EXPLORING DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF PEACE AND NON-VIOLENCE
at the personal and universal level

JAIN VISHVA BHARATI LONDON

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Contents

1. Introduction.

2. The present global crisis and the future outlook.

3. Root causes of violence, wars and what drives conflicts.

4. Peace and non-violent ideas, actions and examples to stop violence and wars.

5. Spreading peace and nonviolence by our actions.

6. Conclusion.

Introduction

Thanks JAIN VISHVA BHARATI LONDON for inviting me to give a talk to day. JAIN VISHVA BHARATI is a great institution working for the welfare for individuals and the community, and an inspiration to us all. It is indeed a pleasure to be among peace activists who are a driving force for change. It is always a small group of committed people whose tireless efforts have brought changes to the world. The concept of enriching and evolving one's life through non violent lifestyle, including the philosophy of least harm to other human beings and all species in our planet is an admirable one. One of the best contributions of Jainism is the golden rule of life. "A person should treat all creatures as himself would be treated". Mahavira, Buddha, Gandhi, Confucious have alluded to the golden rule of life as well.

We are going to explore how the concept of peace non-violence can be broadened to enrich not only ones own life but can be expanded to help others by our actions. *"Be the change you want to see in the world,"* said Mahatma Gandhi.

In enriching one's own life, one engages in the basic principles of truth, Ahimsa (non violence), and tries to lead a life based on ethical and moral principles. It obliterates bad karmas (action) from life, leading to spiritual enlightenment or attainment of salvation.

The path of peace and non-violence are interrelated as you practice Ahimsa (non violence) to achieve peace. The principles of non-violence are twofold. First is based on purity of one's thoughts, emotions and deeds. It is based on the principle of equality towards all living beings, attitude of equanimity (a state of calm and even-tempered; composure): a feeling of equality towards all. No one is big or small, low or high, inferior or superior. The state of inequality is causing unrest in the world. To achieve peace, you must first of all develop a feeling of equanimity towards all.

The second principle of Ahimsa is to exercise self restraint in the use of material resources. If we want to transform society, we will have to change our lifestyle and our way of working. Today, a multitude of people suffer on account of unrestrained behaviour of some individuals. Especially, leaders of certain countries, who by taking their countries to unjustifiable wars, cause the death of millions of people. As Acharya Tulsi said, 'Man should set an example of morality, truth and integrity in his life.'

The concept of nonviolence is thousands of years old and we find the principles of truth and "Ahimsa" (nonviolence) in Jain, Vedic, Buddhist and Gandhian philosophy. Large numbers of people around the world are nonviolent and wish to live in peace as a family, village and town. It is a principle which needs training for cultivating you inner strength and controlling your agitated mind and developing a sense of coexistence and fearlessness. And also to work towards a just, killing free world in which everyone has the right not to be killed and responsibility not to kill others. As UNESCO, declaration of a culture of peace says "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men, that the defences of peace must be constructed." If Jihadis can be trained for mass killing we can also train our consciousness to nonviolence and thereby change our world. We need to develop love, compassion, kindness, friendship, brotherhood and sisterhood – the positive manifestations of nonviolence (Ahimsa).

Truth and nonviolence gives you an enlightened view of the universe, a pure state of soul and mind which makes the body free from attachments and desires leading to sublime character and right beliefs. One can lead a controlled and balanced lifestyle following the principles of least violence and sustainability. Service to humanity and living for the sake of others is one of the key components of nonviolent living.

Nonviolent ideas have been around for over 2500 years but have only been adopted by a minority of humanity. It is owing to the fact that we live in a very violent and volatile world. The only thing changed in the modern time is technology but not our moral understanding, without which our progress is nil. Another factor is our total focus and a fixation on our own lives these days and insensitiveness towards tragedies and troubles of our fellow human beings.

So how can we change this principle of peace and non-violence to encompass at personal level to universal and world at large? Today, I'm going to examine the present global crisis and the future outlook of the world, the root causes of violence and wars. How can we transform the world by our ideas and actions of peace and non-violence for a just peaceful and sustainable world?

