

Violence or Non-Violence – What should we follow: An observation from Sanskrit Literature.

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Abstract

In every religious volume of literature in the world we get the advices of non-violence. There are the important discussions about this in Indian literature also. Almost everywhere we see the rejection of violence and acceptance of non-violence. Sometimes we see contradiction between violence and non-violence in literature. Which one we should accept? We see the line in the 'Udyogparva' of Mahabharata - 'अहिंसेका सुखावहा'. That means only non-violence creates happiness. In Ramayana, Mahabharata and Puranas we find the heroic activities of Kings, Gods and Sages. Basically this heroism was based on violence. What should do a man when the matter is about self protection, defense in the battlefield etc.? Manu says in his 'Manusamhita' that the protection of peoples is the first duty for Ksatriya. They should fight to save people. Is completely non-violence possible for human being? Men eat meat, fishes etc. and collect vegetables, fruits etc. from the trees. This kind of violated works for existence we see here and there. In Vedic Yajna (sacrifice) the killing of animals is violence, but the authors of scriptures justified it as non-violence work. We see in Bauddha literature the rejection of all types of killing. So, sometime we should accept violence though always non-violence is acceptable.

Key Words

Violence, Non-Violence, Gita, Srikrishna, Veda, Manusamhita, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Purana, Jain Philosophy, Buddhist Philosophy, Yogadarsana, Samkhyadarsana.

Introduction

'उपदिश्यते इति उपदेशः, कर्तव्याकर्तव्यविषयको निर्देशः', Non-Violence is an important matter of advices of Sanskrit literature. In every religious volume of literature in the world we get the advices of non-violence directly or indirectly. Vidura said in the 'Udyogparva' (33rd chapter) of Mahabharata - 'अहिंसेका सुखावहा'. That means only non-violence creates happiness. Supporting the mercy he said -

‘क्षमा वशीकृतिलोके क्षमया किं न साध्यते I
शान्तिखड्गः करे यस्य किं करिष्यति दुर्जनःII’

, that means mercy is way of attachment in this world. Everything is possible by mercy. The mischief persons nothing can do him who has the weapon of peace. No behavior of tyranny as physically, mentally or wordy is Non-Violence. Vyasa, the commentator of Yogadarsana said in the explanation of Non-Violence - "तत्राहिंसा सर्वथा सर्वदा सर्वभूतानामनभिद्रोहः". No comment of distress will make he though he is distressed by other - 'नारुन्दुदः स्यादार्तोऽपि न परद्रोहकर्मधीः'(Manusamhita 2/161). 'सत्त्वस्य लक्षणं धर्मः'(Manusamhita 12/38) – that means behavior of religious activities is the sign of Sattwaguna. Again we find this verse in Manusamhita – 'यत् सर्वेणैच्छति ज्ञातुं यन्न लज्जति चाचरन्

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येन तुष्यति चात्मास्य तत् सत्त्वगुणलक्षणम् II' (Manusamhita 12/37), that means Non-Violence is Sattwaguna .

‘लोभः स्वप्नो S धृतिः क्रोर्यं नास्तिक्यं भिन्नवृत्तिता I

याचिष्णुता प्रमादश्च तामसं गुणलक्षणम् II', that means greed, sleepiness, impatient, mercilessness, atheism etc are the elements of Tamoguna. So, violence is a Tamoguna. I will discuss here briefly following the Indian Sanskrit literatures which should we accept between Violence and Non-Violence.

Discussion

Acharya Manu gave importance the non-Violence in the definition of religion. He said in his Manusamhita - "अहिंसा सत्यमस्तेयं शौचमिन्द्रिय-निग्रहःI

एतं सामासिकं धर्मं चातुर्वर्ण्ये ब्रवीन्मनुःII'

