NON-VIOLENCE-A FUTURE-ORIENTED POLICY

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The concept of human values is universal in nature. This is the reason we find uniformity in the teachings on human values in all religions. Non- Violence is a central teaching of all major religions. Non-violence is the practice of being harmless to self and others under every condition. Some ethics of the principle of non-violence are patience, tolerance, self-restraint and positive status quoism. These ethics help individuals become peaceful themselves and become an instrument of peace in society. Further, non- violence is essential in a world of weapons of mass destruction as disputes and disagreements can no longer be solved through the violent method. It is essential to find non-violent ways of solving problems. Peoples of the world need to inculcate non-violent principles in their minds. Only then will peace be possible in the world.

Key Words: Nonviolence, Positive Status Quoism, Ethics of Reciprocity, Peaceful Activism, Value Education, Ethics, Avoidance of Confrontation, Equality, Peace-building, Patience, Tolerance, Self-restraint, Islam, Prophet Muhammad, Future-oriented Policy.

NON-VIOLENCE—THE PRINCIPLE OF RECIPROCITY

Non-violence is an essential value in all religions. The principle underlying the ethics of non-violence is expressed in all religions as the Golden rule. Also termed as the principle of reciprocity, in Hinduism it is given as: 'One should never do that to another which one regards as injurious to one's own self. This, in brief, is the rule of

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dharma. Other behavior is due to selfish desires' (Brihaspati, Mahabharata); in the Bible it is given in these words: 'Do unto others as you would have them do to you' (Luke 6:31); in Islam this rule is given as: 'A believer is one who likes for others what he likes for himself' (Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad in Sahih al-Bukhari, No:13); and in Buddhist scriptures: 'Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful' (Udanavarga 5:18).

This simple principle is very effective in imparting value education, as everyone knows what behavior he or she wants or does not want from others. Everyone likes to be treated in a kind manner. So, everyone should treat others kindly. Everyone wants their life to be free of problems, so they should avoid creating problems for others. In this way, everyone's personal experience becomes a guide for what behavior to indulge in and what behavior to refrain from. This code of ethics is very simple and natural that anyone can easily learn it, whether he is literate or illiterate. No one can find it difficult to understand.

Non-violence is a very important value for human society. Through non- violence we can lay the foundation of positivity in society. In this article we will strive to understand the concept of non-violence in Islam and its benefits.

Benefits of non-violence: It is a fact that all positive achievements in this world has been gained by the non-violent method. No great or noble task has ever been carried out by the power of violence. This is true with regards to scientific discoveries and technological progress. No educational institutions or research institutions have ever been established by violent means. Violence is destructive and no constructive result can ever be achieved from a destructive act. This is the law of nature. Therefore, it can be said that non-violence is

result-oriented, while violence is destruction- oriented.

If the individual confines his activities to the field of non-violence, his work will yield results, whereas one who opts for the way of violence and intolerance will fail to make positive gain. The truth is that whenever anyone opts for the way of intolerance and violence, his effort and energy are spent in two different areas—internal construction and doing battle with the external foe, whereas one who opts for gentleness and non-violence is able to devote all his available energy and resources to the work of internal consolidation alone, and as a result, he can achieve a far greater success. This is the law of nature. Here if one is to achieve a goal, it will only be possible by following this law of nature which is based on the principle of peace and non-violence. Therefore, no one can be successful by deviating from this law.

Positive status Quoism: An important principle of non-violent activism is what may be described as positive status quoism. Status quoism does not simply mean to passively accept the existing circumstances. Rather, it means finding a path for oneself by adopting a non-confrontational policy within the existing circumstances. Therefore, status quoism is not passivity or inactivity; it is a planned course of action. We see this principle at work in the life of Prophet Muhammad (b. 570 AD). Positive status quoism of Prophet Muhammad was accepting the prevailing situation as it is, while working patiently towards the opportunities that the situation presents.

The Prophet of Islam followed this principle in his life at Makkah as well as at Madinah. This is one of the reasons for his achieving such great success—within the short period of 23 years—as had never been achieved by anyone throughout the entire course of human

history. The great benefit of such status quoism is that this policy allows one to instantly avail of opportunities for the advancement of one's own goals. One is able to utilize all of one's time and energy for the progress of one's mission. By avoiding clash and confrontation, it becomes possible devote oneself entirely to constructive activity.

Positive status quoism brings twofold benefit. Firstly, peace remains undisturbed, and secondly and ultimately, success is guaranteed. This formula can be summed up in these words: Avoid confrontation, adopt peaceful activism.

