



**BLOCK 4**

**CONTEMPORARY PEACE INITIATIVES**

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## UNIT 11 INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE\*

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### 11.0 INTRODUCTION

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Interfaith dialogue, also referred to as interreligious dialogue, is about people of different faiths coming to a mutual understanding and respect that allows them to live and cooperate with each other in spite of their differences. In other words it refers to cooperative, constructive and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions (i.e., “faiths”) and/or spiritual or humanistic beliefs, at both the individual and institutional levels. It is distinct from syncretism or alternative religion, in that dialogue often involves promoting understanding between different religions or beliefs to increase acceptance of others, rather than to synthesize new beliefs. Through such dialogues, interfaith differences, that many a time cause conflicts, can reasonably be reduced.

Some interfaith dialogues have more recently adopted the name inter-belief dialogue, (Mehta: 2014) while other proponents have proposed the term inter-path dialogue, to avoid implicitly excluding atheists, agnostics, humanists, and others with no religious faith but with ethical or philosophical beliefs, as well as to be more accurate concerning many world religions that do not place the same emphasis on “faith” as do some Western religions. Similarly, pluralistic rationalistic groups have hosted public reasoning dialogues to transcend all worldviews (whether religious, cultural or political), termed Trans belief dialogue (Harvard: 2012). In this unit we will discuss various aspects of this.

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### *Aims and Objectives*

After studying this Unit, you will be able to understand:

- The meaning and Concept of Inter-faith Dialogue;
- Importance of Inter-faith Dialogue;
- Policies of religions to Inter-faith Dialogue; and
- Inter-faith/inter—religious organisations.

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## **11.1 A BRIEF HISTORY**

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The history of interfaith dialogue is as ancient as religion itself. When not at war with their neighbours, human beings have made an effort to understand them (not least because understanding is a strategy for defense, but also because for as long as there is dialogue, wars are delayed). History records many examples of interfaith initiatives and dialogue throughout the ages.

The Emperor Akbar, for example, encouraged tolerance in Mughal India, a diverse nation with people of various faith backgrounds, including Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Christianity. Religious pluralism can also be seen in other historical contexts.

There have been several meetings referred to as a Parliament of the World's Religions, most notably the World Parliament of Religions of 1893, the first attempt to create a global dialogue

between religions. The event was celebrated by another conference on its centenary in 1993. This led to a new series of conferences under the official title "Parliament of the World's Religions". (<http://www.parliamentofreligions.org>). In early 20th Century, dialogue started to take place between the Abrahamic faiths - Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Bahá'í. In 1965 - the Roman Catholic Church issued the Vatican II document *Nostra aetate*, instituting major policy changes in the Catholic Church's policy towards non-Christian religions. On October 13, 2007 Muslims expanded their message. In *A Common Word between Us and You*, 138 Muslim scholars, clerics and intellectuals unanimously came together for the first time since the days of the Prophet[s] to declare the common ground between Christianity and Islam. In July 2008 - a historic interfaith dialogue conference was initiated by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia to solve world problems through concord instead of conflict. In January 2009, at Gujarat's Mahuva, the Dalai Lama inaugurated an interfaith "World Religions-Dialogue and Symphony" conference. All these are efforts to avoid conflicts by better understanding of each other.

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### **Religion as a Source of Peace-building**

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**Religion can be a source of conflict, but it can also be a source of peacebuilding. Hence it is particularly incumbent upon religious communities and religious leaders to play a positive role in peacebuilding.**

**South Africa is a good example where in the struggle against apartheid, it was religious leaders (particularly in the black community, in the African community – but also in the among some liberal whites) who were at the forefront of nonviolent protest, of pushing for change, of trying to break the conscience (the Christian conscience) of those who were underpinning the apartheid system.**

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## NECESSITY OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

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Interfaith dialogue is necessary for peace. As Plato stated: “He seems to me to have thought the world foolish in not understanding that all are always at war with one another; and if in war there ought to be common men and certain persons regularly appointed under others to protect an army, they should be continued in peace”. (Chroust: 1947, 47) This means that it is peace we need, not war. Commonly people say that if you want peace, you must prepare for war and if you want peace, you must prepare for peace. When we say that Inter-faith dialogue is necessary, we mean that without it we cannot reach to the end or with it, we can reach to the end with fewer difficulties. The end here can be understood as peace or justice or harmony or coexistence or cooperation. Interfaith dialogue, according to Lobo (2002), is not a human activity, but that of God. The human person is dialogical individual whose whole life is marked by dialogue with God, with his fellow humans and with the world or the creation. The very life of God is dialogical. So it becomes necessary that we live the life of God because that is the vocation of men and women. Both the inner nature of God and the outer relationships of God with humans are profoundly dialogical. (Lobo: 2002) It goes well with the pedagogy of God; so it must be the pedagogy of humans.

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## FORMS OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

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Dialogue is a means of building the openness, understanding and trust needed to live and cooperate with each other despite any differences that may exist. It can take place in different ways and on different levels. These are briefly described here:

### **The Dialogue of Life**

It can be called “unarticulated dialogue” because it could take place in all the ordinary interactions and interrelations between people of different religions, without a premeditated plan or structure. “Dialogue of life” according to Riffat Hassan, is not contrived. It arises naturally out of the processes of life - from the interaction, positive and negative, obvious and subtle, verbal and nonverbal, between various peoples or persons. It emerges as people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, go on with their everyday business of getting on with each other, of being good neighbours and living in peace and harmony. While not overlooking the value of formal dialogue between officials, Hassan argues that scholars and observers should pay attention to the “dialogue from below”. Such dialogues can take place in our homes, families, villages, schools, towns and cities. Many ordinary but important things happen when we live, work, visit and study with people of different faiths. In places where religious and cultural differences exist, special effort is needed. There will be a need to make an effort to reach out, to understand, to break down our own prejudices and to overcome the barriers, stereotypes and suspicions that are in all of us. This is not easy and requires perseverance. It requires patience, willingness to listen and an acceptance that people are different, or have a world-view different from our own. To live in peace as our faith requires demands this effort.

### **The Dialogue of Common Action/Social Dialogue**

Cardinal Arinze calls it “dialogue of action”. This happens when people of different religions cooperate and involve themselves in joint projects for a common

good or common concern, such as building a road, bridge, a hospital or a center for learning. For instance, there are some joint organisations of Christians and Muslims working for the promotion of human rights and eradication of deceases (Arinze: 1990).

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### **Example of Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding in Nigeria**

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**In Nigeria, thousands of people- both Christians and Muslims have been killed in violent conflicts. In Yelwa-Nshar, almost 1,000 individuals were killed in a month, resulting in tensions between Muslims and Christians. But religious communities have also contributed substantially to peace.**

**For over a decade, local pastor, James Wuye, and local Imam, Mohammed Ashafa, have worked for peacebuilding. In 2004, they brought together key leaders from the Muslim and Christian communities in Yelwa-Nshar. In intense, emotional meetings, they used a combination of interfaith dialogue and conflict resolution techniques to promote reconciliation. As a result, the two communities forged a peace agreement, which was supported by the governor of Plateau State and celebrated by people.**

**With a tentative peace holding, Wuye and Ashafa turned their peacebuilding attention to the city of Jos, capital of Plateau State, where a similar peace accord was reached and signed. Their work continues to this day.**

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### **Theological Dialogue or Discourse**

This takes place on academic or official levels between experts, theologians and religious leaders. This kind of dialogue helps to clarify issues, to create greater understanding and remove prejudices. By establishing links and relationships between leaders, such dialogue can facilitate and enable practical cooperation and action on the other levels. The aim of this exchange is not to reach a common belief, but rather to clarify what each partner believes, to appreciate each other's spiritual values and to have a better understanding of differences. Here, specialists or theologians in various religions listen to one another, present the doctrines, beliefs and practices of their respective religions – not in a self-protective way but in a well-articulated manner, discover and rediscover their common points and differences. With the use of science and technology, they find a consensus where they can meet in order to face the challenges of the modern world.

### **The Dialogue of Religious Experience**

Prayer and meditation, as fundamental expressions of religious faith, could be interreligious meeting point because there are a lot of experiences to share in different traditions. These two experiences allow someone to start a journey towards the other; it takes place, particularly among believers who adore the same God (Judaism, Christianity and Islam). This involves interfaith prayers and also occasions when spirituality and religious texts are studied by members of both faiths. This kind of dialogue also requires a level of expertise.

Dialogue, in all its forms, involves a certain amount of patience and humility. Differences exist between people, but they also share a common humanity and a desire to serve the gods they believe in. Dialogue is living one's faith in the presence of people of other faiths. It is a means of loving neighbours who are not

of different faith by reaching out to them in a spirit of openness and tolerance. Doing this does not require one to engage in deep theological debate or depart from one own belief. It is more about having respect for people’s different belief’s and faith, about cooperation and living in peace with each other. It will take time to build up relationships, to gain understanding, and to come to trust one another. Dialogue should begin by focusing on things we have in common and on practical things we can do together. There are obstacles that prevent or make dialogue difficult. These need to be acknowledged and challenged.

**Key Points**

- Interfaith dialogue or interreligious dialogue refers it refers to cooperative, constructive and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions
- While the history of interfaith dialogue is ancient, in modern times the World Parliament of Religions of 1893 is notable for attempting global dialogue between religions.
- There are different forms of interfaith dialogue. Dialogue of life refers everyday interrelations between people of different religions, which happen naturally.
- Dialogue of common action refers cooperation among people of different religions in joint projects for common concerns.
- Theological dialogue takes place between experts, theologians and religious leaders to clarify issues, appreciate other’s spiritual values, and better understand differences.
- Dialogue of Religious Experience occurs among believers who use prayer and meditation as Interreligious meeting point to share experiences in different traditions.

**Check Your Progress Exercises 1**

- Note:** i) Use of the space given below for your answer.  
 ii) See the end of the Unit for tips for your answer.

1) Briefly explain the concept of interfaith dialogue and bring out its importance in Indian society.

