

Vinoba bhave thoughts on non-violence

Written by Admin

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The following thoughts expressed by Vinoba Bhave are from the book "Selections from Vinoba" (abbreviated in the text as S.V.), written by Vishwanath Tandon. The book has been published by Sarva Seva Sanghprakashan, Rajghat, Varanasi - 221001, India in 1981.

Meaning Of Peace | Peace And Armaments | Army And Cowardice | Military Power And Strength | India And Disarmament | The Nature of Modern Wars | Attitude towards War | How to Solve International Disputes | Essential Conditions for Internal Peace | The Need of a Shanti Sena (Peace Army) | The Birth of Shanti Sena | The Functions of Shanti Sena | Qualifications of a Shanti Sainik | The Pledge of a Shanti Sainik | Women and Shanti Sena | Shanti Sena and War | Essentials for a Shanti Sainik (Peace Brigade)

Meaning Of Peace

These days absence of war is regarded as peace. But peace really connotes absence of fear. There would be peace only when no part of the world is afraid of or exploited by any other part.
S. V.-742

What is needed for peace is a constructive approach.
S. V.-743

Peace is something mental and spiritual. If there be peace in our (personal) life, it will affect the whole world.

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S. V.-746

Peace And Armaments

It is a delusion that only when all nations are armed and strong, will there be peace among them.

Efforts to establish non-violence through violence have failed innumerable times, and they shall not only fail in future too but shall also make the whole humanity unsuccessful.

S. V.-747

Non-violent resistance to war is final result of a non-violent attitude and not the first as many Western pacifists seem to think.

S. V.-750

Army And Cowardice

In fact, arms bear no relation to bravery. Hence do not be under any delusion that if we maintain any army, our cowardice will go away. When we keep any army, our cowardice does not leave us but we make fool of ourselves. We are fools in that while we cannot maintain any army on the levels of Russia and America, we squander away billions of rupees of poor country on steel by purchasing arms.

S. V.-753

Military Power And Strength

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It is wrong to think that a country's strength lies in its military power only. A nation will become really strong only if it is free from internal conflicts, if it becomes self-sufficient and the people within are united by bonds of love. If we make our country strong like this, whatever be the threats or dangers that may confront us, none of them will cast any shadow on us. On the other hand, our greatness will certainly have a good influence on out side world.

S. V.-754

A country will have to be defended not by arms but by fearlessness, ethical behavior and unity.

S. V.-755

India And Disarmament

Some courage, imagination and faith are need for disarmament, and I will say, India can certainly come forward in unilateral disarmament because of its great tradition. so also other countries of the world because of their own particular situations. As regards unilateral disarmament, I have as much hope from England as from India.

S. V.-760

The Nature of Modern Wars

Attitude towards War

If we look only to the outward form of non-violence, it will not be found to be potent enough. Hence I do not want to waste my energy in resistance to outward symbols of non-violence.

I find great solace and much strength in the phrase of scripture, 'Resist not Evil'. It does not

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say resist evil in a non-violent way. The attempt to resist violence outwardly will only prolong its evil. When light shines, it dispels darkness. There is no resistance between light and darkness. Darkness merely vanishes. Those who believe in the power of love, non-violence and compassion should reiterate their full faith and try to persuade for right thinking.

As regards helping war-efforts, I said humorously that by walking I am doing both - supporting and opposing war-efforts. If you like, I am helping war-effort in that I am freeing the railway and other transports for military movement. I place also no impediment. Thus I am helping war-effort. Or, if you like, by not buying a ticket and refusing to use the railway, I am not giving a single penny for war and thus I am opposing the war-effort.

The main thing is that people should not go mad, lose perspective and their sense of proportion. Sometimes cold war is far worse than war itself. There is a 'cold war' and also a 'hot peace'. One thing that we must appreciate about India is that the whole nation was forcibly disarmed under the British regime. Hence there is a sort of inferiority complex among the educated people.

S. V.-771

We should find out ways of abolishing war, but even then if they continue and we have to go render aid to the wounded soldiers, we should do it. We should not refuse it on the ground that it is a part of war, but we must keep it in mind that it is not our real work.

S. V.-773

How to Solve International Disputes

What to do when this (Sino-Indian) conflict begins afresh? Let there be negotiations. If the dispute is not being solved by negotiations, then let there be arbitration.

S. V.-782

Vinoba : There will be an International Tribunal to settle all disputes of the world.

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Question : How will it be constituted?

Vinoba: The people of every country will send to it their men of learning and high character. These shall only have moral sanction. They will not only settle disputes, but will also have advisory functions.

S. V.-783

Essential Conditions for Internal Peace

If status quo continues, if the poor in the villages are neglected and if disparities go on aggravating, no force will be able to check internal disorder and external aggression.

S. V.-786

For peace and security within the country, we must cast off mutual differences and share our weal and woe together. Sharing decreases misery and increases joy.