Basis of non-violence in Islam: In the words of Mohammed Abu-Nimer, nonviolence stems from the Quranic concept of universal brotherhood as all human beings are the children of Adam and Eve. In fact, all human values including nonviolence in Islam stem from the ideology of tawhid, or the oneness of God, and the equality of all mankind. Tawhid is the basis of the religious system of Islam. This is expressed in the phrase, Allah-u-Akbar, which Muslims utter about 300 times daily in the course of their prayers. Allah-u-Akbar means 'God is great'. Inherent in the idea of 'God is great' is the idea of the equality of human beings. If we derive a principle from this, it will be: God is great and all men and women are equal.

The concept of equality is the real basis of human values in Islam. It means that all human beings are equal and that the entire population of the world is like one great family. Believing in the idea of equality means looking upon everyone as being exactly the same as oneself. Such belief fosters a culture of amity in society. People become one another's well-wishers and desire to live with others in peace. Human equality is thus the bedrock of all virtues, and as such, generates all the desired values. Equality of all human beings as creatures of the one God is a central principle in Islam. The Prophet said, 'All people

are equal, as equal as the teeth of a comb…Only God-fearing people merit a preference with God.' (Ibn Asakir, Tarikh e Dimashq10/363). The principle of equality is key to promoting harmony and brotherhood between people. (Mohammed Abu-Nimer, A Framework for Nonviolence and Peacebuilding in Islam)

A society composed of a large number of people who are possessed of such a moral character becomes a healthy society in every sense. Such a society is marked by a deep sense of integrity, the backbone of which is honesty and truthfulness.

Non-violence in Islam also stems from the very same values of oneness of God and equality of all mankind. When one believes in one God, he/she becomes accountable to Him and, as such, ready to fulfill the rights of all mankind. Let us understand some ethics that emanate from the value of non- violence in Islam.

Non-violence in Islam: According to one tradition, the Prophet Muhammad observed: God grants to rifq (gentleness) what he does not grant to unf (violence). (Abu Dawud, Sunan, 4/255)

The word rifq has been used in this hadith as the opposite to unf. These terms convey what is meant by violence and non-violence in the modern age. This hadith clearly indicates the superiority of the non-violent method.

That God grants to non-violence what He does not grant to violence embodies an eternal law of nature. By the very law of nature all negative things are associated with violence, while all positive things are associated with non-violence.

Violent activities generate hatred in society, while non-violent activities create an atmosphere of love. Violence leads to destruction

while non- violence leads to construction. In an atmosphere of violence, enmity and hostility flourish, while in an atmosphere of non-violence, friendship and brotherhood flourish. Violence leads to problems, while non-violence leads to the exploiting of opportunities. In short, violence is death, non-violence is life.

Some of the ethics in Islam are given as follows.

Patience: The entire spirit of the Qur'an is in consonance with this concept. For instance, the Qur'an attaches great importance to patience. In fact, patience is set above all other Islamic virtues—with the exceptional promise of reward beyond measure. (39:10)

Patience implies a peaceful response, whereas impatience implies a violent response. The word sabr enunciates the concept of non-violence as it is understood in our times. It has been clearly expressed in the Quran that patient action is non-violent action.

Tenderness: Tenderness is an important ethic in the code of non-violence. Tenderness in one's dealings and activities and the readiness to help others and speak kindly to people are all virtues in the Islamic system of morality. Here is one tradition of the Prophet in this regard:

"God is compassionate and likes compassion in His creatures. He grants more to the kind and the tender-hearted than to those who are harsh and severe." (Muslim, *Sahih*, 2593)

One who wants to follow the value of non-violence has to be tender.

Tolerance and Self-Restraint: Islam emphasizes on cultivating the values of tolerance, self-restraint, and controlling of one's temper. The Quran mentions the blessed ones who are destined for Paradise:

"Who restrain their anger and pardon their fellow men." (3:134) The Prophet says: "God will withhold His punishment from one who curbs his anger."

Those who possess these fine moral attributes hold a very high place in the eyes of God.

Gentleness of Speech: Gentleness of speech is a great ethic of a non-violent person. The Quran declares:

"Speak kindly to mankind." (Quran, 2:83)

We have it from the Prophet that "to speak politely is piety and a kind of charity."

Gentleness of speech is a pre-requisite of non-violence.

Non-violence is a future-oriented policy: In this age of weapons of mass destruction, we cannot afford to solve disputes and disagreements through the violent method. We have to find non-violent ways of solving problems. Recent history of violence shows the sheer destruction modern weapons can inflict on human society. The world community must come together and inculcate non-violent principles in the minds of the people. Only when minds are transformed can true change come in the world. Nonviolence is the future-oriented policy.

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