<u>Present Global Crisis and Future Outlook of the World</u>

Citizens, governments and international organizations are confronted with an array of security challenges including new forms of terrorism and international criminal activity; security implications of environmental degradation; instability in the financial system; militarization of space; unregulated flows of small arms, nuclear technologies and illicit goods; and fragile and failing states. These security dilemmas require innovative thinking beyond traditional national security approaches to examine 21st century security challenges and explore responses.

The global system for finance, economic growth and development have collapsed, with food prices rocketing, leaving millions on the brink of starvation. The global warming and climate change crisis has put the planet in peril.

Global economic balances are shifting fast in all domains- manufacturing, trading, and financial with emerging giants China and India tilting the balance. Both of these countries are developing at an unprecedented scale and will leave behind the economies of America and any individual European country. There will be a big struggle for getting oil, water and skilled labour. As China and India become more wealthy and powerful, they will react differently to world events by enforcing Asian values on democracy, freedom and rule of law.

With unprecedented development in information and technology, terrorists can develop or perhaps able to buy weapons of mass destruction and hold countries to ransom. Same is true of rogue governments, if they get their hands on nuclear weapons, they could create mayhem and chaos on a large scale. However, the west and the north will be pushing for global non-proliferation and containment of terrorism. The influence of America, European Union, Japan, and Russia will in the next 10-15 years be gradually diminishing on world affairs.

The influence of different faiths and religions will gradually increase by a religious renewal especially in the Muslim world. If this influence is wrongly used, it can breed extremists and fundamentalists who will use tactics to contain powerful countries.

<u>Root causes of violence, wars and what drives conflicts – civil, international and future wars.</u>

The **culture of violence** pervades our society, glorifying war rather than educating for peace, non-violence, and international cooperation. The continued military spending (USD $1.4 trillion per annum) in our society perpetuates a culture of violence and hostilities. Military spending in armed conflicts, involvement of Pentagon and Military Industrial Complex's 'war of aggression,' has a direct vested interest in the perpetuation of such conflicts is a major cause of ongoing wars. Afghanistan and Pakistan is an example of that.

Terrorism, fundamentalism and radicalism are producing continued, unrelenting attacks on civilian and military targets around the world.

Escalation of small arms and lights weapons (800 million in circulation) both start and prolong conflicts, causing millions of deaths. Production of new mini nukes, buster bunker bombs and

stockpile of existing 30,000 nuclear warheads, along with proliferation of nuclear and biological information and technology can result in terrorism, indiscriminate mass killing and destruction.

Economic globalisation has marginalised broad sections of the world's population, further widening the gap between rich and poor.

The **over use of environmental resources** is neither sustainable nor equitable. The world's dominant consumers are overwhelmingly concentrated among the well off, but the environmental damage from it falls most severely on the poor, over consumption of the earth's resources can result in ecological mayhem.

Increasing colonialism and neo-colonialism is evident in indigenous and un-represented people who are suffering from the suppression of their right to self-determination, ethnic and cultural genocide, and the violation of their cultural, language and religious freedoms, and the militarisation and nuclearisation of their lives, lands and waters.

Ethnic, religious and racial intolerance, and nationalism are among the principal sources of modern armed conflict.

The costs of the **gender injustice and machismo** that still pervades most societies are high for men whose choices are limited by this standard, and for women who experience continual violence both in war and in peace.

Lack of protection and respect for children & youth continue to be exploited and victimized, particularly in violent conflict situations where harming children have become not only a consequence, but frequently a strategy of war.

The **lack of democracy and just global governance** at all levels of society are causing conflicts and replacing the rule of law with the rule of force.

The common assumption is that **violence and warfare are inherent in human nature**. **Violence in local communities** paves the way for conflicts at national and international levels.

The **role of media in one dimensional reporting**, and thus, misrepresenting the facts and flaring hostilities in wars. The glorification of violence as expressed through commercial entertainment can contribute to the approval of violence as a normal and acceptable condition.

Another danger to world peace and security is **the level of poverty and hunger of the one sixth of the world's population,** who are under nourished and live in developing countries and are prone to conflicts over resources.