This non-violence is described as 'Yama' in the Yogadarsana of Patanjali as the part of 'Astanga Yoga' - 'अहिंसा-सत्यब्रह्मचर्यापरिग्रहाः यमाः.' In Jain Philosophy there is the advice of 'Samyak Charitra' to attain 'moksa' and to achieve 'Samyak Charitra' need to keep 'Panchamahabrata'. These are 'Ahimsa'(Non-Violence), 'Sunrita'(truth), 'Asteya', 'Brahmacharya' and 'Aparigraha'. The stay from the all mischief of motioned and motionless is non-Violence. Buddhist Philosophy, the main advicer of non-Violence says about the ten prohibitions .These are the killing of animals, theft, behave of eroticism, false talking, the words of divagation, talking of harse words, gried, Violence etc.No one should behave violence physically or mentally. We see in Srimadbhagavadgita, Lord Sri Krishna says – He should giving up the Violence - 'अद्वेषा सर्वभूतानाम्'. In Veda we find – 'मा हिंस्यात् सर्वभूतानीति.' Bhisma said in the 'Santiparva' of Mahabharata less of anger, truth, forgiveness, purity, non-violence etc. nine religious activities should follow by all casts of society. We see in the speech of Lord Indra that who live by stealth, should follow non-violence, truth, less of anger, purity, Yajna etc. Again Bhisma said that which Brahmins are impure, cruel and violent should not give them anything. Forgiveness, non-violence, patience, truth, anger less, equality etc. are the features of a self restrained person. We find in the speech of Sage Bhrgu – the persons who are addicted in anger, greed, violence, lie etc. do not feel peace of mind in this world and next world. There we find the praise of non-violence in Manusamhita - 'अहिंसो दमदानाभ्यां जयेत् स्वर्गं तथाव्रतः'(Manusamhita-4/246).That means non-violent person get the way of heaven by restrain and act of giving. Again Manu said in this volume –

"धर्म शनेः सञ्चिनुयाद्वल्मीकमिव पुत्तिकाः।
परलोकसहायार्थं सर्वभूतान्यपीडयन् II' (Manusamhita- 4/38).

That means as termite collects soil to make hill, man should choose the way of religion for not to harm anyone.

The Gita does not support this. In 'Srimadbhagavadgita' we see Lord Krishna says devotees not to do any violence - 'अमानित्वदम्भित्वमहिंसा क्षान्तिराजवमाआचार्योपासनं शौचं स्थैर्यमात्मबिनिग्रहः' I 13/7, 'अहिंसा सत्यमक्रोधस्त्यागः शान्तिरपेशुनम्...' 16/2. There are three types of violence according to work - 'Krita' (self violence), 'Karita' (violence by other) and 'Anumodita' (to support violence). The violence originates from six internal enemies. In the explanation of Gita we see four types of non-violence - in place, in time, personal violence etc. The wish of not to do violence in general places and religious places also is called non-violence of place. The wish of not giving trouble any time others is called non-violence time. The wish of not giving pain teachers, mother, father, children, cows, dears etc. is called personal non-violence. The wish of not giving trouble in place and time by anger, greed and illusion is called universal non-violence or 'Mahabrata'. We see also in the explanation in real life the complete non-violence is that which takes man to Universal soul from the mortal world. Purity of mind is important for this non-violence. 'पवमानः पुनातु मा क्रत्वे दक्षाय जीवसे I अथो अरिष्टतातये II' 6/19/2 - We see here the prayer for purity from the universal soul through this mantra. Again in 'Gita' we see the another explanation - the things which are not his own, which are the properties of nature but man starts to think all these as his own and when others are not able to get these, they become sorrow. Thus who enjoy these, they create violence indirectly. In the other hand if any person becomes sorrow to see the noble persons who spend their lives to serve others, they do not create any violence. The noble persons do everything for others - शारीरं केवलं कर्म कुर्वन्नाप्नोति किल्बिषम् I

Poet Bhartihari said in his 'Nitisataka' - 'अक्रोधस्तपसः क्षमा प्रभवितुः', that means the control of anger is the ornament of religious devotions and forgiveness is the ornament of power.

