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## UNIT 9 PACIFIST MOVEMENTS\*

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### 9.1 INTRODUCTION

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The term Pacifism is derived from the word Pacific that translates into Peacemaking in Latin. It is based on *Paci-* Peace and *-ficus* meaning making. The basic aim of Pacifism is to resolve disputes in a peaceful manner and in most amicable way. Pacifism vehemently opposes war or military action or the use of force. The basic belief is that the political, economic and social ends are not to be met using violence. It rejects the use of force by government or any other organization to achieve their ends. Since the very name suggests that it stands for peace, it is quite evident that pacifism is opposed to war and military action.

It is important to note that there is no set definition of pacifism. It is construed differently by different people though all the categories agree that it stands for peace. The focus is both inward and outward that is at the individual level or towards a societal level, pacifism has to be practiced if we are to live in peace. The basic philosophy, ideology and principles of pacifism find their roots in religious teachings. The proponents of pacifism believe that this ideal, if practiced by all, will lead to world peace and order. Their belief found further support when world leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King advocated and practiced them giving the world a new hope to get freedom from oppression. Pacifism stands as the most effective instrument of conflict resolution in the world.

#### ***Aims and Objectives***

The basic aim of this Unit is to familiarize the reader with the concepts relating to pacifism. After reading the Unit, you will be able to understand

- What is pacifism and why it is necessary
- The inefficacy of military action and violence
- Gandhi's advocacy of pacifism and

- Eminent persons who advocated and followed pacifism for world peace and order.

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## 9.2 WHAT IS PACIFISM?

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Pacifism is described as a belief that any violence, including war, is unjustifiable under any circumstances, and that all disputes should be settled by peaceful means. It applies to all those who oppose war. Pacifism is also defined broadly to include those individuals who, strongly sensitized to the ongoing slaughter on the battlefields and opposed to military solutions, engaged in concerted peace advocacy, which included nonviolent actions (petitions, meetings), the search for a negotiated end to the conflict, and championing principles for a lasting peace. Such activists usually pursued their ideas and programs through pacifist or quasi-pacifist groups (David Patterson, p. 2).

To obtain peace, the essential virtues that are needed to be practiced include tolerance, harmony and love. As described earlier, pacifism rejects war as a means towards peace. As advocated by Count Leo Tolstoy in *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, the meaning, history and purpose of pacifism are widely given in his treatise. Pacifism helps in developing those virtues that are non-violent in nature and that which greatly contribute to peace and order without going to war. The principles of pacifism inspired by Leo Tolstoy had a great impact on Mahatma Gandhi's mind. To him, it was an effective tool for resisting war. He practiced it during his struggle for immigrant rights struggle in South Africa. Gandhi communicated with Tolstoy and these two great men carried the legacy of non-violence and in thought and deed. They laid the foundation for future human rights struggles as evident in South Africa during Nelson Mandela's time and also during the Civil Rights Movement in America led by Martin Luther King. A non-violent resistance to oppression and movement towards self-determination through rejection of violence caught the attention of the world.

The idea to reduce tensions and foster peace existed even before the known break-out of the World War-I. People from all walks of life attended Universal Peace Congresses knowing fully well the efficacy of peace and order. The gradual emergence of an international system and the frequent crises and wars led to unresolved tensions between nations. The year 1889 is said to be the beginning of the conglomeration of pacifists for promoting peace. Europe became the hub of most of such meetings. The resistance to war gained momentum; but this also led to the emergence of various groups propagating peace though not essentially pacifists. Therefore, the support to these groups also varied according to the nations concerned. Another problem was the element of nationalism wherein some members supported their countries becoming aggressors for various reasons. The absence of uniform code and specific purpose were mostly moulded according to the nationalist factors. For example, the activists from France, Italy and Germany and so on had their own reasons to support their nations' prejudicial policies. Therefore, peace activism took different notes as per the requirement of the prevalent times. The activities of the peace activists and the pacifists were more or less disregarded and the efforts to forge international camaraderie did not yield positive outcomes.

