

Disarmament From Strength

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What do we, who are gathered here in this Convention, represent? Some of us have talked about non-violence. Do we all believe fully in non-violence, taking it to its utmost conclusions? I suppose not. We are not all pacifists. The word "Gandhian" is being used more and more frequently nowadays, and by frequent use it has lost all meaning, so that the most violent of men call themselves Gandhian. We all of us had the privilege of serving Gandhi, but I think it would be a little presumptuous on my part, for instance, to call myself a Gandhian. I am powerfully influenced by what he said, by what he taught us. But he was too big a man--let us recognise it. We live in his glory, in the glory of his name. We, in India, take the name of the Buddha and Gandhi and think we have done our duty. We assume vicariously, to some, extent, the virtues of the Buddha and

Gandhi, just as to some extent in the West fierce and brutal wars were fought in the name of Christ.

The tremendous problem which faces the world today is one of survival; one of not being gradually reduced to the level of beasts; one of the increase of civilisation, of moral values. It does not require any argument for all of us to know that a nuclear war not only means the end, the destruction of humanity, but that it is something infinitely degrading to our sense of values. Nobody, surely, can like being liquidated or having any part in this widespread destruction. But, nevertheless, large numbers of people are prepared to put up with this eventuality because presumably they think that something worse may take place unless they are ready for a nuclear war. They are afraid of defeat by another country, and, therefore, resign themselves to an arms race and the possibility of a nuclear war. Or else, they satisfy themselves by saying that nobody wants a nuclear war, but that they must have nuclear bombs as deterrents to prevent the other party from using them. This is curious logic—and meanwhile we go nearer to the final explosion. It is all these bombs that are being made and collected, and all these tests, that are gradually bringing the probability of an explosion nearer. And time is limited. If you don't put an end to it soon enough, it may later on be beyond the capacity of human beings or nations to stop the rot.

At the present moment we have four powers, essentially two of them and two others, who have nuclear arms and who have already collected vast numbers of them. If and when we decide on complete disarmament, it will be a terrible problem as to what we shall do with these bombs that we have collected. How shall we dispose of them without injury to somebody? You cannot throw them into the sea; the sea will be contaminated. I do not know what one can do with them, but that is a matter for the

scientists. Anyhow, there is this vast collection of arms with us and the time is limited, and it is really a question of a race between the good sense of humanity and the fear between man and man.

Fear, I think, is a terrible thing. Fear and cowardice are the most degrading things anybody or any nation can have. They make one brutal. That is, why, when people talk about non-violence in theory, speaking for myself, I completely agree. But I am horrified at the idea of the coward and the weak and the persons who are afraid of living under the shade of non-violence. Of course, Gandhi's non-violence was of the brave and he said so: "I would rather that you take out the sword you have in your heart and use it." There is nothing in this to do with fear. It is his idea of non-violence. But, I am afraid the non-violence of many people in this country—and I say so quite frankly—is non-violence of the timid and the afraid and the fearful—and from that nothing good can come. Nothing good can come from people who are afraid, who are cowards, and from their kind of non-violence.

So the difficulty arises that when you ask masses of human beings to follow a policy, they must be trained up to it, as Gandhi indeed tried to train up and succeeded in a large measure in a limited field. But they must morally, spiritually--call it what you like--realise the significance of their action. If not, then they fall between two stools. They are neither here nor there and only fearfully look ahead to what might happen. That is a bad thing. Therein lies the difficulty, I think, of applying non-violence in large numbers: that it should not make them cowards. If they are really non-violent, well and good, let's go ahead; and I am quite sure if we went ahead in courage, non-violence would win, not cowardice. In India, especially, we have the habit of talking in the highest terms but not

acting up to them, our actions not coming anywhere near the ideals we profess.