Refugees and internally displaced populations (IDPs) are a increasing source of violence and tension in the communities. According to UNICEF 2006 estimates, more than 1 billion children under the age of 18 are living in areas of conflict or emerging from war. There is a problem of mass displacements caused by conflicts (IDPs) which is linked with problem of population displacement and 'one sided violence' committed by armed forces against civilians.

A major threat to global stability is **the food crises in poor countries which causes government collapse turning into a failed state.** Global warming is causing a shortage of freshwater, the loss of topsoil and rising temperatures, all of which reduce food production.

The resulting food-price inflation puts severe stress on the governments with fragile economies. Teetering on the edge, these can easily become failed states. Many of their problems stem from the inability to control their populations making them particularly vulnerable to food pressures.

States fail when national governments can no longer provide personal security, food security and basic social services such as education and health care. They often lose control of part or all of their territory. After a point, they can become so dangerous that food relief workers are no longer safe and their programmes are curtailed (for example, Somalia and Afghanistan).

Failing states are an international problem because they are a source of terrorists, drugs, weapons and refugees, threatening political stability everywhere. Somalia is a failed state and has become a base for piracy; Iraq is a hotbed for terrorist training and Afghanistan is at war and is the world's leading supplier of heroin. Following the massive genocide in Rwanda, refugees from that failed state, thousands of armed soldiers among them, helped to destabilize neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo. Once states fail, no one assumes responsibility for their debt to outside lenders. If enough states disintegrate, their fall will threaten the stability of global civilisation.

Peace and non-violent ideas, actions and examples to stop violence and wars

How can we actively adopt a stance of nonviolent behaviour in the light of the trends of rising violence in the personal, public and international global contexts?

Support role of UN Peacekeeping operations which deploys 120,000 people in 18 locations on five continents in the world. At certain places UN has kept peace over 50 years like Kashmir and in other places it's struggling to maintain peace as in Darfur and Congo. UN is one of the best examples of enforcing, keeping and building peace in the world. The demand for effective peacekeeping outstrips of availability of human and other resources.

States should comply with the UN Charter as they have signed and agreed under Chapter 7 provisions of the UN Charter, and have accepted not to go to war which in other words, make the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan illegal.

Bringing UN Security Council reforms for fair representation, more democratic decision making process and increasing peacekeeping budget in line with increasing demand for peacekeeping.

Tackling Terrorism to build a just and equal society that addresses the root causes of the disaffection of the minority who are victims of the excess of the majority.

Promote reasons to avoid war. There are many good reasons to avoid war. Economic grounds. War is expensive and one needs to reduce the military spending, adopting a culture of peace and the prevention of Warfare.

Violent conflict can be prevented with Rapid Reaction Force or a civilian peace mission.

Nonviolent Peaceforce should be sent to conflict areas to prevent death and destruction and protect human rights, thus creating the space for local groups to enter into dialogue and to seek peaceful resolution to local conflicts. The vision of civilian peace mission should be to have large-scale unarmed civilian peacekeepers using proven nonviolent strategies as a viable alternative in preventing, addressing, and mitigating violent conflicts worldwide.

Applying Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine and international law (under ICC) to stop genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. **Also, follow the work of the Peacebuilding Commission** to help bridge the gap in co-ordination of peace building activities in countries just a emerging from violent conflicts.

Campaigning to ban US military bases as in Iraq, Afghanistan and other places around the world. America is a global bully with 750 bases in 130 countries. It is a military juggernaut intent on world domination and in partnership with Military Industrial Complex continues to wage conflicts on a permanent basis.

Protecting civilians in armed conflict and avoid cover-ups. There are a large number of civilians, refuges or internally displaced person from armed conflicts in the Gaza, Sri Lanka and Somalia.

Campaign for article 9 of the Japanese constitution (which rejects war and militarism) to be discussed and adopted by the UN General Assembly, thereby encouraging member states to move away from war and militarism, towards non-violent conflict prevention and resolution.

Promote education and non-violent ways of ending conflicts build on arms control treaties, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regimes. Also Protect Human Rights violations and environment from destruction as both lead to maintaining long term peace and security.

