CHAPTER II

EVOLUTION OF PACIFISM

Since prehistoric times, theology, religion and philosophy have drawn their conclusions relating to the concept of violence. That violence erupts according to the law of Divine Providence. But in the social evolution that concept becomes obsolete, as has been well put by Leo Tolstoy.

"The obsolete religious justification of violence, which consisted in the assumption of the uniqueness of violence. Which consisted in the assumption of the uniqueness and divinity of personages having power and put in power by God."1

"The fatalistic view of war is nonsense. War making is due to definite motives and subject to prudential checks and reasonable criticisms just like any other form of enterprise."2

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2. Ibid., p. 187.
In the light of such views, as well as from historical experience, it remains beyond doubt that violence and war full within the domain of man for definite motives. The fatalistic view is entirely unsatisfactory to the rational mind. Ralph Waldo Emerson suggests that if all the inhabitants of this earth are offered their needs, including aesthetic stimulation then violence has an end like all other things.

It would therefore be beneficial, at this stage, to consider the nature of violence as also how violence has been viewed in various studies.

Aggression or violence has always been there among the living creatures. Animals kill their prey; plants are destroyed by a variety of species. Man has brought devastation on himself throughout history. Animals display emotion through hissing and growling. Man employs a number of dramatic gestures. Aggression is seen as resulting from (1) frustration, (2) learning, and (3) conditioning. Animals would be aggressive in a helpless condition when they are set free from cages; man in a strenuous condition of labour. When thus aggression results from an understood

1. It is interesting to note that Nietzsche proclaimed, during the war that "God is dead" (Marly Seinshower, Literature and Philosophy Between Two World Wars, P.106).
phenomenon, it is bound to have incentives. Animals kill either for survival or for food. This does not, however, always apply to man. For, of all species, man alone has deliberately practised it. Also, for him, aggression is an intelligent and highly economical act. If conditions are favourable, man kills employing ambush, and from a distant and safe position. If for animals, violence provides food, for the non-predator, it serves other ends. For instance, thrill their readers by depicting violence which has dramatic appeal.

For animals, aggression is a simple function and a part of its natural behaviour. They are passive in the absence of provocation. This does not apply to man. In the absence of provocation, he would create one; and he becomes even more aggressive when he has a purpose. He means deliberately to inflict suffering. A gorilla may chase and pursue its prey with the branch of a tree but it cannot, and does not, inflict suffering with a target. Any wound it causes is incidental and not aimed at. And with the lapse of time, it forgets the event. Not so with man. Ac lies in wait, plans the attack, and when the

1. Zilman, D: Hostility and Aggression, p. 11.
2. Ibid. : p. 5.
3. Ibid. : p. 10.
opportune moment comes, strikes, and strikes in cold blood.

Though it is believed often that anger leads to aggression, it is not always true. For aggression occurs even in the absence of anger. In fact, anger is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for aggression. The belief that a general observation of animal life has inspired human aggression is of course totally baseless.

It is also said that man has inherited the instinct for aggression. Freud talks of a dual instinct: (a) death instinct: a force urging disintegration of the organic matter, the function of death being to return the organism to its original inanimate form, and (b) the instinct of the relationship between life and death. There is also the view that aggression cannot be acquired in response to a particular condition but it is inbuilt into the organism, and that aggression is a spontaneous activity. Instinctive aggression cannot be always rationalised. Animals inherit instinctive forces that motivate aggression. These, obviously, are not trained to be aggressive. If rats, cats, mice and dogs can become non-aggressive, 

1. Ibid. p. 3. 
1. LILMAN, J.; HOSTILITY AND AGGRESSION. P. 11
primates and man must be expected to be capable of accomplishing the same. Genetically speaking, monkeys and apes are as much affectionate creatures as they are vicious killers and every human being is as much endowed with the capability of being a pacifist as with that of being a mass murderer.  

It is also by now an established fact that instinctive aggression in man is more of a myth and justification of aggression than this belief has no basis. Aggression is not inevitable at the individual or the social level. A ready-made answer and rationalization of anyone's violent acts and its profitability provides only an excuse for anyone who indulges in violence.

