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## The Growing Violence in Public Life in India

When Christ said, 'love thy neighbour as thyself' he stated a great imperative without which life would be impossible. Love is life, while hatred is death. According to Gandhiji, love and non-violence are synonymous terms. Non-violence is a term negative only in appearance but it has real positive meaning. Non-violence represents the positive aspect of life, violence represents the negative aspect of life. Non-violence is constructive, violence is destructive. Non-violence is not only human but also godly, divine. Violence is just the opposite. Violence is untruth since it negates life, non-violence is truth because it aims at preservation of life. Man must practice non-violence because it is in accord with the scheme of the Creator and abjure violence because it is inimical to the creation itself.

Non-violence is the central principle of all religions. The basic tenet of every religion is love which means non-violence. Gandhiji was so much against violence that he would not recommend its use even for such a noble cause as the achievement of freedom of the country. He would not use violence even against those who had enslaved India for centuries.

It is a sad commentary indeed on our faith in Gandhism that we feel no qualms of conscience in razing to the ground the edifice of non-violence which Buddha, Vardhman Mahavir and Gandhiji erected for us. For little benefits we indulge in violence. We witness a lot of violence in elections. Most politicians from lower level to the higher one tend to achieve their end through violence. Recently elections to legislative assemblies of some states and Union Territory were held. In one of the states elections were marred by violence. Even in the presence of paramilitary forces acts of violence were perpetrated without any concern for electoral propriety. Violence was let loose even after the declaration of results. This must not have happened. The sanctity of our electoral process is vitiated by these

acts of violence. Even at the lower level, say the Panchayat elections, violence was resorted to by some elements.

Recently there have been many cases where violence was freely resorted to. Our Constitution allows peaceful demonstrations and protests to express dissent against government's policies, but violence is never allowed to be resorted. There was a long spell of protests and demonstrations against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 (CAA). No problem. But later on, violence was let loose in some parts of Delhi in an organised way in which hundreds of lives were lost and property worth hundreds of crores of rupees was consigned to the flames. The greatest irony is that many high profile politicians were involved in this orgy of violence.

This year on January 26, 2021, the sacred ramparts of the Red Fort were defiled and desecrated. National flag was dishonoured; the unruly mob carried out destruction of national property to their fill. Thanks to the restraint exercised by Security forces, firing was not resorted to and therefore casualties could not occur. Was this the way of the farmers to get their demands fulfilled? Unfortunately, the hooligans were not the real farmers; the perpetrators of violence were a group of disgruntled people against the policies of the government. The irony is that some farmers' leaders came out in defence of these people and tried to pressure the government not to take legal action against them. Earlier, there was an all India agitation by our Dalit brethren. Demonstrating peacefully is legally justified but law does not allow anybody to take law into his own hands, to resort to loot, arson and murder in the name of agitation.