

Observations & Views:

Some Aspects Of Nonviolence

Based on the PBS Program, Bill Moyers' Journal, of March 13, 2009.

Compassion:

Karen Armstrong said, "Compassion doesn't mean feeling sorry for people. It doesn't mean pity. It means putting yourself in the position of the other, learning about the other. Learning what's motivating the other, learning about their grievances."

The Golden Rule:

The Golden Rule represents an important view of nonviolence. According to Bill Moyers, the Golden Rule is: "Do not do to others what you would not like them to do to you." That universal principle of empathy and respect is at the core of all major religions.

Religious Conflicts:

Commenting on conflicts between religions, Bill Moyers and Karen Armstrong had the following exchange:

Bill Moyers: One of your peers, a friend of mine, the scholar of religion Elaine Pagels told me many years ago in an interview like this that, "There is practically no religion I know of," she said, "that sees other people in the way that affirms the other's choice."

Karen Armstrong: Yes. And this is a great scandal. There used to be. Islam, for example, the Koran is a pluralistic document. It says that every rightly guided religion comes from God. And there must be no compulsion in religion. And it says that Muhammad has not come to cancel out the teachings of Jesus or Moses or Abraham.

Now, Muslims have fallen into the trap that Jews, Christians, and others have done, of thinking that they are the one and only. This is ego. This is pure ego.

The above conversation points to the fact that religious leaders misconstrue the basic teachings of their religion to satisfy their ulterior motives. They totally disregard the Golden Rule. Another interesting remark made by Karen Armstrong about the religious leaders is:

“Many of the so called religious leaders are in power not because they are sages of wisdom or contemplatives. They're not Dalai Lamas. They are religious politicians who are not known for their lack of ego.”

The Jain religious leaders, scholars and Acharyas are no exception. They forget that ego is self-directed abstract violence.

Religion And The Problem Of Terrorism

Based on the PBS Program, Bill Moyers' Journal, of January 19, 2009.

According to the Jain concept of nonviolence, there are no just wars.¹ Thus there is no justification for violence to deal with terrorism. Similar concepts were presented on the PBS Program, Bill Moyers' journal, of January 9, 2009. Among other things, Bill Moyers remarked, “But brute force can turn self-defense into state terrorism. It's what the U.S. did in Vietnam, with B-52s and napalm, and again in Iraq, with shock and awe. By killing indiscriminately - the elderly, kids, entire families by destroying schools and hospitals - Israel did exactly what terrorists do and exactly what Hamas wanted. It spilled the blood that turns the wheel of retribution.

“Hardly had Israeli tank fire killed and injured scores at a UN school in Gaza than a senior Hamas leader went on television to announce, "The Zionists have legitimized the killing of their children by killing our children." Already attacks on Jews in Europe are escalating — a burning car crashes into a synagogue in Southern France, a fiery object is hurled through a window in Sweden, venomous anti-Semitic graffiti appears across the continent, and arsonists strike in London.

“What we are seeing in Gaza is the latest battle in the oldest family quarrel on record. Open your Bible: the sons of the patriarch Abraham become Arab and Jew. Go to the Book of Deuteronomy. When the ancient Israelites entered Canaan their leaders urged violence against its inhabitants. The very Moses who had brought down the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" now proclaimed, "You must destroy completely all the places where the nations have served their gods. You must tear down

¹ Nathmal Tatia in Translator's Introduction to Umasvati's TATTVAARTH SUTRA, 'That Which Is', Harper Collins, San Francisco and London, 1994, page xxi. Please also see the article 'Nonviolence And Relativism: Means To Heal The Scourge Of Terrorism', Jain Study Circular, January 2005, pages 20-24.

their altars, smash their pillars, cut down their sacred poles, set fire to the carved images of their gods, and wipe out their name from that place."

"So God-soaked violence became genetically coded. A radical stream of Islam now seeks to eliminate Israel from the face of the earth. Israel misses no opportunity to humiliate the Palestinians with checkpoints, concrete walls, routine insults, and the onslaught in Gaza. As if boasting of their might, Israel defense forces even put up video of the explosions on YouTube for all the world to see. A Norwegian doctor there tells CBS, "It's like Dante's Inferno. They are bombing one and a half million people in a cage."

"America has officially chosen sides. We supply Israel with money, F-16s, winks and tacit signals. Our Christian right links arms with the religious extremists there who claim divine sanctions for Israel's occupation of the West."

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Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of life at all in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.

Dwight D. Eisenhower, (1890 - 1969)
34th president of US 1953-1961)
From a speech before the
American Society of Newspaper Editors,
April 16, 1953