Poets and philosophers have often touched the theme of aggression; rarely basing their views on any systematic observation. More often than not, they have treated it as instinctive, an unspecified unreasonable inner force compelling the finer organism to act in a violent way.

It would be argued that aggression must have some utility or else it would have long ago disappeared from the emotional make-up of man. The history of Man has never

proved this. On the other hand, efforts have always been made, though unsuccessfully, to curtail aggression. It is true that laughter, art, and epistemic curiosity has not quite removed aggression from our midst. One may even say that such an attempt is idealistic, for it rests on shaky theoretical grounds. If this does not help, then the option is to divest aggression of all semblances of utility. For belief in utility will lead to fresh eruptions of violence and destruction. Man can discern and reduce conflict only through virtue and rationality. If he resists his violent behaviour, violence does not bring the yield, the anticipated gratification; there are better ways of achieving the same end, and violence is decidedly an inferior means. The need for food and shelter, for instance, can be satisfied without resorting to aggression at all. It is thus that aggression need hardly ever be supported.

It is noted in this brief survey that when the predator was on the earth, he was a hunter for all his essential functions of feeding and mating. In the ages that followed, there was multifarious development and rapid growth of population which in turn must have led to large scale exodus from place to place. Gradually all walks of life got institutionalized and man became more and more settled. But each fresh
advance brought in its wake special ambition, resource requirements, inter-group competition, power struggle etc., which have become casual elements in promoting aggression. What hunting meant for food to the predator has developed into war to obtain other ends. Warfare has been highly institutionalized and has become exceedingly complex, and resulting invariably in tragedy and large scale suffering; what is unfortunately lost sight of is to achieve our ends, whatever they may be, war is not inevitable. Hence the efforts of men from even primitive times to prevent war.

Pacifism in its simplest version has its roots in philosophy, theology, and religion. It may well be said therefore that "Peace is as old as civilization" for throughout history, in all higher cultures, it may be observed that religion, philosophy and ethics have supported the demand for the abolition of war.

Definite conception of peace existed as early as third century in China. The writings of Lao-Tze, Confucius and Moteae have definite pacifist concepts. They all questioned the need of war. Each of them rose beyond the simple acceptance of human conflict and formulated concepts which are pacifist in their direction and intent. When Christ walked on the earth, his followers stood up to his teachings and lived
up to them fully. Later, when nations were converted to Christianity, passion once to be regarded as the impulse of primitive love and the idea of love associated itself with Christianity. The early Christians, while embracing Christianity spontaneously, accepted pacifism and became perhaps the earlier pacifists in the true sense of the term. As time passed, however, owing to its popularity and the zeal with which it was practised, Christianity itself became a cause of war and was responsible for a number of wars. It was not long before the interpretation of the message of Christ and the law of the Gospel were adjusted to the customs of the age. As a result of this, Christians could not condemn the use of arms by the unconverted, if this were necessary for the purpose of maintaining an orderly fabric of society. The divine sanction and had to be obeyed without question. Christian ethics now clothed war in legal terms. The practice hitherto was that those who got themselves converted to Christianity were expected to give up military attachments. But the divine right theory postulated that, if the subject was convinced of the justice of war, the Christian could offer his services; indeed, he had to. If the order of Christianity was disturbed, a Christian, at the command of lawful
authority could take up arms. Obedience to lawful authority became a duty and a soldier was innocent as long as he obeyed the righteous command of the ruler. This was the main structure of thought during the 4th century.

Although the question of a choice between war and pacifism has always confronted man, he has never been able to draw strength towards deciding on either of the two. Traditional theological teachings, in this direction, have been usefully inadequate. Those who accept the view of a just war do not seem to accept the fact that certain forms of force can be eschewed. On the other hand, they indulge in all sorts of excuses for the diabolic actions they perpetrate. This is what led to the acceptance of government authority as a divine institution, of the belief that a soldier follows a noble and admirable profession, and of the intrinsic faith in the justness of one's own government, leading to unquestioned obedience of its commands. It must have been, to begin with, taken for granted, that the prince always considered an issue at length and gave a just command perhaps also, if a subject was convinced of the injustice of war he had the liberty to refuse to support authority. Such a situation, however, could not have lasted long, for obvious reasons.
Once, therefore, war itself came to be justified, man began rushing for arms for trivial causes and sometimes for no cause at all. Again, when once arms were taken up, there was no longer any respect for law. This decay openly set in and all sorts of crimes began to be committed. In the process, violence reached such proportions that at least the Church recognized that it was its legitimate duty to get rid of war and its instruments. It accepted pacifism, at least in principle, as a legitimate Christian attitude.