Promote a culture of non-violence and non-killing for replacing the gun culture. The task is challenging but for peace to prevail we have to reverse the trend of killing through hating violence, war, and mass psychological transformation for creating harmony, peace and love. Promote reasons to avoid war like war destroys environment, hinders development and hampers the desire for decent living.

Leaders should promote international co-operation to end long running disputes. Most of the world problems today of peacekeeping, conflicts, development, climate change and human rights which are inter-related and should be dealt in tandem.

Talking to terrorists and learning from the Northern Ireland Peace Process. The peace agreement in Northern Ireland is now held up as a beacon for conflict resolution around the world. On the basis of the British experience in Northern Ireland, it is now widely agreed that talking to terrorists and all parties in the conflict is a pre-requisite for peace.

Promoting the role of activism for an active campaign against the policy of governments/politicians leading their countries to war, using preventative diplomacy against the surge of war.

Supporting holistic solutions to all the interrelated issues and taking responsibility to deal collectively and have a multilateral approach in dealing with threats and challenges of today.

Linking the agenda of development, environment and disarmament together by building partnerships at national and global level.

Endorse working towards phasing the elimination of nuclear weapons. For decades nuclear non-proliferation treaty has saved the world from extinction. We should ensure and cooperate with other countries to maintain the nuclear disarmament and restrict the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Support discussion and dialogue leading to inter-cultural and inter-religious harmony for a safer future.

Promote the work of human rights council for dealing more objectively and credibly with human rights violations.

Promote completion of millennium development goals, fight against poverty and debt relief. To make reducing the global incidence of wars and military spending a new Millennium Development Goal (MDG).

To work towards using resources for peaceful and environmentally sustainable purposes. At present the global arms trade, and its accompanying glut of military spending, continues to represent the single most significant perversion of worldwide priorities known today.

To make 21st century about governments giving power to the people. A united civil society should use its strength for stopping politicians using their power unilaterally in violation of law and international treaties.

To work for promoting democracy, good governance and multilateralism which paired with rule of law can deliver civil liberty, economic opportunity, and security which can change life in a positive way.

Introduce universal education and spread ideas which can be very influential in disseminating knowledge for everybody's use for nurturing a globalised information and knowledge economy and society.

Spreading peace and non-violence by our actions.

There are many examples in history where non-violent struggle has been successful. Some of the examples are below:

- The Indian Independence Movement, whereby Gandhi's campaign of non-violent action ousted the British from India.
- The US Civil Rights Movement and the part played by Martin Luther King.
- The Polish Solidarity Movement of the 1980s that ended Soviet control of Poland.
- Philippines dictator Marcos overthrown in 1986.
- The non-violent movement that ousted the Chilean dictator Pinochet in 1987.
- The collapse of Communist governments in Eastern Europe – the "Velvet Revolution" organisation.
- South Africa: the 600 civic organisations that avoided civil war and supported Mandela and De Klerk to end Apartheid.
- The student-led movement that ousted Serbian dictator Milosevic in 2000.
- The Rose Revolution in Georgia, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, and so on.

I would like to suggest some actions which can make a difference in our community city, country and wider world.

1) **Making your borough a Borough of Peace or your city a culture of Peace City and work for building a Peace Museum.**

We can change our own city or borough into a culture of peace, which can organise events and festivals for celebrating and building peace. Culture of peace can also be taught in schools and universities, civic and community organisations.

The UNESCO Declaration and Plan of Action for a Culture of Peace, establishes that the culture of peace is an interweaving of values, attitudes, and behaviour that reflect a respect for life, the human being, and human dignity.

The Plan of Action contains measures based on education, race, development, and freedom of expression that must be put into practice to bring about the great transition from force to the word: to foster education in peace, human rights, democracy, mutual tolerance, and comprehension, national and international; to fight every form of discrimination; to promote democratic principles and practices in every area of society; to fight poverty and bring about a form of development that is indigenous and sustainable and that benefits everyone and grants all people a decent life; to mobilise society in order to ignite in the young a burning desire to find new ways of living based on

reconciliation, tolerance, and generosity, and to reject all forms of oppression and violence, the just distribution of wealth, the free flow of information and shared learning.