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**OBSTACLES TO DIALOGUE**

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Interreligious dialogue is possible but also difficult because of some hindrances. May be that is why Jean-Mary Gaudel emphasised said that the highest form of dialogue will always be the cross, not as a dogma, but as a mystery which we cannot avoid. Dialogue with other Religions goes with some obstacles. Many

scholars have listed some of these challenges as: paucity of deep knowledge of one's religion, deficiency of the knowledge of other religions, fear of the unknown, suspicion, lack of self-critical assessment, superiority and inferiority complexes, disparity between those taking part in dialogue, inequality in theological development. Neglect of natural law, confusion between faith and reason, lack of theological and metaphysical language that can be used to explain certain truths. The increasing the presence of independent preachers constitutes an obstacle. Again, when someone does not elevate the status of other religions to the level of world religions it could be an obstacle (Capalla: 2003). We are not saying that all religions are the same.

If we cannot avoid these obstacles in order to meet, we can at least understand them and create avenues whereby we can focus on what unites, and suspend what divides. Perhaps we need also a background, which can help us meet despite differences. Just knowing, who we are that we are all human beings, that we are all citizens of this world, could be a solid background for dialogue.

### **Challenges of Interreligious Dialogue**

Interfaith dialogues are not without their challenges. According to David Smock, "The depth of passion that accompanies interfaith dialogue and religious peacemaking also carries with it liabilities. Sharing at the deep level of religious conviction can generate resistance and defensiveness. Some of the challenges that may accompany interfaith dialogues are the following: (1) Religious narratives are often perceived to be incompatible with one another and can create disagreements. (2) Religious institutions that proselytize can increase conflicts and distrust. This is particularly true in contests communities are deeply polarized. Here interfaith dialogue runs the risk of being misunderstood as attempt to convert rather than build peace. (3) There can also be differences in the capacities of speakers which can exacerbate conflict. For example, problems may arise when some religious leader speaks well, better articulates their faith and thereby appears more convincing. In contrast, the other party is not able to be as articulate and thereby is left feeling defeated. Thus, speakers must be well-prepared and knowledgeable about their respective religions. (4) There is also a chance that some groups may refuse to engage in interfaith dialogue, either because they believe such encounters are not permitted by their faith or because they hold severe animosity towards other faith groups. (5) Interfaith dialogue may also oversimplify the similarities and convergences in different religions, thereby fail to inculcate the feeling of respect for differences in others religion. (4) Interfaith dialogue and other forms of religious peacemaking may also open old wound. However, despite these challenges there are even more reasons why interfaith dialogues can be effective as emissaries for peace, provided they meet some preconditions?

### **Preconditions for Meaningful Interfaith Dialogue**

A Boston College theologian, Catherine Cornille, identifies five preconditions for any meaningful interfaith dialogue: humility (causes a disturbance of one's view of other religions), commitment (causes a commitment to faith that simultaneously rejects intolerance to other faiths), interconnection (causes the recognition of shared common challenges such as the breakdown of families), empathy (causes one to view another religion from its own perspective), and most importantly hospitality (like the tent of Abraham, that was open on all



four sides as a sign of hospitality to any new comer). Breaking down the walls that divide faiths while respecting the uniqueness of each tradition requires the courageous embrace of all these preconditions (Balcomb: 2012, 40-49).

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## INTERRELIGIOUS/INTERFAITH ORGANISATIONS

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There have come up some organisations which have been engaged encouraging and organising inter-faith dialogues at various levels. Following are the better knows:

***International Interfaith Dialogue India (IID)*** is a interfaith voluntary organization established in 2009 at Kochi. Its objective is to promote religious harmony and peace by positive interfaith dialogue, highlighting and activating the moral and social values which are shared by all religions.

***Interfaith Encounter Association (IEA)*** was established in 2001 and works to build genuine coexistence and sustainable peace, through joint community building on the grassroots level, using interactive interfaith dialogue as its vehicle. The apolitical and all-inclusive approach of the organisation and its activities continuously form the human infrastructure for peace in the Holy Land and the Middle East.

***Messiah Foundation International*** is an interfaith organisation which aims to promote mutual love, peace and understanding between members of all religions and faiths through the spiritual sciences taught by Ra Gohar Shahi. MFI has centres across the globe, including in the United States of America, Canada, the United Kingdom of Great Britain, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Japan.

***Project Interfaith*** is a non-profit organisation that aims to grow understanding, respect and relationships among people of all faiths, beliefs and cultures. The goals of the organisation are approached through online media resources (particularly Ravel Unravel) as well as community-building programs that educate and engage a variety of audiences on issues of faith, religion, identity, interfaith relations, and religious and cultural diversity.

***Insight Film Festival*** is a biannual interfaith Community Interest Company that exists to encourage filmmakers throughout the world to make films about ‘faith’. It creates events and spaces where such films can be displayed, discussed and celebrated. It welcomes participants from all faith backgrounds and none, and focuses particularly on young filmmakers. In doing so, it wants to make positive contributions to understanding, respect and community cohesion. (Public Research Institute: 2012)

***United Religions Initiative (URI)*** was founded in 2000 to promote daily, lasting interfaith cooperation, end religiously motivated violence, and create cultures of peace, justice, and healing for the Earth and all living beings. With hundreds of thousands of members in 80+ countries representing over 200 religions and indigenous traditions, URI uses “cooperation circles” to promote dialogue and action.

***The Jordan Interfaith Co-existence Research Centre*** is a Jordanian non-governmental organisation for promoting peaceful religious coexistence. It fosters grassroots interfaith dialogue and works on creating interreligious harmony.

*Heavenly Culture, World Peace, Restoration of Light (HWPL)* is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation registered under the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs that transcends differences in culture, belief and region to engage leaders and youth in sustainable and comprehensive solutions for peace. To that end, HWPL is committed to community development through volunteer outreach, women advocacy, and cultural and religious exchange through International Women's Peace Group (IWPG) and youth engagement through International Peace Youth Group (IPYG).

*WARP Summit and a Religious Dialogue for Peace.* While it may, in most cases be too simplistic to say that ideological differences based on religion or culture is the cause of war in our world today, it is not too much to say that these differences are exploited to heighten the community's propensity for violent behaviour.

Through the World Alliance of Religions Peace Summit, HWPL seeks to create a forum for dialogue centering on the creation of a commonly acceptable value-system between secular and religious communities in all socio-political sectors of our diverse societies. Such a value system will form the basis for the creation of peace agreements and a universally applicable constitution of interfaith relations, as well as education materials which can be used across the spectrum of humanity's diversity to begin revolutionising the basic precepts of our cultures and ideologies which provide the central tenants promoting conflict and violent behaviour.

The above are some of the well known organisations engaged in and encouraging inter-faith dialogue. There are many others at country specific levels, regional levels and international levels that are continuously working for peace and conflict resolutions through mutual understanding.

### **11.5.1 United Nations Support**

In 2010, HM King Abdullah II addressed the 65th UN General Assembly and proposed the idea for a 'World Interfaith Harmony Week' to further broaden his goals of faith-driven world harmony by extending his call beyond the Muslim and Christian community to include people of all beliefs, those with no set religious beliefs as well. A few weeks later, HRH Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad presented the proposal to the UN General Assembly, where it was adopted unanimously as a UN Observance Event.

The first week of February, every year, has been declared a UN World Interfaith Harmony Week. The Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre released a document which summarises the key events leading up to the UN resolution as well as documenting some Letters of Support and Events held in honour of the week.

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## **IMPORTANCE OF INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

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Interreligious dialogue increases the understanding of the beliefs and practices of other religions. This enhanced understanding can lead to a more peaceable coexistence in the pluralistic culture of the 21st century. Through sustainable and respectful relationships based on dialogue and engagement, conflicts resulting

from or exacerbated by fear, disrespect and misunderstanding between communities are less likely to occur, and, when they do, are less likely to devolve into violence. As people of different religious communities encounter each other in neighborhoods where they live, in mutual service, in schools, in government, and in civic activities, the foundations established through dialogue enables and empowers these people to know the areas in which mutual activity can ease their living and working together in society, as well as to know in advance the areas in which religious differences can make Mutual undertakings difficult. Because interreligious dialogue will inevitably bring to the surface the differences between religions, the discussants are forced to examine their own beliefs in order to support their stated positions. This examination will ultimately increase self-understanding.

### Key Points

- Interfaith dialogues are not easy. They run the risk of increasing disagreements, creating fear of proselytizing, oversimplifying religious tenets to stress similarities; opening old wounds and exacerbating conflict.
- Meaningful interfaith dialogue that can break walls while respecting uniqueness of each religion, must be imbued with humility, commitment, interconnection, empathy, and hospitality.
- The first week of February each year has been declared as UN World Interfaith Harmony Week.
- Interfaith dialogue increases respect and understanding of other religions, which is important for building peaceful coexistence.

## CRITICISM OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

The group *Hizb ut-Tahrir* rejects the concept of interfaith dialogue, stating that it is a western tool to enforce non-Islamic policies in the Islamic world. Many Traditionalist Catholics, not merely *Sedevacantists* or the Society of St. Pius X, are critical of interfaith dialogue as a harmful novelty arising after the Second Vatican Council, which is said to have altered the previous notion of the Catholic Church's supremacy over other religious groups or bodies, as well as demoted traditional practices associated with traditional Roman Catholicism. In addition, these Catholics contend that, for the sake of collegial peace, tolerance and mutual understanding, interreligious dialogue devalues the divinity of Jesus Christ and the revelation of the Triune God by placing Christianity on the same footing as other religions that worship other deities.

According to some Hindu critics, it has been argued that the so-called interfaith “dialogue ... has [in fact] become the harbinger of violence. This is not because ‘outsiders’ have studied Hinduism or because the Hindu participants are religious ‘fundamentalists’ but because of the logical requirements of such a dialogue.” With a detailed analysis of “two examples from Hinduism studies”, S. N. Balangadhara and Sarah Claerhout argue that, “in certain dialogical situations, the requirements of reason conflict with the requirements of morality”. (Balangadhara: 2008)

### Check Your Progress Exercises 2

- Note:** i) Use of the space given below for your answer.  
 ii) See the end of the Unit for tips for your answer.

1) Explain the obstacles to interreligious dialogue and risks involved in it.

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### LET US SUM UP

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Inter-religious/inter-faith dialogues have emerged as important means to reduce religious, ethnic and communal conflicts. Interfaith dialogue is not just words or talk. It includes human interaction and relationships. It can take place between individuals and communities and on many levels. For example, between neighbours, in schools and in our places of work – it can take place in both formal and informal settings. Normal life means that we come into daily contact with each other. Dialogue therefore, is not just something that takes place on an official or academic level only – it is part of daily life during which different cultural and religious groups interact with each other directly, and where tensions between them are the most tangible.