In 1660, a Society of Friends, prepared a manifesto and presented it to King Charles II in which they declared that all wars should be condemned. That would result in a cleaning of the spirit which would command them to turn away from evil. In 1693, the Quakers built a city, on pacifist principle, in Pennsylvania. William Penn and others called it 'the holy experiment.' The most ambitious attempt to treat war as unlawful was made with the pact of Paris of 27th August 1928, known as the Kellog Pact (or `peace P actu, pacifism got a further boost when a Commission was appointed by the British Council of Churches, whose report in 1946 and 1948, rejected all military service for peace. The Roman Catholic Church has recognized pacifism as a legitimate Christian position. Sincere endeavours were made in the direction of abolishing wars,
protecting its victims, and ensuring peace at the Round Table Conferences held in Hague in 1967 and 1968. Such effort at various levels have led to the establishment of a number of Peace Movements. The most significant of these has been the Community of the Non-Aligned Nations which has shown its willingness to take up any unjust problem on the International scene and discover a way of overcoming evil, without itself, in the process, becoming another form of evil.

TECHNIQUE OF PACIFISM:

It now remains to examine whether pacifism is a Utopian ideal or whether it can work as a practicable policy. It could be argued that adherence to pacifism is not only meaningless but even irresponsible. How about a country's defence if everyone embraces this utopian concept? Does it not mean that we are unwilling to meet the obligations of citizenship? Pacifism in its extreme form and self-castigation has no social precedent. Self-castigation in order to achieve that precious object of all-round peace and establishment of a world on ethical grounds has been a rare element of fiction. There has always been a warrior class and warfare has been their traditional affair. It
is they who should take the responsibility of preventing war. If such are the objections to the practice of pacifism, they cannot be set aside. Pacifism may appear to be a dream. The deadliest diseases of our civilization, once considered inevitable, have been later challenged and more or less eradicated. Movements such as slave emancipation, abolition of child labour, prison reforms, trade unionism, socialism, anticolonialism and universal education did not get the general approval easily but they moved from strength to strength and belied the belief that they were Utopian. So, if other evils could be put to have an end, why not war?

For the pacifist, the main problem is to draw up the guidelines which would help governments to renounce wars. George Orwell writes that pacifism refuses to face the problems of a Government and that pacifists, who are always individual people, will never be in a position of control. This is a very justifiable argument. Does it mean that individuals cannot, in their private capacity, take up the cause of pacifism as it involves the interests of the whole community?

Yet another thing to be considered seriously here is whether pacifism is a vocation, as it implies commitment and testimony to a particular way of life; or is it a
doctrine which can be translated into a practicable alternative to those personal policies which depend in the last resort on willing men to threaten or even use military power.

In the first place, we should not lose sight of the fact that it has been individuals as a rule who have been the makers of eras and epochs. The practice of pacifism at the individual level does not necessarily mean defying governmental authority. On the other hand, it aims at setting the government on a value-based foundation. Pacifism is neither a dream nor a Utopian concept. If a soldier gets trained (trained) himself in four or five years' time to face war, the pacifist also can be trained to control his passions and resist aggression. The techniques of the pacifist include 'boycott' and 'picketing' to insist on a renunciation of arms and postponing the conflict.

Advocates and promoters of conflicts may ask: if pacifism is universally accepted, what means are there to satisfy human instincts for heroism, valour, and a spirit of adventure? For, isn't pacifism essentially passive? Such a query reckons without the fact that man can be rational and can devise ways and means of satisfying such instincts through other skills.
In this brief, inadequate, survey of the evolution of pacifism, a few landmarks are referred to as well as to the promoters of pacifism. In the final analysis, pacifism may be defined as the acceptance of that attitude which absolutely refuses to participate in, or support, the waging of war in any form whatsoever.