I am very proud of India and of the many things that India has given to humanity. I think those are things of the greatest value to humanity and I do believe humanity will yet profit by them. But I know my people to some extent, liking them enormously, and I know their failings too, and I do not want to make them profess one thing and do something entirely opposite. That is hypocrisy and cowardice, and a grave danger. I am convinced of the virtue of non-violence and of its power. But I am not sure that people in this country, or for that matter people of any other country, at the present moment are capable of carrying their burden of non-violence—and if they fail, they fail utterly.

I am absolutely convinced that if any country adopted unilateral disarmament through strength, nobody would be able to injure it and it will win in the end. But what is the good of my saying so when I feel that those who adopt non-violence do not do so through strength, but in fact are fearful of the consequences of their action and indulge in violence of all types? Vinobaji, a man of the present day in the great tradition of India, has said in his message to the Convention that he is less afraid of nuclear bombs than of the dagger and the sword. What does it mean? Is he not stressing the evil in our hearts which comes out with everything that we do?

It is true that nuclear bombs have increased the danger tremendously, leading to a crisis in human affairs where either humanity survives or it does not. And this crisis can only be resolved, I think, finally not by some nuclear tests being stopped, but by something deeper, by the minds and hearts of men and the spirit of man rising to somewhat higher levels. I believe that humanity will rise; it is my firm faith, because there is no other way.

Otherwise it might perish. We talk about nuclear bombs, but these are parts of a larger thing—abolishing war, putting an end to war, absolutely. Before war goes we must have full disarmament. All these things are connected, each leading to the next step. Or we talk of the final step all the time. we never take any step at all. Therefore, for the present, we should concentrate on the stoppage of nuclear tests, though I shall be very happy to subscribe to the banning of the whole manufacture for all our desire to put an end to it will not lead us far, because nuclear bombs in an advanced scientific age, in a country which is advanced in science and technology, can be manufactured with ease. Can you put an end to all the nuclear bombs today? And, even so, if human beings want to make them later, they will make them. They will make them in a year or two. They are advanced enough and maybe technology will advance still further and make it easier to manufacture these bombs. I remember a very eminent nuclear physicist telling me once that one of these days you will manufacture nuclear bombs in your back-gardens or in a small laboratory. Well, that may be a slight exaggeration. But the fact is nuclear bombs are all the time planted in our minds and hearts and unless we can get rid of them there, how can we be certain?

So, in the ultimate analysis, war must be abolished. War will not be abolished till there is a change in human beings. That is a big question which I do not feel I am competent enough to answer. But there is no alternative left. So we must have disarmament. We must have a world without war, it is said. But a present step, an urgent step, is to put an end to nuclear tests. The horror of it seems to me amazing, that a thing like this could be continued even purely on grounds of decency, if not anything else. Then also, continuing nuclear tests brings the possibility of war nearer. It may create an atmosphere of an arms race, of fear and of the possibility of the accidents happening.

One other thing I should like to suggest, not as solution, but as a step towards lessening of tensions; and that is, having areas, atom-free areas, in Asia, in Africa, in Europe, which are recognised to have no nuclear weapons and which will not be used for nuclear weapons. All this cannot mean much, because the ultimate thing is having no war, full disarmament. But all these are steps which help. Today, the worst thing is the terrible tension and the fear behind it. Imagine thousands of aircraft with nuclear bombs always being in the air day and night. Imagine also those thousands of aircraft being piloted by brave young men. Any one of them may lose his nerve and do something which may lead to a war. It is horrible thought and still on goes this mad race.

Every little step that we take towards the goal is a good one, and although I do not know what effect this Convention may have on other countries, in India at any rate, I hope it will draw away the attention of our people to these problems, because we are a curious mixture and exceedingly mild people who occasionally turn terribly violent and misbehave. An average Indian will deliberately avoid stepping on a little insect; he will go round it. But that same average Indian may not be so kind to human beings. So I hope that this Convention will bring some education and throw some light on these problems to our own people, because after all we are rather small men, grappling with enormous problems, grappling with the future of humanity. And small as we are, we can do something if we work together, if we understand the problem and do our little towards its solution.

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