Throughout the world there are local, regional, national and international interfaith initiatives; many are formally or informally linked and constitute larger networks or federations. The often quoted, was formulated by Dr. Hans Kung, a Professor of Ecumenical Theology and President of the Global Ethic Foundation.

At present, many people are simply unaware of the need for interreligious dialogue. Some are not interested while others actively oppose interfaith cooperation. Multi-religious and multicultural nature of society is still a relatively new experience. Therefore, for many, the need to make an effort in order to ensure that we live together in peace and justice has not yet been fully realised. As people of faith and as people who wish to build social harmony and justice, we have a role to both raise awareness of this need and to actively respond to it.

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## ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress Exercises 1

- 1) Your answer should include religion as a source of peace building, forms and kind of interfaith dialogue and everyday interrelations between people of different relations.

### Check Your Progress Exercises 2

- 1) Your answer should have the following points:
  - a) Obstacles to dialogue
  - b) Interreligious faith and organisation and
  - c) United Nations support to interfaith dialogue.



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## UNIT 12 PEACE INITIATIVES\*

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### Structure

Introduction

*Aims and Objectives*

Vinoba Bhave (1895-1982)

Improvement of Gandhian Philosophy

Resistance against Injustice

Bhoodan and Gramdan Movement

Shanti Sena

Jayprakash Narayan (1902-1979)

Contribution to Bhoodan and Gramdan Movement

Efforts for Internal and External Peace

Total Revolution

Martin Luther King (1929-1968)

Montgomery Bus Boycott (1956)

Birmingham Campaign (1963)

March on Washington (1963)

Conflict Resolution Strategy of Dr. King

Nelson Mandela

Sharpeville Massacre

Phase of Violence and the Rivonia Trials

Incarceration

Peace and Reconciliation

Mandela's Legacy as a Peacemaker

Gene Sharp

Strategic Non Violence

Techniques of Non Violent Action

Impact of Sharp on worldwide struggles

Let Us Sum Up

Some Useful References

Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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### 12.0 INTRODUCTION

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In this Unit we will to study the work done by five important persons – Vinoba Bhave, Jayprakash Narayan, Martin Luther King Jr, Nelson Mandela and Gene Sharp. – to build and keep peace in their respective societies. All five were influenced by the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi in varying degrees and initiated movements based on non-violence to achieve peace and justice. The nonviolent

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movements initiated by them were in societies where vertical conflict was prevalent, and where oppressed groups were trying to free themselves from the domination and where their opponents involved were not equal but powerful. The movements initiated by them were peace keeping movements in that they tried to prevent conflict by attacking the root cause of the conflict. Through these they tried to bring about social change through socio-economic development and reconstruction.

All five – Vinoba Bhave, Jayprakash Narayan and Martin Luther King Jr. Nelson Mandela and Gene Sharp – were of the view that social structural forces which were giving rise to oppression needed to be tackled for lasting peace. The peace movements led by these leaders fought for was far more than absence of war. For many people all over the world, “peace means a decent livelihood, freedom from oppression, access to resources for survival, cultural autonomy and freedom from violence by the State as well as the powerful”. For “many security does not mean so much as national security but people’s security”. Thus it is important to understand that peace movements do not only try to resolve the conflicts between nation states but also try to give justice, equality and livelihood to oppressed groups in a society. The struggles of non-violent resistance undertaken by Vinoba Bhave, Jayprakash Narayan and Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and Gene Sharp were efforts to achieve ‘Peace through Justice’. They aimed to attain peace by eliminating social oppression and economic exploitation and address the suffering and misery of the people. By doing this, the movements aimed to eliminate violence and conflict from the society. Let us read about these.

#### *Aims and Objectives*

After going through this Unit, you will be able to understand :

- the philosophy and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi;
- innovations in Gandhiji’s philosophy and how the leaders adopted it to changing needs and circumstances;
- how these leaders resolved the conflicts and transformed the society in which they lived; and
- how they used the technique of non-violent resistance to tackle the different problems of society.

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### **VINOBA BHAVE (1895-1982)**

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Vinoba Bhave was born on 11th September 1895 in a village named Gagode which is presently located in the Raigad District of Maharashtra state. He spent his childhood in the princely state of Baroda. The spirituality and devotion of his mother, Rukmini Devi, exerted tremendous influence on the young Vinoba and shaped his thinking when he was young. He took the vow of lifelong celibacy when he was just ten years old. The reading of Indian religious texts like *Bhagavad Gita*, *Mahabharat*, and *Ramayan* inspired spiritual quest in him. In his later life he became a freedom fighter and a social reformer. Spirituality remained at the heart of his actions and thought. He once said, “All revolutions are spiritual at the source. All my activities have the sole purpose of achieving a union of hearts.”

In his youth Vinoba came in contact with Mahatma Gandhi in June 1916. When he was growing up in Baroda he had read about Mahatma Gandhi and wrote



some letters to him. Later he went to Gandhi's Kochrab Ashram in Ahmedabad and was influenced by him. In the ashram Mahatma Gandhi was impressed by Vinoba's efforts to help the sweeper who cleaned the latrines. It has been reported that it was due to this that Gandhi insisted that all such work had to be done as part of the daily routine at the ashram. In the pre-independence period Acharya Vinoba had participated in the Satyagraha movement. In April 1923, Vinoba was arrested because he had participated in a Satyagraha procession with the National flag in Nagpur.

In 1940, Vinoba was chosen by Mahatma Gandhi as the first individual Satyagrahi to protest against the British policy during the World War II. Since he was little known to the people of India and was not even a member of the Indian National Congress, Mahatma Gandhi introduced him to the Indian people in an article in *Harijan* on 20th October 1940. He was also arrested during the Quit India Movement in 1942. In fact, many consider Vinoba to be the "moral and spiritual heir" of Mahatma Gandhi. In March 1948, Vinoba took the initiative in the founding of 'Sarvodaya Samaj' which was a loosely structured organisation of Lok Sevaks during a conference held at Sevagram. The Sarvodaya Samaj consisted of Lok Sevaks who had pledged to follow Gandhian principles. The loksevaks had to register their pledges with the Convenor of the Samaj.

### Improvement of Gandhian Philosophy

Vinoba improved upon Gandhian philosophy of non-violent resistance and moulded it to be effective in the new context. He consistently introduced innovation in the thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi and popularized them among the masses. He considered the thoughts of Gandhiji to be of revolutionary nature. He often quoted Gandhiji as saying that if "there is a contradiction between my earlier thoughts and present thoughts then the present thoughts should be considered relevant". In this statement of Gandhiji, Vinoba saw an indication of Gandhiji's desire of not searching for consensus in his thoughts but accepting the new thoughts put forward by him. Vinoba wrote profusely and introduced innovations and modifications in almost every aspect of Gandhian thought. Some of the more important changes introduced by him are as follows:

- 1) Vinoba made a deep study of the concept of '*Anasakti Yog*' put forward by Gandhiji after the study of the *Bhagwad Gita*. He then put forward the concept of *Samyayog*. According to him *Samyayog* is the main teaching of *Bhagwad Gita*.
- 2) Gandhiji had used the concept of *Antodaya* in his thinking. Vinoba developed it further by elucidating the concept of *Sarvodaya*. *Sarvodaya* seeks the welfare of all.
- 3) He made innovation in concept of 'trusteeship' of Gandhiji by putting forward the concept of 'Bhoodan'.
- 4) He also developed some ideas of Gandhiji's *Hind Swaraj* in his book *Swarajshastra*. According to Vinoba establishment of a 'Government free' society was the ultimate goal.
- 5) Acharya Vinoba Bhave tried to further develop the concept of Satyagraha. His movements of Satyagraha did not oppose the state in a severe manner. The Bhoodan movement was not even opposed to the state. Vinoba discussed failings which had crept into Gandhiji's concept of Satyagraha. According

to Vinoba the nature of Satyagraha movement initiated by Gandhi insisted on “Truth”. However it did not insist on acceptance of ‘Truth’. Gandhiji included the masses in his Satyagraha movements. However most of the people were unaware of the intricacies of the philosophy of Satyagraha. This destroyed the purity of the movement and it acquired the nature of ‘pressure politics’. The word Satyagraha had therefore acquired a negative connotation in the pre-independence period. Even Mahatma Gandhiji had realised these failings of his Satyagraha movement. Vinoba was of the opinion that the Satyagrahi is the person who claims that ‘truth’ is with them and never forsakes it. However, they do not think that the other person does not carry ‘truth’ with them. Rather, they consider that the other person also a carrier of ‘truth’. The Satyagrahi realises that though one part of ‘truth’ is with them, a smaller or bigger second part of ‘truth’ may also be with the other person. Therefore discussions can be held in a neutral manner. The Satyagrahi will accept the other person’s part of the ‘truth’ and the other person will accept the Satyagrahi’s part of the ‘truth’. According to Vinoba, in order to create a Satyagrahi, people should be taught to accept ‘truth’. A person cannot be a Satyagrahi unless they learn to accept ‘truth’.

### 12.1.2 Resistance against Injustice

Vinoba put forward five types of political resistance against injustice. They are as follows:

- 1) Resist evil with greater violence
- 2) Resist evil with equal violence
- 3) Resist evil with non-violence
- 4) Resist not evil
- 5) Non-violent assistance in right thinking.

In the opinion of Vinoba, the first approach is of people involved in politics. The second approach is adopted by Moses etc. The third approach is of Leo Tolstoy and Mahatma Gandhi. The fourth approach was to accept the unfortunate to happen and continue the programme of friendship and love with the opponent. This approach was taken by Jesus Christ resulting in eradication of injustice. Non-violent assistance in right thinking was the fifth approach of Satyagraha described by Vinoba. Do not resist the unfortunate. Assist the opponent to right thinking. Assist the person in thinking so that they will not inflict injustice and choose the right approach. Vinoba takes the position that even if resistance to the opponent becomes necessary it should be in the form of assistance offered. The innovation made by Vinoba was that he put forward the view that the approach taken by Jesus Christ ‘resist not evil’ and the approach taken by Mahatma Gandhi ‘Resist evil with non-violence’ were not adequate in a democratic country. Vinoba advocated the use of the approach of ‘Non-violent assistance in right thinking’ to fight injustice in contemporary societies.