In Yajurveda we find the line - 'मा हिंसीः'. Violence was not accepted in the whole Vedic literature. The killing of animals in Yajna is violence. The ancient scriptures said that these types of violence of Veda are considered as non-violence. Manu says legal violence is not wrong - 'यजार्थं ब्राह्मणैर्वध्याः प्रशस्ता मृगपक्षिणः I

भूत्यानाञ्चैव वृत्त्यर्थमगस्त्यो ह्याचरत् पुरा II' 5/12

According to Sankhya Philosophy legal violence is a sin for man. In 'Dasavatarastotram' of Jayadeva we see the mention about Buddha Avatara of Sri Krishna - 'निन्दसि यजविधेरहह श्रुतिजातं सहृदयदर्शितपशुघातम्'. That means, Oh God, Judge the Vedic words which support the killing of animals in Yajna as wrong. In Santiparva of Mahabharata we see Bhishma mentions the view of Vichaksu. They support violence, who are away from religious dignity, fools and who are confused about Atman, dishonest, atheist etc. Men immolate animals in Yajna by their own interest. Non-violence is the best religion for all. The greedy persons create there occasions to eat the meat, fish, wine etc. Lord Krishna asked here -

'परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् I
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे II'

So, sometimes violence is acceptable, though Gita does not support violence.

Again, in Manusamhita Manu says about the duty of Ksatriya - 'क्षत्रियस्य परो धर्मः प्रजानामेव पालनम् I' 7/144 Here fighting is necessary to save country and their people. For this Kings should not avoid the way of battle - 'स्वधर्मो विजयस्तस्य नाहवे स्यात् पराङ्मुखः' II 10/119

Sri Krishna remembered Arjuna repeatedly this duty. What is destiny of Ksatriya who kill thousands of people in the battlefield? Bhishma said the King who attacks the enemies fearlessly; Gods accept them as the best. The Kings became free from all sin by the blood of wound from his body. Mahakavi Bharavi said in his Kiratarjuniyam -

'अवस्थकोपस्य विहन्तुरापदां भवन्ति वश्याः स्वयमेव देहिनः I

अमर्षशून्येन जनस्य जन्तुना न जातहार्देन न विद्विषादरः II' 1/33

There are the two causes in the behavior of non-violence - sickness and cult of non-violence. The man, who is weak, is not able to do violence. The real non-violence is lying in forgiveness.

The sage Valmiki cursed the Nisada for killing one of the Kraunchas in mourn. The curse is violence. The curse of Valmiki to Nisada seems injustice. Again in the ninth chapter of Aranyakanda of Ramayana Devi Sita supported both violence and non-violence in special purposes. We see many Akhyanas and Upakhyanas in the Veda, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Puranas. The main characters of these mainly are the Kings, Gods, Sages, Demons etc. Their heroic activities, fighting with wrong persons are described everywhere. Generally Kings, Sages, Gods are not involved in fighting when they get troubled by others they involved in violence -

Samapradhanesu tapodhanesu guram hi dahatmakamasti tejah.
sparsanukula iva suryakantastdanyatejo bhibhavat vamanti .

Normally we do not find non-violence when an able person gets pain by others.

We find an exception in Raghuvamsam. Mahakavi Kalidasa said in this court-epic - 'क्षमा शक्तौ I' So, sometime we should accept violence though always non-violence is acceptable.

Conclusion

Non-violence was mentioned in Yogadarsana of Patanjali as 'Yama' and accepted its necessity. In Jain Philosophy the non-violence is one of the parts of Panchamahabrata. The Buddhist Philosophy said about the rejection of violence. There we see the mention of non-violence as duty for every cast in the Santiparva of Mahabharata. Manu says in his Manusamhita - 'अहिंसो दमदानाभ्यां जयेत् स्वर्गं तथाव्रतः' (4/246). In Srimadbhagavadgita we see Lord Krishna says devotees to behave non-violence. In Yajurveda we find this line - 'मा हिंसीः'. The Veda does not support violence. The authors of scriptures said about the killing of animals at the time of Yajna as a non-violent work. In Gita Sri Krishna also said to destroy mischief persons he takes Avatars in ages. Thus he supports violence indirectly. The characters of Ramayana,

Mahabharata and Puranas get violated for some special purposes. So, we can say from above discussion sometime we should accept violence though always non-violence is acceptable.

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