Nonetheless, it would be a disregard to think that the pacifists did not make serious efforts. When the war was evident and nations were getting ready for

combats, they did speak up as advocates of peace. They even cabled to the heads of some of the nations to let peace prevail over war but their appeals had no visible effect or impact. In spite of the failure of their efforts, the pacifists gained popularity and were appreciated for their courage to advocate peace in a hostile war environment. The focus of the pacifists during the outbreak of the war featured on the future of the world and as to how peace could be consolidated in the post-war atmosphere. Pacifism gained momentum in Europe and the United States gradually; amidst the fear of wars, they continually preached peace and were eternally optimistic about a peaceful international world order.

There are different types of pacifists:

- Absolute pacifists are absolutely against violence who refuse to kill others whatever the situation may be, be it in self-defence too.
- Conditional pacifists usually oppose wars but support it when their own nation's security is at stake thus calling for military defence as necessary.
- Selective pacifists decide whether a military war is justified or necessary. They even refuse to fight for their country if their country gets into unjust war or invades others.

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### 9.3 PACIFISM FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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Paul Bohannon once said “Society is impossible without conflict. But society is worse than impossible without the control of conflict” (Paul Bohannon (ed.), *Law and Welfare: Studies in the Anthropology of Conflict* (New York, 1967), p. xxi). Conflict is part of our everyday life. Gandhi's view of conflict and the importance of expressing it is one of his most significant insights. According to his interpretation, the *Gita* regards each person as possessing truth and untruth together. “The field of battle is in our own body”, Gandhi said in summarising its teachings. One finds altogether a different understanding of the meaning of international conflicts / civil wars or wars in the literature on conflict. Disagreement over the exact notion of the conflict as a term in the domain of international relations dominates until today.

Overall, conflicts are interpersonal, intra-personal, one that involves countries, individuals, groups and so on. Each conflict varies in intensity, perception, intention to resolve and the initiative taken to resolve the conflict. Today we have numerous conflict resolution tools that help in identifying and analyzing the conflict. We also have enthusiastic individuals and organizations who are interested in resolving conflicts between parties. Therefore the existence of conflict does not necessarily mean that the conflict would blow into a full-fledged war.

The world before the First and Second world wars presented altogether a different picture. There were conflicts, players, clash of aspirations and ambitions to expand one's national territories. It definitely was a period of intermittent clashes between nations who believed in realism to the core. That pacifism emerged as a viable alternative during those times was a no mean achievement and the advocates had a commendable role to play to resolve conflicts. There were Quakers, religious pacifists and absolute pacifists who contributed largely towards peace initiatives.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

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

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

1) What do you understand by the concept of Pacifism? Highlight the importance of Conflict Resolution?

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## 9.4 GANDHI AND PACIFISM

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Contrary to the just war tradition, pacifism rejects war as an acceptable means for obtaining peace. Pacifism connotes a commitment to nonviolence in one's personal life that might include the attempt to cultivate pacific virtues such as tolerance, patience, mercy, forgiveness and love. Gandhi was the first to divulge the merits of pacifism in the Indian context. His thoughts and views on non-violence emanated from his observation of Jain traditions, and his extreme reliance on the principles of truth. Like Gandhi, the proponents of non-violent action believe that nonviolence could be all the more successful if society focused its resources on preparing the citizens for nonviolent struggle and on synchronizing nonviolent action. Some glimpses into Gandhi's thoughts on pacifism as a tool of non-violence would make us understand his philosophy.

- Gandhi was an advocate of goodwill between nations and societies. He believed in the moral superiority that imposes a moral responsibility on states as well as individuals to settle disputes at the level of the parties concerned.
- Gandhi argued for elimination of war and to establish and promote world peace. Gandhi felt that it could be pursued better by the statesmen and nations to use or develop certain methods and institutions to work for establishing peace. Some of the methods include third party settlement; world government; disarmament and an international police force in place of a huge international organisation.
- Gandhi recommended Satyagraha, his method of non-violence, as a proxy for military strike. He claimed satyagraha as a law of universal application and can even bring the harshest of opponents to have a change of heart and mind.
- Gandhi expected a sovereign India to carry out a pacifying function in the world which would be a projection of the country's heritage and its nonviolent struggle against the British Empire. Gandhi's notions implicitly deny those ancient Hindu ideas emphasising stratagems, guile and the balance of power as the basis for India's external relations, especially those associated with Kautilya and Kamandaka. Nonetheless Gandhi left to Indian policy makers

some practical advice as well as a moralistic approach to world affairs. Adroitness and idealism are also evident in his views (Gandhi on Pacifism, IGNOU Publication).