In recent times, when a Satyagraha is undertaken immediate results are expected by the Satyagrahi. If the effect of Satyagraha is not perceived immediately, its degree intensity and aggressiveness is sought to be increased. In the opinion of Vinoba instead of increasing the intensity and aggressiveness of the Satyagraha it should be diminished by degrees. This will increase the force of the Satyagraha. According to Vinoba when violence is used for a purpose and is ineffective its

intensity is increased incrementally to achieve success. But when non-violence is used and is ineffective its intensity is to be decreased.

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## BHOODAN AND GRAMDAN MOVEMENT

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One of the reasons for many a social conflicts in contemporary times is on the question of land, lack of access to it by large sections of people is linked to socio- economic inequalities, deprivation and poverty. Land for landless is also critical to achieve social harmony. Vinoba Bhave introduced the idea of Bhoodan for this. Bhoodan Movement was an advanced form of Gandhiji's concept of trusteeship. Vinoba was of the view that the land problem in India could be solved through the use of *Bhoodanyajna* which was a compassionate (*Karuna*) approach to the problem. For him the *Bhoodanyajna* undertaken by him was a Satyagraha.

Vinoba was appalled by the deteriorating condition of the country's agriculture and the poverty of millions of landless labourers. He also observed that the land reform legislation which was passed by the government had proven to be ineffective in solving the problems of landless. He was also aware of the existence of large scale existence of social and economic inequalities in the villages of India. The Bhoodan Movement was the application of the principles of Love, Truth and Non-violence to solve the problem of rural inequality and the problems of the landless millions. It was an effort to reverse the glaring hierarchy in the economic structure of Indian society.

The idea of starting a Bhoodan movement came to Vinoba when he interacted with some landless labourers of Pochampalli village in the Telangana region on 18th April 1951. The region was rocked by violence. The labourers told Vinoba that if they could get little land they would be able to make a living. Vinoba put the condition that if they were given land, they will have to work it together. They will not get any individual land holding. A landlord named Ramachandra Reddy who was present at the meeting immediately donated hundred acres of land. Such was the origin of 'Bhoodan'. Vinoba interpreted this incident as a sign from God and immediately undertook a campaign to collect land from the landlords as *Dan* to be distributed among the landless.

Vinoba adopted the method of *padayatra*, or pilgrimage on foot, marching from village to village to spread the message of Bhoodan. His efforts were rewarded with success in the Telangana region and even greater success in Uttar Pradesh. The Bhoodan movement achieved phenomenal success in the initial years and was given wide publicity in India and abroad. During his campaign to collect Bhoodan, the people of Man-groth in Uttar Pradesh offered their entire land in their village to him. It is from this incident that the idea of 'Gramdan' came to Vinoba and gave new direction to the Bhoodan movement.

### Gramdan

In 1963 Vinoba spelled out his idea of Gramdan as a programme of village self-rule. Gramdan had the following features:

- 1) Land was to be owned by the village community
- 2) Landholders were to donate 1/20th of their holding for the landless

- 3) Everyone would give 1/40th part of what he has earned on his land to the village community each year
- 4) Those who do not cultivate land would give one day's earning every month to the village community
- 5) Labourers will donate one day labour every month.

Gramdan encompassed three stages of development in a village. The first stage was called 'Prapti' during which the people made decision to accept Gramdan and transferred their ownership to village council. During the second stage of 'Pusti' the people implemented the features of Gramdan i.e. redistribution of 1/20th of landholding. The third stage was that of 'Nirman' during which the village council mobilizes resources to start village reconstruction programmes. The Gramdan movement aimed at replacing the centralised state with decentralised village republics.

Vinoba believed that without Gramdan the ideal of Gramswaraj could not be attained. To make it more inclusive, Vinoba enlarged the concept of 'Dan' or gift by including *Shramdan* (gift of one's labour to a Sarvodaya project), *Sampattidan* (gift of wealth to the movement), *Buddhidan* (dedication of knowledge for Sarvodaya ideals) and *Jeevan Dan* (dedication of life for the Sarvodaya movement).

### 12.2.1 Shanti Sena

Along with Bhoodan and Gramdan, Vinoba laid emphasis on the Shanti Sena programme. The concept Shanti Sena or Peace army was based on the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi who had conceptualised Shanti Sena as an army of non-violent volunteers dedicated to minimizing communal violence. Vinoba took the lead in establishing the Shanti Sena. Violent disturbances had taken place all over India after the reorganisation of states in the late 1950s. In 1957 when Vinoba was in Kerala a number of riots took place near Gramdan villages. Vinoba was afraid that the whole work of Gramdan would be lost if the riots spread to the Gramdan village. He therefore decided to build a non-violent army to prevent violence spreading to the villages. The Shanti Sena was to protect Gramdan and Gramrajya and the Shanti Sainik was to protect the people as a mother protects her child. Vinoba visualised the Shanti Sena as a Seva Sena (service army) and the Shanti Sainik as a Seva-Sainik. The Shanti Sena could thus be called the offshoot of the Gramdan movement.

In a meeting in Kerala in July 1957, Vinoba elaborated his vision of the Shanti Sena. The Sena was to be formed to protect the freedom which had been won. Vinoba calculated that one 'Shanti Sainik could be needed for every five thousand Indian people. Therefore, India will need about 70 thousand sainiks for 35 crore people. The task of the Shanti Sena was to prevent violence by being alert for the signs of tension. However, in normal times, the shanti sainiks were to work as servants of society and make efforts to get gramdans and do other constructive work. However in emergency conditions they should be ready to give their lives to establish peace. In the meeting, Sri Kelappan, an eminent person from Kerala volunteered to work as Commander of the Shanti Sena and about 50 young men volunteered to be Shanti Sainiks. Thus the first batch of Shanti Sena volunteers were organised in Kerala.

The Shanti Sainik was expected to follow the principles of Nispaksh (non-partisanship), Nirvair (non-enmity) and Nirbhay (fearlessness). Service without discrimination was the characteristic of the Shanti Sainik. Love was his weapon. He should not be afraid of others and should not make others afraid of him. He should not consider others as enemies. Only a brave person could be a Shanti Sainik. He should win the hearts of the people through his service. He should listen and console the people with problems, solve fights between brothers and prevent them from approaching courts. The Shanti Sainik can be said to be successful if no riot or disturbance occurs in his area.

For Vinoba the peacekeeping role of the Shanti Sena was secondary in nature. He believed that non-violence could grow only with constructive work. It was the daily day to day duty of the Shanti Sainik to promote constructive work. However, in emergency situation when disorder or disturbances occur, Vinoba expected the Shanti Sainik to tackle the situation with self-sacrifice and love in their hearts, and even lay down their lives to stop violence. It is only in emergencies that his peacekeeping role assumed importance. Thus the Shanti Sena was concerned primarily with the task of building the non-violent strength of the society through: 1) creating social awareness, 2) promoting the value of non-violence among the people and 3) giving the people training in techniques of nonviolence. Vinoba was not in favour of using the Shanti Sena to protect the country's borders. He gave more importance to peace building through Gramdan and constructive work and spiritual awakening. He first wanted to achieve such transformation in Indian society that the use of police or army becomes unnecessary for maintaining internal peace. It is only after this is achieved that the next step of non-violent external defense would be attainable. Vinoba took the stand that the Shanti Sainiks should not practice Satyagraha in the international arena and interfere with the work of the army as long as the people supported and sanctioned the existence of the army. It is only when people revoke their support and sanction to the army after its existence becomes unnecessary that we can think of non-violent defense of the borders of our country. In 1962, Vinoba disapproved the efforts of Jayprakash Narayan to lead a group of Shanti Sainiks to the Indo-China border to protest against the war between the two countries.

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### **JAYPRAKASH NARAYAN (1902-1979)**

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Jayprakash Narayan was born on 11th October 1902 in the village of Sitabdiara in Saran district of Bihar. He was popularly known as JP or *Lok Nayak* (The People's Hero). He went to America for higher education. In America, he came under the influence of Marxist thought. However, he did not join the Communist Party of India when he returned to India. He became leader of the Socialist group within the Indian National Congress. He was arrested for undertaking revolutionary activities during the Quit India Movement. JP worked as the Secretary of the Socialist Party after its separation from the Congress in 1948. In 1950 JP visited Wardha and met Vinoba Bhave at Pwnar. He was influenced by Vinoba's philosophy and programme of social reconstruction.

JP's fascination for non-violence evolved gradually. He was greatly influenced by Mahatma Gandhi's thought of relationship between ends and means. He became convinced that purity of means was necessary and essential for the achievement of a good aim including resolution of social conflicts. JP was especially attracted by the simplicity and egalitarianism of the Sarvodaya

philosophy. He also realised that the Sarvodaya plan included large number of socialist ideals. In 1951 he wrote an article in the Janata entitled “Socialism and Sarvodaya”, in which he appealed to the socialists to study Sarvodaya Plan, which he described as a “concrete programme of social revolution”. Here it should be noted that JP’s belief evolved from Socialism to Gandhism. As he was a socialist in his earlier days, he interpreted Sarvodaya from a different perspective.

In his thought and philosophy JP gave highest importance to *Lokniti* (Peoples Polity). He was of the opinion that politics should give way to *Lokniti*. If this happened, the influence of the State will slowly diminish and ultimately result in the withering away of the State. JP visualized the existence of an ideal society where one individual did not have to exert dominance over another. It was due to this conviction that JP despised power politics and never contested any elections. He was much impressed by the ‘*Kanchan Mukti Prayog*’ of Vinoba which was aimed at achieving complete self-dependence in the village by manufacturing everything that is needed in the village. This reinforced JP’s view that *Lokshakti* (people’s power) needed to be strengthened to achieve real welfare of the society. In an article entitled “Lok shakti ka Sampratyay”, he described the first meaning of *Lokshakti* as to do work in small groups and communities in such a manner that they are encouraged to put in collective effort. The other meaning of *Lokshakti* was to stimulate peoples’ power and to give strength to forces working towards social justice. Another important dimension of *Lokshakti* was giving impetus to movements for social transformation. JP was also aware that for social justice to exist in Indian society it was necessary not only to be equitable but also moral and he believed that the State could not achieve this. It could be achieved only by the cooperation of the common people.

