelled these to assume violent form.⁴⁷ Therefore, although the context and levels of intensity of conflicts are different, it can be a subject of research why people at this time cannot adopt the principles of non-violence as seen in the movements led by Gandhi and Ghaffar Khan. Is it the lack of strong morale or religious values? Or, people becoming too much materialistic considering how much more can they get at the expense of others? Conflicts could be resolved in many ways, but violence is the easiest way to this end. However, Jesus remarked –“an eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind.” These words of wisdom explain the increasing proportion of loss of life, and property resulting from mindless violence in the world today. For instance, the conflicts between Palestine and Israel, and between India and Pakistan have produced only bloodshed, despair, helplessness and above all, never-ending hatred among people.

Today, conflicts are going on in many parts of the world. Non-violence is a significantly useful method in resolving conflicts at their early stages. Hence, the principles of non-violence should be learnt, adopted and applied on greater scale. For this purpose, the role of leaders, family, society, institutions including religious ones and national and international organisations is vital. Leaders of non-violent movements who have set examples before the world act as role models for others to follow. Their success stories inspire to bring a positive change in the society.

⁴⁷ Ammar Abdulhamid, “Why Nonviolence Failed in Syria”, 19 March 2013, available at <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/commentaryanalysis/why-nonviolence-failed-in-syria>, accessed on 20 June 2013.

Family is where children receive their first training. Therefore, families should encourage strong values of non-violence, making it a part of child rearing practices. The family environment and members should be set as exemplary for the children to emulate the principles of non-violence. Parents should avoid physical punishment and violence in dealing with children. School, on the other hand, is the first formal institution to shape children's lives and behaviour. Here, they come under the influence of many people and ideas. Thus, schools can be a crucial institution to promote non-violence. The stories of non-violent freedom struggles must be included into the curricula; there can be plays and dramas for highlighting the importance of non-violence. Students who resolve conflicts through non-violent ways should be rewarded. Colleges, universities and madrassas (religious school) can introduce courses on non-violence. Centres for non-violence should be established to spread the ideas into the society.

For promoting world peace through the principles of non-violence, the role of national and international organisations is also vital. The United Nations Organisation should coordinate and inspire the nations to evolve the universally acceptable principle of non-violence for conflict resolution. The time has come to make a choice between principles of non-violence to resolve conflict and weapons of mass destruction. This choice should be the collective choice of humanity and not of few elites.

5. Concluding Remarks

Not only can non-violent movement save people's life and wealth but also demonstrate tolerance towards enemy, love for God's creatures, and cultivate seeds of peace culture and thus contribute to build a harmonious society. Once this peace culture becomes deeply rooted, then gaining one's interests at the cost of others will lessen and in turn, reduce conflicts. As a conflict resolution method, non-violence should be given priority since it completely denies killing or harming the opponents, and has the potential to resolve a problem at the initial stage or before a conflict erupts. However, the strategy may not yield quick results, but has the moral superiority over the more powerful opponent, like a tyrannical regime which almost always tends to use force or resort to violence; even then, the people involved in non-violent movements try their best to stick to their principles. And their prolonged dedication towards the methods may yield desired results when the repressive regime departs from power; for example, the non-violent movements in the apartheid South Africa led by Nelson Mandela and his followers. Non-violence is a means of conflict resolution that aims to uphold truth and justice (rather than mere victory for one side) and it is the only method of struggle that is consistent with the teachings of the major religions.⁴⁸ There is a widespread misperception on how Islam perceives violence as a method of achieving a goal, but this paper argues that Islam emphasises the path of non-violence to resolve a conflict, and it is evident in the Quran

⁴⁸ Thomas Weber and Robert J Burrowes, "Nonviolence: an introduction," available at <http://www.nonviolenceinternational.net/seasia/whatis/book.php>, accessed on 15 March 2013.

and the Prophet's sayings. A fundamental principle of non-violence is that human rights must not be compromised to achieve any end, and that all forms of violence, whether self inflicted, among individuals or among states, do violate human rights.

About South Asia, the movements of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan created important examples. Gandhi's movements contributed significantly to Indian independence although some of the movements tended to lead to violence whereas those of Ghaffar Khan's movements remained almost totally non-violent. But other than these two, there has almost never been any emergence of spiritual and charismatic leader in this region, who promoted non-violent movement. Not only the South Asians but the people of the whole world have learnt the wisdom and power of non-violence from these two great men and their movements. Until the reappearance of leaders endowed with such qualities, the prospects of successful nonviolence movements remain in doubt in South Asia. Currently, this region including Afghanistan has a number of inter- and intra-state conflicts causing a number of death including innocent civilians who are not a party to the conflict.

A devastating war has been going on in Afghanistan for more than one decade, resulting in great losses. Non-violence is a common technique which can be achieved by anyone if he or she has a strong positive will, and can use it as a weapon to achieve the goal. It is a weapon of people of strong morality. Had the Taliban with their followers given up of the path of violence and applied non-violence methods, the conflict between the Taliban and the Western forces might have been resolved far earlier without much loss. This author argues that Mahatma Gandhi has been given his due respect worldwide but Ghaffar Khan, a Muslim non-violent activist is yet to. Hence, more research should be done on his non-violent philosophy and techniques, it may be more relevant in today's world which is divided into "We" and "They", and when Islam, a religion of peace, is considered by many in the West as analogous to terrorism. Ghaffar Khan's teachings are also important for those Muslims believing that violence/terrorism will bring equality, justice and peace.

To promote the idea of non-violence, the most important means is education. Teaching and examples of non-violence can be included in the curricula from primary to higher level. Significance of this method can be spread out through mass media, cultural activities like film, drama, scholarly works and peace conference. Clerics and scholars from all religions need to focus more on the principles of non-violence in public gathering. Leaders in particular politicians should learn and practice more methods of non-violence in resolving political problems.

"People try nonviolence for a week, and when it 'doesn't work' they go back to violence, which hasn't worked for centuries."-Theodore Roszak