The 2000 Manifesto of the International Year for a Culture of Peace, signed by more than 110 million people around the world, establishes "the commitment in my daily life, in my family, my community, and my region, to respect all lives, reject violence, free my generosity, safeguard the planet, reinvent solidarity, and listen to others in order to understand them".

This should serve to involve us and implicate us personally in this process that can lead in a few years to a brightening of the horizons that are so dark today and make possible a peaceful coexistence of all inhabitants of the earth.

There have already been many regions, countries, and municipalities that have incorporated the culture of peace into their constitutions and statutes.

It can also take the shape of Peace Museums which can display history of peace making in pictures, paintings, documents and other art forms.

It is very important that this trend spread, though even more important is the awareness among people that the moment has come to stop accepting the imposition of and blind obedience to power. Citizens are ceasing to be spectators and becoming actors. They are abandoning silence and fear and becoming agents of peace instead of vassals.

Peace is both a condition and a result, both seed and fruit. It is necessary to identify the causes of conflict to be able to prevent it. Avoiding conflict is the greatest victory.

UNESCO, the United Nations organisation charged explicitly with building peace through education, science, culture, and communication, recalls in the preamble of its constitution that it is the "democratic principles" of justice, liberty, equality, and solidarity that must illuminate this great transition from a culture of violence and war to a culture of dialogue and reconciliation.

2) Creating a Peace and Non Violent media centre.

Internet online services and social media are in more than one ways changing the society rapidly. Around two billion people across the world are connected to the internet via Youtube, Facebook, Twitter, MySpace. The success of the social media can be seen by the recent happenings around the Iran election where the totalitarian regime is sticking to power in the run up to a fraudulent election. Because of the traditional channels closed by government, the whole world came to know about the wrong doing of the government by the social media, including Twitter.

The message of peace through non-violence can be made aware in a concerted way with the help of social media. Lectures, workshops, campaign presentations and other events can be organised online. All the major issues of the 21st century can be highlighted and a successful campaign can be started for a safer and sustainable future for our planet by the aid of the media.

Today long-distance participation via mobile phone, SMS, and the Internet has made possible a radical change in the fundamental component of all democracies — the expression of the will of the people.

3) Global Leadership Summits and Ambassadors of Peace

- Teach people by inspiring and educating a new generation of leaders who can meet the challenges of 21st century and make a difference.

- Future leaders with a love for learning, sense of possibility, and understanding of world around them – can serve the world and bring greater opportunities for future generations.
- Leaders can spread the message of peace and non-violence to the wider society. Survey after survey has concluded that most of the people in the world wish to live in a peaceful and safer society. However, the leaders and governments of certain countries in partnership with military industrial complex and military generals have kept the world on a permanent war footing, engaging in war from one country to another.

One of the best examples of leadership and Ambassadors of Peace is Ashoka, king of India in 269 BCE who became a Buddhist. Ashoka, prior to his conversion, had been an active military leader, but in a number of ways he changed when he became a Buddhist. In terms of military activity, he reduced this considerably, only using force when it was absolutely necessary to restrict incursions and aggressive activity by other rulers. He did not engage in the hunting of deer and other animals, and both he and his courtiers were largely vegetarian.

So what we should do is to have a program of global leadership summits and Ambassadors of Peace for achieving a less violent world.

Conclusion

When we look at the daily deaths in ongoing wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan and daily attacks by terrorists, the sense of gloom and helplessness gathers around us and we feel powerless to take any actions to remedy these situations. However, let me point out to you that the rise of non-violence and non-violence action has been acknowledged by Freedom House, a Washington based organisation with close ties to the foreign policy establishment. The 2005 study observed that, of the nearly 70 countries that have made the transition from dictatorship to varying degrees of democracy in the past 30 years, only a small minority did so through armed struggle from below or reform instigated from above. Hardly any new democracies resulted from foreign invasion. In nearly three-quarters of the transitions, change was rooted in democratic civil-society organizations that employed non-violent methods. In addition, the study noted that countries where non-violent civil resistance movements played a major role tend to have freer and more stable democratic systems.