### **Contribution to Bhoodan and Gramdan Movement**

For JP, the village was the natural habitat of human beings and therefore development of villages was a necessary condition for the development and peace of society. Moreover, JP was aware of the problem of land reforms since his young days. He visualized the solution of the land problem in Vinoba’s Bhoodan movement. On 18th April 1954 at a Sarvodaya Conference held at Bodh Gaya, JP took a pledge of dedicating his life (Jeevandan) to bring about social transformation through work in the Sarvodaya and Bhoodan movement.

JP participated whole heartedly in the constructive programme of Sarvodaya Movement and the Bhoodan movement started by Vinoba. He was in favour of solving the problem of land through peaceful means. During the period from 1954 to 1974, JP was involved in following movements:

- 1) Sarvodaya and Bhoodan Movement;
- 2) Gramdan Movement; and
- 3) Reconstruction programmes.

In 1966, the state of Bihar was hit by a severe famine. JP involved himself in famine relief work. He was awarded the Magsaysay Award for his work during the famine. JP was also involved in promoting communal harmony, especially during Hindu-Muslim riots. He was instrumental in utilizing the Shanti Sena of the Sarvodaya workers to establish and promote communal harmony in riot affected areas.

In 1954, JP founded the Sokhodeora Ashram in Kowakol village of Bihar to put his ideas and beliefs regarding village reconstruction in practice. He chose the village because it was one of the least developed villages in Bihar. The Sokhodeora Ashram was established for two purposes:

- 1) to create a peace loving society based on the foundation of truth and non-violence which is free from exploitation and governance and which values a happily, healthy, cultured, independent, self-ruled and self-dependent rural life.
- 2) to bring about change in the value system of the people so that their personal interest is guided by public interest and mundane ambition by spiritual inspiration.

In this experiment at village reconstruction JP laid emphasis on collective farming and *graminikaran* (villagisation). JP used the term *graminikaran* to mean that the donated land belonged to the whole village, and not to any individual. It meant that the whole village, including the person who had donated the land, had a right to land.

In 1970, JP started the work of village reconstruction at Mushahari block in Muzaffarpur district of Bihar. There was threat of violence in the area as rampant poverty and inequality had given way to activities of the Naxalites. JP felt that the Naxal threat in the area underlined the need to undertake non-violent social change and reconstruction. Village councils were formed, Gramdan land was redistributed, and a Village Peace Force (Shanti Sena) was organised.

However, gradually JP became disappointed with the impact of the Bhoodan and Gramdan Movements and Sarvodaya. There had been little change in the conditions even after the Bhoodan movement and the enactment of a number of land ceiling acts by the government. He realised that there had been little progress towards the social order envisaged by Sarvodaya and the Bhoodan movement. JP's thoughts began to differ from Vinoba. In 1974 their paths diverged completely, when JP began the movement for 'Total Revolution'. JP had realised that persuasion or conciliation alone could not solve land problem and peaceful struggle and satyagraha were necessary to achieve the objective.

### **Efforts for Internal and External Peace**

JP made efforts to establish communal peace in India and consistently advocated amiable Hindu- Muslim relations. He also made efforts to promote cordial relations between India and Pakistan. After the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi in 1948, he had formed the Indo-Pak Reconciliation Committee to foster friendly relations between the countries. JP believed that both the countries could make progress only when they had cordial relations with each other. In 1964, while addressing the annual conference of the West Bengal Gandhi Memorial Trust he expressed the view that the partition of India had not solved a single problem. He advised the leaders of both the countries to negotiate and find a solution to all the problems, including Kashmir. He undertook a tour to Pakistan to support the concept of 'Basic Democracy' propounded by Ayub Khan, the leader of Pakistan. However, after the Indo-Pak war of 1965, JP's views regarding Kashmir changed. Earlier, he had favoured the inclusion of Pakistan in any talks regarding Kashmir but after the 1965 war he declared the question of Kashmir to be closed for

Pakistan. After the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, JP hoped that a new era of relations would begin between India and Pakistan.

JP was a champion of freedom and democracy and openly criticized countries when they violated human rights. He put forth specific views with regard to conflicts between countries of the world. He was very disturbed when China invaded Tibet in 1950. JP was of the view that the people of Tibet had the right of self-determination. He criticized China for using torture and committing atrocities on the Tibetan people. JP also spoke against the Russian invasion of Hungary and Czechoslovakia in 1956. JP made efforts to establish peace during the Indo-China War of 1962. JP was of the view that peace and non-violence could never be achieved by attacking any independent country. He wanted Indians to oppose China peacefully on the basis of their moral strength. He wanted to lead the Shanti Sainiks and workers of the Sarvodaya movement to the border to protest against the war in a non-violent way. However, in a Sarvodaya Conference held at Berchi in November 1962, Vinoba disapproved the move and made it clear that Sarvodaya workers should concentrate only on the work of Bhoodan and Gramdan.

However, JP continued to articulate his thoughts about the use of unarmed peacekeeping in the international field. He advocated the formation of World Peace Brigade, a type of international Shanti Sena which would operate to establish peace in the world in a non-violent manner. JP played a pivotal role in making peace in Nagaland. In 1946, Phizo, the leader of the Nagas had formed the Naga National Council and demanded independence of Nagaland. After India gained independence the Naga cessationists reiterated their demand for an independent Nagaland. Gradually the movement of the Nagas became violent. In 1955, there was a fierce battle between the Indian army and the rebels. A peace mission was initiated to stop the increasing violence and establish peace in Nagaland. JP, Shankarrao Deo, and the Chief Minister of Assam, Bimla Prasad Chaliha and Rev. Michael Scott were members of the peace mission. JP wanted Nagaland to remain part of India, but wanted to give special provisions in the Indian Constitution for the people of Nagaland. In 1964, the members of the peace mission met the leaders of the Naga rebels and a proposal for ceasefire was signed between the Indian Government and Naga rebels. JP took initiative in establishing a Peace Group in April 1965, to support the work done by the Peace Mission. It is widely believed that it was JP who won over the Nagas with love.

In April 1972, some dreaded dacoits of the Chambal valley put down their arms before JP. They also promised to live a different life. This incident shows how the power of non-violence and love could control the most hardened criminals. JP was aware that the mental attitude of the dacoits was different from other criminals and most of them had been victims of some sort of injustice in their earlier life. In fact many of them had taken up arms as they did not have alternative methods to fight the injustice inflicted on them. JP formed the 'Chambal Valley Peace Committee Mission' to promote the surrender and integration of the dacoits in the society. On 14th and 15th April 1972, the infamous dacoit Madho Singh and others surrendered in an open function.

### **Total Revolution**

The 'Total Revolution' movement is an appropriate example of non-violent resistance in post-independent India. This movement took place under the



leadership of JP against the Congress Government led by Indira Gandhi. Students were mobilized to offer non-violent resistance to corrupt politicians, black marketers, capitalists who indulged in profiteering and hoarding which led to rise of prices, people who had practiced evasion of land reform laws etc. JP led the movement in Bihar and maintained its momentum by organising strikes, demonstrations and marches. Attempts were made to establish a polity based on Gandhian principles known as Janata Sarkar (People's Government). Gram Sabhas which had all the adults of the village as members were established. The Gram Sabhas refused to pay taxes to the state and made their own arrangements for policing. There were also attempts to promote social reforms like stopping dowry payments and limiting expenditure on marriages and death ceremonies and discouraging liquor consumption. JP had even suggested formation of Sangharsh Samities to keep check on the elected representative of the people. JP wanted the elected representatives to be responsible to the Sangharsh Samitis and not only to their political parties.

On 5th June 1974, JP put forward the concept of 'Total Revolution' in a rally at Patna. JP's concept of Total Revolution was a synthesis of Gandhian thought, teachings of Karl Marx and the principles of Western Democracy. Through this concept, JP introduced innovation in Gandhian thought and tried to harness it to achieve the total transformation of Indian society. It was based on the Gandhian principle of changing society with non-violent techniques. In fact 'Total Revolution' aspired to achieve fundamental change not only in the society but also in the individual. 'Total Revolution' gave emphasis on three important aspects: 1) moral values 2) decentral-ization of economic and political power and non-violent means. In January 1975, JP announced the formation of Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini. It was a disciplined youth organisation dedicated to the work of Total Revolution.

Recent studies have given emphasis on the fact that JP's movement for 'Total Revolution' was not much of a break from his earlier efforts to achieve social transformation through Bhoodan and Gramdan. JP understood Mahatma Gandhiji's non-violence as not just an effort to maintain law and order but as a revolutionary philosophy. His concept of 'Total Revolution' encompassed transformation of economy and polity but also the social and moral ethics of the individual and society. JP had used the term 'Total Revolution' in an article written in 1969 to describe the objective of the Sarvodaya movement. Once JP remarked that "[t]here is hardly any difference between Sarvodaya and Total Revolution.

If there is any, then Sarvodaya is the goal and Total Revolution the means. Total Revolution is basic change in all aspects of life. There cannot be Sarvodaya without this".

### Check Your Progress Exercises 1

**Note:** i) Use of the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the Unit for tips for your answer.

- 1) Explain the innovations introduced by Vinoba Bhave, Jaiprakash Narayan in the Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence resistance.

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2) Describe Jayprakash Narayan’s ‘Total Revolution’ Movement.

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### **MARTIN LUTHER KING (1929-1968)**

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Martin Luther King Jr. was a prominent leader of the Civil Rights Movement in America. He used the technique of non-violent resistance for the advancement of civil rights of the American black people. He was a clergyman and became a civil rights activist early in his career. In 1955 he led the famous Montgomery bus boycott and in 1957 founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 for his work against racial segregation and racial discrimination by using nonviolent means. King was assassinated on April 4, 1968.

Dr. King was born into a well-educated and relatively well to do family. His grandfather and father were pastors of a Baptist church and were members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). This organisation had been set up in 1909 for the purpose of promoting black equality. In 1954 Dr. King became the pastor of a church in Montgomery, Alabama.

Martin Luther King was inspired by the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. One day Dr. King travelled to Philadelphia to hear a talk by Dr. Mordecai Johnson, president of Howard University, who had just returned from India. Johnson spoke on the life and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. Dr. King found the message of Mahatma Gandhi electrifying. He immediately left the meeting and bought half a dozen books on the life and work of Mahatma Gandhi.