S. V.-787

The Need of a Shanti Sena (Peace Army)

The basic problem of the world today is the establishment of peace. Perhaps in no other age has there been such a world-hunger for peace. There are countries whose whole way of thought, up to yesterday, was deeply dyed in violence; today, even those country long to find release from violence. True, they go on increasing their armaments, but nevertheless they are wondering how to get rid of them. The sheer inertia of habit makes for the stockpiling of arms. But intellectually people have come to understand that arms will achieve nothing - nothing, that is, except losses for the poor and the blocking of all progress in real welfare, consequent on the immense expenditure of resources on the army. Even those countries where revolutions have taken place through bloodshed desire peace today. Why? Because whereas in the former days the weapons were in the hands of men, it is so no longer; men are now in the hands of their weapons. If the spark of war should not set the world on fire, no man will be able to control

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it. Mankind has, therefore, lost faith in the possibility of solving its problems through war or violence. That in itself is a great thing to have happened and the way forward is now open. If arms can no longer settle our disputes, then some other way of settling them must be found. That is what the Shanti Sena is designed to do.

S. V.-799

The Birth of Shanti Sena

The Shanti Sena is not a new proposal. We owe both the word and the idea behind it to Bapu, who himself endeavoured to give it a practical shape. He was both its commander and its first soldier. As commander he issued the order 'Do or Die', as a soldier he obeyed it. That is, his life and actions give us a complete picture of what the Shanti Sena is. No doubt, he also expounded his ideas freely in words, but it was through action, through life, that his thought was most fully expressed.

S. V.-801

The Functions of Shanti Sena

The Shanti Sena is an army which offers its services in perpetuity to all men without distinction. A sick man is given the same care, no matter what his caste, his religion or his politics, and no matter whether he lives nobly or wickedly. All that matters is that he is a man in need.

We have therefore to set up this sort of army which will serve the needs impartially, disinterestedly, without asking for any reward. Its whole vocation will be to confront hatred and love.

S. V.-802

Qualifications of a Shanti Sainik

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A member of Shanti Sena, whether a man or a woman, must have a living faith in non-violence. This is only possible if one has a living faith in God. Without that, one would not have the courage to lay down one's life without anger, fear and desire for vengeance.

This messenger of peace should have equal respect for all the prominent religions of the world. If he is a Hindu, he would have equal reverence for other religions found in India. He should have the knowledge of the principles common to various religions.

It need not be mentioned that one who works for peace should have a blameless character. He should be reputed for his impartiality.

S. V.-806

The Pledge of a Shanti Sainik

The main principle of Shanti Sena is that they should be free from partisanship, free from hatred, free from fear. They will trust one another, will fear none, and will frighten none. They will consider no man their enemy; their hearts will be filled with love. This is the pledge of the Shanti Sainik.

S. V.-808

Some portion of the primary training of the army is also essential for Shanti Sena. It is about discipline, drill, chorus singing, etc.

A volunteer should know how to remove the wounded. He should have such articles with him as are need for First Aid. He should know how to extinguish fire, how to enter safely a place on fire, how to climb up with or without a load and to descend safely.

S. V.-810

Women and Shanti Sena

If women will take up the work of Shanti Sena, the face of the world will change, and we shall be able to achieve freedom from the problems which we are facing today in the country and abroad. Men cannot do all this. They are not in their proper senses. They cannot think out of it. The only solution they can find is to increase armaments. Thus in this age of science, when men's brains have become paralysed, if our women come forward with their divine qualities of restraint and modesty, and use their mother-power, they can establish the rule of compassion. S. V.-816

In the path of violence, men will always lead. But in the part of non-violence, women can go ahead of them. So it is essential that women should lead, and that too in their own way. The way of women is the way of compassion. S. V.-817

Shanti Sena and War

Question : What will the Shanti Sena do when confronted by an armed forces in times of war?

Vinoba : What is the work of the Shanti Sena? Wars are not a daily occurrence; even quarrels do not occur every day, and twenty-four hours of the day. It will be the Shanti Sena's task to remove the root causes of unrest - the gulf between the haves and the have-nots, the pride of ownership, the insistence of 'mine' and 'thine', on high and low, on caste distinction, on religious differences and disputes. These are all causes of unrest, some economic, some social, some religious. The Shanti Sena will, therefore, be a full-time service army, working to remove these causes of dissensions and to find peaceful solutions to national problems. The result will be a cleansing of the national mind and growth of mutual goodwill. When that takes place, the government will not have to spend much on the army; the moral strength of the nation will be increased and it will be able to make its influence felt in the international field.

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The full time friendly service which it renders will make it respected both at home and abroad.
S. V.-820

Essentials for a Shanti Sainik (Peace Brigade)

(i) Faith in Truth and Non-violence. (ii) A fearless, non-malicious and non-party attitude. (iii) Making no distinctions on the basis of country, creed, race, caste, language, etc. (iv) Standing fully aloof from power and party politics. (v) No support to war. (vi) Preparedness to undertake even risk to life in calming disorders. (vii) Observance of the Shanti Sena discipline.
S. V.-1206

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