A different study, published last year in the journal International Security, used an expanded database and analysed 323 major insurrections in support of self-determination and democratic rule since 1900. It found that violent resistance was successful only 26 percent of the time, where as non-violent campaigns had a 53 percent success rate.

From the poorest nations of Africa to relatively affluent countries of Eastern Europe; from communist regimes to right-wing military dictatorship; from across the cultural, geographic and ideological spectrum, democratic and progressive forces have recognized the power of non-violent commitment to non-violence, but simply because it works.

National governments created a global political atmosphere of fear and insecurity and depend on military solutions to global issues. The right way is to build confidence among all parties rather than foster fear and insecurity, then funds and other key resources could be redirected from wars, nuclear and conventional arms production to other priorities such as climate change, health, education, and agriculture, toward the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals

The message is simple – To spread peace and nonviolence by your actions in your city, country and international level. The nonviolent actions can change things dramatically as it once did for Gandhi Ji in India and Dr. Martin Luther King in America. The sheer ability of nonviolent ideas and ethics can help powerless people gain a lot of power to change things around for better in a nonviolent way. People can bring change not through violence, not through money but strength of their ideas, personality, ethical and moral stance.

We have covered a lot of ground today from global crisis to root causes of violence and wars. We have also tried to analyse how culture of peace can replace gun culture. We also gave examples of peace ideas of non-violent actions which have been successful. I have also recommended three ideas for us to kick start our own initiative/project/campaign which can be adopted by us. However, we are also open to other ideas which can be taken up and expanded to help others by our actions.

Let me conclude by quoting Margaret Mead "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Thank you for listening.

Notes

1. The Brunei Times, "The Culture of Peace has come," 11 October 2009
2. Article by Vijay Mehta written for the Indian Institute for Public Administration, "Reforms in Global Governance and Democracy: for a Just, Peaceful and sustainable World" January 2010.
3. What the world will look like in 2025.
4. Jain Vishva Bharati London, "Peace though the Practice of Non-violence".
5. "Is human aggression irredeemable?" by Scilla Elworthy in May 2008l.
6. "Charter for a World without Violence" – http://www.nobelforpeace-summits.org/CHARTER/charter.htm
7. "The Methods of Non-violent Action" by Gene Sharp.
8. "101 Peace Ideas" by Vijay Mehta – http://vmpeace.org/pages/education_101_peace_ideas.htm
9. "Weapons of Mass Democracy" by Stephen Zunes September 2009.

The full version of this speech can be downloaded from:

- VM Centre for Peace   www.vmpeace.org
- Action for UN Renewal   www.action-for-un-renewal.org.uk

Vijay Mehta is president of VM Centre for Peace www.vmpeace.org , Founding Trustee of Fortune Forum Charity www.fortuneforum.org, Chair of Action for UN Renewal www.action-for-un-renewal.org.uk and co-Chair of World Disarmament Campaign. He is an author, a champion for truth and global activist for peace, development, human rights and environment. Some of his notable books are The Fortune Forum Summit: For a Sustainable Future, Arms No More, and The United Nations and Its Future in the 21st Century. His latest book is on Global Warming and is called 'Climate Change IQ,' which is available to download free of charge in electronic form from the website www.climatechange365.co.uk.

Fortune Forum charity (www.fortuneforum.org) convenes global leaders, celebrity activists, philanthropists, influential entrepreneurs and media moguls to collectively make a difference. Fortune Forum has held three summits in London since 2006. The summits have attracted a worldwide audience of 1.3 billion people (one fifth of humanity) including print and media coverage. Previous keynote speakers include Bill Clinton, former US President and Al Gore, former US vice-President, and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize 2007.

Vijay Mehta has appeared in various TV programmes including BBC World, Press TV, Ajtak-24 hour Indian news channel, and Think Peace documentary, Canada, among others. His work has been regularly featured in the respected international press including The Sunday Times, the Independent, Observer, Irish Times, and Guardian newspapers. His life is devoted to the service of peace, humanity and our planet.