In his book ‘*Stride toward Freedom*’, Dr. King has described how reading about Mahatma Gandhi affected his thinking. Earlier he had come to the conclusion that the ethics of Jesus were only effective in individual relationships. He had thought the ‘turn the other cheek’ philosophy and love thy enemies’ philosophy propounded by Jesus was only applicable in case of conflict between individuals. Dr. King could not understand how the ethics of Jesus could be applied to resolve conflict between nations and racial groups. Reading about the life and work of Mahatma Gandhi made him understand that he was mistaken. Mahatma Gandhi showed him the way to raise the love ethic of Jesus from a mere interaction between individuals to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale.

In 1959, he visited the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi in India. King’s trip to India influenced his understanding of non-violent resistance and strengthened his commitment to the civil rights movement. The statement made by King in a radio address on his final day in India clearly brings out the influence of the

teachings of Mahatma Gandhi on him. King said:

“Since being in India, I am more convinced than ever before that the method of non-violent resistance is the most potent weapon available to oppressed people in their struggle for justice and human dignity. In a real sense, Mahatma Gandhi embodied in his life certain universal principles that are inherent in the moral structure of the universe, and these principles are as inescapable as the law of gravitation.”

Though, Dr. King was indebted to Mahatma Gandhi for the concept of non-violence, he reinterpreted it to suit the struggle of the black Americans. He articulated ‘non-violence’ as a part of the ethics given by Jesus Christ. In fact, he drew upon a number of Christian traditions to justify the use of non-violence in the fight against racism. In his speeches and writings he made frequent mention of Jesus Christ’s ‘Sermon on the Mount’ to convince the black people of the importance of non-violence. The non-violent struggle of Dr. King against racism is significant because it resulted in minimal dehumanization of the racist white people. The struggle appealed to the empathy and reasonableness of the racist white people. Dr. King was of the view that non-violent direct action was the only cure available to the blacks for fighting the injustice against them. It was only due to the non-violent protest that the white racist people were forced to recognize that no inferior people could choose such a struggle involving sacrifice, bravery and skill. The black people were thus able to garner respect from even the staunchest white racist person.

Dr. King saw non-violence as a moral principle. In his book Dr. King describes the five notions that show his commitment to non-violence as a method of resistance:

- 1) Non-violence is not to be practiced by cowards because it takes great courage to stand defenseless in front of an adversary with weapons who is prepared to use them.
- 2) The goal of non-violent resistance is with respect and understanding of the adversary and not to harm, defeat or humiliate him.
- 3) Non-violent resistance is against the evil deeds and not against the evil doer.
- 4) Though non-violent resistance is physically non-aggressive it is spiritually aggressive and has the power to influence the soul of the adversary.
- 5) Non-violent resistance is based on self-suffering.

### **Montgomery Bus Boycott (1956)**

The Montgomery Bus Boycott was an important episode in the fight against racial segregation in America. The local government of Montgomery implemented a system of racial segregation on its buses. Under the system, the front row seats were reserved for the white people, while the black people had to sit on seats on the back rows. On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks, a black woman was returning home by bus after a hard day’s work. The bus soon filled up. A white man was left standing. The bus driver ordered her and three other blacks to move because the city ordinance said that no black could sit parallel with a white passenger. The others moved but Mrs. Parks refused. She was arrested and convicted for violating the law. However, she appealed against the ruling in a higher court of law.

The Rosa Parks incident was the immediate cause of a movement against racial segregation on the buses. Martin Luther King led the black people in organising a boycott (not use) of the buses for a day. The message given to the black people was “Don’t ride the buses to work, to town, to school, or anywhere on Monday. If you work, take a cab, or share a ride, or walk”. The boycott was very successful on the first day and therefore it was continued. It continued to receive strong support from the black people. Since it was the black people of Montgomery that used the buses in large numbers there was a noticeable decline in the earning of the local government. The participants in the boycott were fined, arrested and even subjected to physical abuse. However, they refused to relent. The entire boycott lasted for 381 days. It ended on December 20, 1956 when the Supreme Court of USA gave a decision that racial segregation on buses was unconstitutional.

Though the supreme court of USA had ruled in favour of the blacks, Dr. King was aware of the challenges it posed for reconciliation between the whites and blacks. He wanted the black people to respond with understanding of the white people who had oppressed them. He wanted the movement to move from protest to reconciliation with the white people. Therefore after the victory at Montgomery, Dr. King advised the blacks not to gloat over their victory and must not take this as a victory over the white person, but as a victory for justice and democracy. The Montgomery bus boycott was the first significant victories of the movement against racism and made Martin Luther King one of the important leaders of the civil rights movement. This movement was the psychological turning point in the struggle of the blacks against racist segregation. Moreover, the boycott demonstrated the power of the black community using direct non-violent action. The movement showed the black people that non-violent resistance could be used elsewhere to counter racist prejudices.

During the Montgomery bus boycott Miss Juliette Morgan, a librarian and sympathiser with the cause of the American blacks, wrote a letter to the local newspaper ‘Montgomery Advertiser’. In this letter she compared the Montgomery bus boycott with the Dandi March undertaken by Mahatma Gandhi in India. This letter made the name of Mahatma Gandhi famous among the black people of Montgomery.

### **Birmingham Campaign (1963)**

Eight years later, in March 1963, King took initiative in launching a campaign to end segregation in Birmingham, Alabama, where they hoped to replicate the results of Montgomery. Instead of focusing on a specific issue like public transportation, King wanted to put an end to economic policies in Birmingham that promoted segregation and discriminatory practices against African Americans. Knowing that this would require more intense civic action, King organised the Birmingham campaign to be more aggressive than previous ones.

Dr. King and black civic activists launched economic boycotts against businesses who refused to hire people of all races and desegregate their facilities, and began a series of marches through the city and peaceful sit-ins at libraries and restaurants that he knew would provoke the arrest of civil rights activists. Explaining his strategy, King said, “The purpose of...direct action is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation.”

During the Birmingham movement, the black leaders used ‘freedom songs’ to encourage the participants. Dr. King called these songs the “soul of the movement”. These freedom songs united the black participants on an emotional level and gave them courage and conviction to oppose racism in a non-violent way.

Dr. King was arrested during the Birmingham movement. His arrest was a turning point in the civil rights movement of the African Americans. Dr. King was placed in solitary confinement. The work of Dr. King and his colleagues got wide publicity throughout the USA and the world. In jail Dr. King, wrote his famous “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” in which he argued that true civil rights could not be achieved without non-violent direct actions of civil disobedience. King wrote that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,” and made the case that “one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws.” The letter, which was later published in many magazines and books, still serves as one of the best example of civic activist writing in American history.

The injustices perpetuated against the black people in Birmingham were apparent. The black leaders tried to negotiate in good faith with the leaders of Birmingham city; however they refused to do so. It is only after the stage of negotiation failed that Dr. King took the path of Direct Action in the form of organising sit-ins, marches and so forth. The purpose of non-violent direct action was to create crises and tension in a community which has constantly refused to negotiate. Direct action dramatizes the issue so that it can no longer be ignored. Dr. King had opposed violent tension but he was of the view that a constructive type of non-violent tension is necessary for growth.

The letter, along with the non-violent direct action, led to significant gains in Birmingham by the end of Spring 1963. Many of the discriminatory practices in Birmingham were abolished, and the city became notably less segregated. Non-violence referred to by Dr. King as “the sword that heals”, gave the Black Americans the dignity of moral conviction and self-sacrifice. It healed the oppressor as well as the oppressed. It did not only express hurt and anger at the white people but also made the black people experience the healing necessary for the existence of a just society in the United States.

### **March on Washington (1963)**

In the months after the end of the Birmingham campaign, King became intimately involved in the organisation of the historic August 28, 1963 March on Washington. The March on Washington aimed to encourage passage of civil rights bill and government action to increase the employment of black people.

The organisers intended to highlight the status of black people in the Southern states of USA. However, in order to give the march a more widely accepted audience, civil rights, labor, and religious organisations were involved in organising the march. In expanding its message beyond the scope of African American civil rights to universal labor issues, the march attracted crowds to a tune of a quarter of a million people in front of the Lincoln Memorial for Dr. King’s keynote address. Dr. King’s address drew inspiration from both the Bible and the United States Declaration of Independence. In his address he outlined his hopes for racial harmony and the prospect of equality in the United States.

King's speech was applauded by the participants of the March as well as Americans throughout the country. In fact the March impressed television audiences throughout the world and Dr. King's address acquired world-wide fame. The success of this speech and the march as a whole led to the passage of significant civil rights legislation; the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the National Voting Rights Act of 1965 legally ended segregation throughout the country. While the passage of civil rights legislation brought King's dream much closer to reality, there was still much work to be done at the community level in terms of implementation, and King spent the next three years working tirelessly towards that goal.

#### 12.4.4 Conflict Resolution Strategy of Dr. King

Dr. King utilized four strategies to unite the black Americans in the non-violent fight against racism in the United States. The first strategy was his effective use of the Bible. Dr. King frequently used passages from the Bible to appeal to the Christian spirit of the black people. This gave moral authority to his speeches. In fact his well-known speech 'I have a Dream' was full of biblical references.

Dr. King's second strategy was to appeal to the values of the Western Civilization. He made it a point to use thoughts from the Western theological and philosophical traditions such as the writings of Hegel, Niebuhr, Tolstoy, and Franz Fanon. He used the popularity of the traditions to communicate his thought to the common people.

The third strategy of Dr. King was his brilliant use of American constitutional and legal documents to give credence to his philosophy and movement against racism. He used the 'American Declaration of Independence, the American Constitution and decisions of Supreme court to show that he was willing to work in the legal context in countering racism. However, he also made it clear that unjust laws needed to be challenged.

The fourth strategy of Dr. King was that he consistently included both the black and white people in the society which he aimed to achieve, which he called 'the Beloved Community'. Thus he did not advocate the supremacy of the blacks over the white people. His concept of 'Beloved Community' encompassed both the blacks and the whites. He did not favour a different separate identity for the black people.

The use of violence in any conflict results in bitterness between the conflicting parties. But the use of non-violence leads to reconciliation and existence of the "Beloved Community". Dr. King distinguished between three kinds of love: *eros*, "a sort of aesthetic or romantic love"; *philia*, "affection between friends" and *agape*, which he described as "understanding, redeeming goodwill for all," an "overflowing love which is purely spontaneous, unmotivated, groundless and creative"... "the love of God operating in the human heart." Dr. King said that "Agape does not begin by discriminating between worthy and unworthy people...It begins by loving others for their sakes" and "makes no distinction between a friend and enemy; it is directed toward both". It is through Agape love that the beloved community is created and preserved. It is due to the Agape love in Dr. King's beloved community that justice is ensured not for any one oppressed group but for all the people in the community.

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## **NELSON MANDELA (1918-2013)**

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Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was a nonviolence anti-apartheid activist and politicians, who spent twenty seven years in prison for his cause, and later went on to become the first black president of South Africa from 1994 to 1999.

Born on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1918 in a small village in South Africa's Transkei region, Mandela was a member of the Thembu royal family and belonged to the Xhosa tribe. After his father's death, young Nelson was raised by Jongintaba, the regent of the Tembu. Nelson renounced his claim to the chieftainship to become a lawyer. He attended South African Native College (later the University of Fort Hare) and studied law at the University of Witwatersrand; he later passed the qualification exam to become a lawyer. In 1944 he joined the African National Congress (ANC), a black-liberation group, and became a leader of its Youth League. In 1952, with fellow ANC leader Oliver Tambo, Mandela established South Africa's first black law practice in Johannesburg, and began to take up cases resulting from the Apartheid legislation (enforced in 1948). Also that year, Mandela played an important role in launching a campaign of defiance against South Africa's pass laws, which required nonwhites to carry documents (known as passes, pass books, or reference books) authorizing their presence in areas that the government deemed "restricted" (i.e., generally reserved for the white population). As a part of the campaign, he traveled throughout the country, trying to build support for nonviolent means of protest against the discriminatory laws. In 1955, he was one of the key people involved in drafting the Freedom Charter, a document calling for nonracial social democracy in South Africa.

As result of his antiapartheid activism, Mandela became a frequent target of the authorities. Starting in 1952, he was intermittently banned (severely restricted in travel, association, and speech). In December 1956, along with over 100 other people, he was arrested on charges of treason that were designed to harass antiapartheid activists. Mandela went on trial that same year and eventually was acquitted in 1961.

### **Sharpeville Massacre, 1960**

Sharpeville Massacre refers to an incident that took place on March 21, 1960, incident in the black township of Sharpeville, near Vereeniging, South Africa, in which police fired on a crowd of unarmed blacks, killing or wounding some 250 of them. It was one of the first and most violent incidents in the demonstrations against apartheid in South Africa, and had significant impact on the movement. Besides drawing attention and criticism of the international community on South Africa's apartheid policy, it also compelled Mandela and the ANC to abandon nonviolent stance, and instead advocate violence against the regime.

In December, 1959, the ANC announced in its annual conference at Durban that 1960 was going to be the "Year of the Pass." A series of mass actions was planned to launch a nationwide anti-pass campaign on 31 March - the anniversary of the 1919 anti-pass campaign. A week later, a breakaway group from the ANC, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) during its first conference in Johannesburg, announced that the PAC would launch its own anti-pass campaign. A intense drive for the proposed nationwide campaigns began. Participants were asked to surrender their reference books (passes) and court arrest.

On 21<sup>st</sup> March, some 20,000 blacks gathered near a police station at Sharpeville, located about 30 miles (50 km) south of Johannesburg. After some demonstrators, according to police, began pelting stones at them, the police officers opened fire with submachine guns. In this firing, about 69 blacks were killed, and more than 180 wounded, with 50 women and children being among the victims. As news spread, massive protests erupted, and a state of emergency was declared in South Africa. More than 11,000 people were detained, and the PAC and ANC were outlawed. Following the dismantling of apartheid, South African President Nelson Mandela chose Sharpeville as the site at which, on December 10, 1996, he signed into law the country's new constitution. Even today, 21<sup>st</sup> March is a national holiday in South Africa in commemoration of those killed and wounded in the incidents.

### **Phase of Violence and the Rivonia Trials**

After the massacre by police forces at Sharpeville, and subsequent banning of the ANC, Mandela abandoned his nonviolent stance and began advocating acts of sabotage against the South African regime. He went underground (during which time he was known as the Black Pimpernel for his ability to evade capture), and became one of the founders of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* ("Spear of the Nation") - the military wing of the ANC.

In 1962, Madela went to Algeria for training in guerrilla warfare and sabotage, returning to South Africa later that year. Shortly after his return, on 5<sup>th</sup> August, Mandela was arrested at a road block in Natal, and subsequently sentenced to five years in prison. The following year in 1963, the imprisoned Mandela and several other men were tried for sabotage, treason, and violent conspiracy in the infamous Rivonia Trial - named after a fashionable suburb of Johannesburg where during raids, the police had discovered quantities of arms and equipment at the underground Umkhonto we Sizwe's headquarters. During the trial, Mandela gave a powerful speech from the dock, in which he admitted the truth of some of the charges made against him. The speech was a classic defense of liberty and defiance of tyranny, and drew international attention acclaim and attention. It was published later that year as *I Am Prepared to Die*. At the end of the trial, on June 12, 1964, Mandela was sentenced to life imprisonment, narrowly escaping the death penalty.

### **Incarceration**

From 1964 to 1990, Mandela spent 27 years in Prison, split between Robben Island Prison, Pollsmoor Prison, and Victor Verster Prison. The South African government periodically made conditional offers of freedom to Mandela, most notably in 1976, on the condition that he recognize the newly independent—and highly controversial—status of the Transkei Bantustan and agree to reside there. In 1985, an offer required that he renounce the use of violence. Mandela refused both offers, the second on the premise that only free persons were able to engage in such negotiations and, as a prisoner, he was not a free man. Here Mandela was articulating his ultimate commitment to the cause of justice—peace comes only after "rights" have been achieved

During his long years in prison, Mandela continued his political activism for right and dignity, albeit in a different form. He was made to chop rocks and given rigorous tasks, but that did not break his spirit. Inside the prison, he advocated successfully for long pants (Blacks were given only short pants) and



bread (Coloreds and Indians were given bread, but blacks were not), and continued to be a political activist - both befriending jailers (demonstrating his respect for the dignity of all humans) and fiercely fighting the prison administration and larger system with their own tools, legal petitions, and his firm advocacy. He saw his prison life as the world he lived in where it was important to struggle for rights, dignity and justice. Prison was the microcosm of the world and both needed serious change

Throughout his incarceration, Mandela retained wide support among South Africa's black population. His imprisonment became a powerful symbol of the anti-apartheid struggle for equality and dignity, and a cause célèbre among the international community that condemned apartheid. As South Africa's political situation deteriorated after 1983, and particularly after 1988, Mandela was engaged by ministers of President P.W. Botha's government in exploratory negotiations; Mandela met with Botha's successor, President de Klerk, in December 1989.

On February 11, 1990, the South African government under President de Klerk released Mandela from prison. Shortly after his release, Mandela was chosen deputy president of the ANC, and became president of the party in July 1991. Mandela led the ANC in negotiations with de Klerk to end apartheid and bring about a peaceful transition to nonracial democracy in South Africa.

### **Peace and Reconciliation**

Soon after Mandela's release, tribal and racial violence flared up in South Africa - in part because the white population rebuffed efforts for a free election. In 1992, with the death toll climbing, Mandela met with de Klerk, hoping to ward off a civil war; in the months that followed, he urged South Africans to seek not revenge but reconciliation. Mandela became aware that the prospects for a peaceful transition in South Africa were also being damaged by an increase in "black-on-black" violence, particularly between ANC and Zulu nationalist movement group Inkatha, resulting in thousands of deaths. For their efforts at peaceful transition to majority rule, both Nelson Mandela and Frederik Willem de Klerk shared the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993. The following year, in the first general elections where Blacks were allowed to vote, thousands of South Africans stood in line to exercise their Franchise. Mandela led the ANC to victory, and became the first Black President of South Africa.

As the new President of a country that was transitioning from apartheid minority rule to a multicultural democracy, Mandela saw national reconciliation as the primary task of his presidency. Aware of the experiences of other post-colonial African countries which were plunged into civil war and economic crisis at such times, Mandela worked to reassure South Africa's white population that they were protected and represented in "the Rainbow Nation". As he stated, "We saw our country tear itself apart in terrible conflict... The time for healing of wounds has come... Never, never again will this beautiful land experience the oppression of one by another." Mandela spoke to the South Africans that suffered for so many years, and led his people away from violence and threat of civil war, to a better era where there was less racial segregation and more equality among the races.

In 1996, he oversaw the formation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), with Archbishop Desmond Tutu at its head. The TRC was created to investigate crimes committed under apartheid by both the government and the ANC. Anybody who felt they had been a victim of violence could come forward and be heard at the TRC. Perpetrators of violence could also give testimony and request amnesty from prosecution. After two years of hearings which looked into rapes, torture, bombings, and assassinations, a final report was issued in October 1998. The commission played a critical role, in helping South African society “move away from the past to concentrate on the present and the future”, as Mandela said.

Nelson Mandela thereby stands among the tallest of leaders - not just for his dedicated struggle against a unjust and inhuman system of apartheid for which he spent twenty seven years in prison (that too), but also because for his ability to set aside bitterness, hatred after all these years, and sit across the table with the so called enemy- to build a lasting and just peace. This peace was aimed not just at ending apartheid and violence, but at establishing a harmonious relationship between the two sides, to reconcile and forgive. He truly ranks among the greatest peacemakers of our times.

### **12.5.5 Mandela’s Legacy as a Peacemaker**

Mandela’s legacy as a political activist and peace maker draws on different influence, and evolved considerable over the course of his life – starting as an aggressive young man of fierce principles, commitment and devotion to his causes - first that of African nationalism, and anti- Apartheid freedom, and later that of a democratic multi-racial and just society. From the oral history of his tribal elders, Mandela absorbed a strong sense of pride in the history of pre-colonial Africa. From an early age, he also gained exposure to British culture and religion via the Methodist missionary school he attended, which resulted in his having an affinity for British liberal constitutionalism and legalist political culture. Mandela was also greatly influenced by M.K.Gandhi, and Nehru. Gandhi had spent his formative years in South Africa, and it is here that he developed his philosophy of *satyagraha* - a form of active yet peaceful resistance to political injustices. Mandela particularly drew from Gandhi his transnational perspectives and ideas of coexistence in harmony. Nelson Mandela’s early encounters with Indian activist in South Africa, and their ideologies of emancipation seriously impacted his view of African liberation, and a close bond between the ANC and South Africa’s Indian population developed over time. This personal encounter with other people’s liberation movements in South Africa, eventually also influenced the ANC leadership turn multicultural and multi-religious. Not surprisingly India was the first country Nelson Mandela visited after his release from Jail, and was awarded the Bharat Ratna, Indian’s highest civilian award. Furthermore, India on 16 March 2001 conferred The International Gandhi Peace Prize on Nelson Mandela at a grand ceremony at the presidential palace in New Delhi. “In honouring Mandela,” President Shri K.R. Narayanan said, “we are paying tribute to an unusual hero in the Gandhian mould, who personifies the triumph of the human spirit over forces of oppression.”

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## **12.6 GENE SHARP (1928-2018)**

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Gene Sharp was a theorist, peace activist and author of groundbreaking works on the dynamics of nonviolent conflict. Born in North Baltimore, Ohio, he studied

at Ohio State University, where he also received his Master of Arts in Sociology in 1951. Sharp spent his initial years as a political pacifist (something from which he differed later), and refused to sign the draft for conscription of soldiers for the Korean War. For this he Sharp was jailed for nine months in 1953–54.

After his release in 1954, Sharp briefly worked as assistant to prominent pacifist A.J. Muste, before moving to Oslo and researching how teachers during the Second World War used nonviolent tactics to resist the imposition of fascist schooling in Norway. His investigations into nonviolence ultimately led to a doctorate at Oxford University, and to seminal three-volume, 900-page treatise called *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, published in 1973 and still in print today. In 1983 he founded the Albert Einstein Institution, a non-profit organization devoted to studies and promotion of the use of nonviolent action in conflicts worldwide. Sharp died on January 28, 2018 at home in Boston, at the age of ninety.

## Strategic Non Violence

Pacifism or moral opposition to war and violence has a long tradition, and can be traced to the core texts of many major world religions. But Sharp wanted to go beyond this. On his reading of old newspaper coverage of Gandhi's 1930 *satyagraha* in India, he found evidence that most participants in the resistance campaign did not take on nonviolence because they were morally committed to it, but rather they used nonviolent action because they believed it worked. This thesis put forward by sharp went contrary to some of the cherished convictions of many pacifists he knew, who strongly believed in "principled nonviolence"—implying that the practice of non violence requires deep ethical resolve. This Sharp considered as a great opportunity, for it meant that large numbers of people who would not believe in ethical or religious nonviolence were likely to use nonviolent struggle for pragmatic reasons.

Taking the position now known as "strategic nonviolence," Sharp argued that people turn to violence not because they are wicked or warmongering but because they do not see any other option for resolving intractable conflicts. Thereby if one is able to show that the strategy of nonviolent conflict can be an effective alternative, he urged, it can win over many more people than by merely making "exhortations in favor of love." He would ultimately come to avoid the term "nonviolence" altogether, believing that it was too ambiguous and loaded with connotations of passivity and religious belief. Instead he began use the word more as an adjective to describe "nonviolent struggle" or "nonviolent conflict." Sharp's thinking along these lines went on to influence other academic researchers who made a further break in terminology. As a result, campaigns of unarmed action simply began to be referred to as "civil resistance."

## Techniques of Non Violent Action

One of the greatest contribution of Sharpe *is the fact that he illustrated* nonviolent action as "a technique of struggle involving the use of psychological, social, economic, and political power," – as a tool that could be used even against viciously repressive regimes. In order to explain how this works, Sharp first laid out a theory of political power. Differing from the popular assumption that, in the end, power emerges from coercion, i.e "power comes from the barrel of a

gun,” Sharp referred to a wide range of political thinkers in the first volume of *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* to argue that basically all rulers depended on the cooperation and consent of their people to survive. “Obedience is at the heart of political power,” he stated. Most institutions, be it the police, the courts, the civil service, the army— carry out orders so that the system functions. However, when people and institutions start to withdraw their cooperation, the regimes begins to get weakened. If enough of them withdraw, the regime collapses. Sharp investigated historical records and showed dozens of examples to illustrate how nonviolent action had succeeded by the sheer withdrawal of obedience, resulting in undermining of authority and bureaucratic capacity of rulers.

Sharp’s understanding further enabled him to theorize about how future campaigns might take shape. Just like armed struggle, nonviolent conflict also involves the “waging of ‘battles,’ and thereby a thorough strategy and tactics, and demands of courage, discipline, and sacrifice from its ‘soldiers’”. In his second volume of *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, Sharp list “198 methods of nonviolent action”. This includes varied approaches such as vigils, fasting, land occupations, “protest disrobing,” display of flags and symbolic colors, mock funerals, humorous skits and pranks, deliberate bureaucratic inefficiency, and civil disobedience, not to mention several dozen distinct types of strikes and boycotts. Sharp believed that this list would considerably expand, as movements innovated and other researchers added further to it. However, over the past four decades, the total list has remained as it first appeared, gaining symbolic status.

### **Impact of Sharp on Worldwide Struggles**

The impact of Sharp’s work on struggles across the globe has been significant. His writing *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, a slim ninety-three-page distillation of his core insights and a handbook for overthrowing autocrats, has been translated into more than thirty languages. The volume has had widespread usage in the hot spots of global resistance. The volume was written initially in 1993 to aid dissidents in Burma, and provide them a tool to use nonviolent action against the ruling junta. The book was used by Serbian students seeking to overthrow the regime of Slobodan Milošević, was circulated among activists during successful uprisings in Georgia and the Ukraine, and was downloaded in Arabic amid mass protests in Tunisia and Egypt during the Arab spring.

The book has been banned or discredited by authoritative regimes. The Iranian government denounced the book and its author. In 2005, two independent bookshops in Russia were burned down after stocking the newly available Russian translation. Sharp’s influence has particularly grown after the Arab Spring, and he was the subject of a feature documentary, entitled *How to Start a Revolution*, released just as the Occupy movement took shape in 2011.

However, it would be erroneous to attribute mass movement like the Arab spring to one individual. Such mass movements and resistance have local roots and emerge as result of local people resisting the dominating socio-economic structures. Instead, Sharp’s contribution must be seen as advancing the study and use of strategic nonviolent action as a pragmatic alternative to violence in resolution of conflict.

## Check Your Progress Exercises 2

**Note:** i) Use of the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the Unit for tips for your answer.

1) Explain the conflict resolution strategy of Martin Luther King

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2) Explain how Mandela's political views evolved considerable over the course of his life?

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3) Explain Gene Sharp's ideas of strategic non-violence.

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## 12.7 LET US SUM UP

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Vinoba Bhave, Jayprakash Narayan, Martin Luther King, Mandela and Sharp were leaders and theorists who used the method of non-violent resistance to fight injustice and achieve peace in their respective societies. They were aware that there could be no lasting peace unless the downtrodden masses got freedom from poverty, injustice and discrimination. All five were influenced by the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. Vinoba Bhave was one of the favourite disciples of Mahatma Gandhi. Many consider him to be the “moral and spiritual heir” of Gandhi. Though Jayprakash Narayan was initially under the influence of ideology of socialism, he was later inspired by Gandhian philosophy. He dedicated his life to furthering of the Bhoodan and Gramdan movements started by Vinoba Bhave. Martin Luther King was also convinced that Gandhiji's philosophy of nonviolent resistance was the most important weapon available for the Black American people in their fight against racial segregation and injustice. However, all five leaders introduced innovation in Gandhiji's philosophy of nonviolent resistance. They modified and adopted the Gandhiji's idea of nonviolent resistance to suit the changed circumstances. Vinoba evolved the approach of ‘Non-violent

assistance in right thinking'. Vinoba was of the opinion that in a democratic society this was the only effective approach of nonviolent resistance. The Bhoodan movement sought to bring about social transformation through individual acts of charity while the Gramdan movement sought to bring social revolution through collective decisions on the community. The ideal of Vinoba was to establish a 'Stateless society' through the use of Bhoodan, Gramdan and the Shanti Sena.

Jayprakash Narayan was also involved in the Bhoodan and Gramdan movements started by Vinoba Bhave. However, he later became disappointed with the impact of the movements. Jayprakash Narayan realised that the mere use of persuasion and conciliation could not bring about social transformation of Indian society. He was of the opinion that peaceful struggle and Satyagraha were needed to achieve the objective. Jayprakash Narayan made efforts to promote internal and external peace. Jayprakash Narayan achieved world fame due to his leadership of the movement for 'Total Revolution'. The movement for Total Revolution used Gandhian techniques to achieve total transformation of not only the material conditions of the people but also the moral character of the individual.

Martin Luther King Jr. was one of the most charismatic leaders of the civil rights movement in America. It was under his leadership and guidance that the Black Americans initiated movements of non-violent resistance against racial inequality. Martin Luther King reinterpreted the Gandhian concept of non-violence in the context of Christian ethics. He successfully led the black Americans during the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1956) and the Birmingham Campaign (1963). Both these movements were turning points in the struggle of the blacks to gain civil rights in America. It was the March on Washington (1963) organised under the leadership of Martin Luther King that led to enactment of the civil rights bill. He promoted reconciliation between the black and white people of America by putting forward the concept of 'Beloved Community' where both black and white people live in peace and harmony.

Nelson Mandela, unlike Gandhi, for long advocated that revolutionary violence was unavoidable, considering it as counter-violence or a justified uprising against iniquitous laws. However, the influence of Gandhi on Mandela grew in his later years, and as he emerged from prison to bring about peace and reconciliation with his oppressors. Gene Sharp was greatly influenced by Gandhi. However, in his later works, his non violence activism was characterized by hard bitten realism as he championed a "technique approach" to nonviolent action, arguing that it should be used for pragmatic rather than for religious or ethical reasons.

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## ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress Exercises 1

- 1) Your answer should highlight the following points
  - a) Improvement of Gandhian philosophy and resistance against injustice
  - b) Jayprakash Contribution to internal and external peace and Total Revolution

### Check Your Progress Exercises 2

- 1) Your answer should have the following points:

**Contemporary Peace  
Initiatives**

- a) Martin Luther King Jr's Civil Right Movement and
- b) Conflict resolution strategy of Dr. King
- 2) Your answer should have the following points:
  - a) Nelson Mandela's non-violence anti apartheid movement and
  - b) Political views of Mandela
- 3) Your answer should have Gene Sharp ground breaking works on the non-violent conflict and techniques of non-violent action.



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