- Gandhi believed in forgiving the opponents for their wrong-doings. This ability to forgive the opponent would cultivate a morally superior individual. Since the society is a sum of all its individuals, this quality of forgiveness could contagiously spread to promoting peace and harmony among people and nations.

Gandhi's qualified pacifism is derived from his belief of dynamic nonviolence and his attempt to find the ultimate truth. His reiteration that truth and non-violence are as old as hills gives us a glimpse into his uncompromising position on non-violent strategy and action. Likewise, his methods had to match the end for which one is seeking. The approach should be truthful means to achieve truthful end. His ethics of love and justice are interrelated. Gandhi's pacifism could be best understood by his words on abhorrence of war and his plea to the military proponents to seek peace rather than seeking war. Gandhi held that "as a member of a disarmed, subject nation which needed the spirit of resistance, he would vote for military training in a free India". He disliked the concept of people paying taxes for military actions of their policy makers. He called for the rejection of the same and advocated pacifism as a better alternative.

Gandhi did not favour a rule by the outsiders in a country. The thirst to oppress and rule of unsuspecting and innocent masses through military action was one of the worst kinds of rules, he felt. He made it clear to the proponents of peace movement far and wide that intellectual objectivity is undefended during war-time as one tends to get swayed by the circumstances. Gandhi told pacifists that a military contest should be rejected. Nevertheless, he was convinced that the Spanish Republicans fighting Franco, the Chinese struggling against Japan, and the Poles resisting Germany, are fair enough though he was dead against the methods of violent defence. Gandhi found that justice always rests with one party to a conflict; though military action is deplorable, he said that some amount of good can emerge from this kind of situation.

Gandhi's ideas about war cut across unqualified pacifism, conditional pacifism and patriotic realism. As an unqualified pacifist, Gandhi believed that nothing of value is produced from military conflict. This view can be found in his idea during the period 1909-1914, in his comments about Western democracies immediately after World War I and during the early years of World War II. It is seen also in his condemnation of nuclear war. As an absolute pacifist, he is more utopian than his general premises suggest (Gandhi on Pacifism).

Gandhi believed that the peace efforts following the First and Second World wars were just eyewash. Firstly, after the World War I, the Allies were as devious and malicious as Germany. Their clandestine treaties and military testimony were proof of this and did not match up to the dignified position as someone who could forgive the wrongdoers. This eventually led to the holding of grudges and finally led to the clash of ideologies yet again plunging the world into an unwarranted Second war that was all the more destructive. As the World War II broke out, he said on introspection that the peace makers at Versailles have consistently denied justice to Germany by their non-peaceful overtures. Further, Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points for its so-called peace initiatives was

indirectly an attempt to seek war and unleash violence. Expressing his anguish in 1939, when the war broke out between the parties concerned, he said, "After all, what is the gain if the so-called democracies win? War certainly will not end. Democracy will have adopted all the tactics of the Fascists and the Nazis, including conscription and all other forcible methods to compel and exact obedience. All that may be gained at the end of the victory is the possibility of a comparative protection of individual liberty."

The 'Royden Affair' gives an excellent illustration of Gandhi's unconditional pacifism during World War II. Mude Royden, a British pacifist, decided late in 1941 that her capacity for nonviolence was not sufficient for the circumstances in which she found herself. Following her interpretation of Christ's idea, she decided to support the war which she could not effectively diminish. When Gandhi learned of her decision, he criticised her new position and asked her to repent and to return to her former unqualified nonviolence. It does not seem that Gandhi understood that her personal incapacity to observe strict pacifism was a condition to which he himself confessed in the 1920's as one of his explanations for supporting the British cause in World War I (Gandhi on Pacifism).

It is important to note that there were certain changes to the stance of pacifism by Gandhi during the World War II. He permitted a defence theatre for operations against Japan under the terms of a treaty with the democracies. The defence of India-Burma frontier became a necessary action and he did not object to it. This is not to say that he advocated military action; where necessary, he felt that non-violence could play a greater role in settling conflicts. In this context, Gandhi was driven more by a feeling of patriotism. In reality, during the war times, the pacifists in various parts of the world were divided by their loyalty to their respective nations and had to shun the pacifist notions though they continued to write and advocate peace and pacific settlements. Perhaps this constitutes one of the varying shifts of the pacifists during the war times. Like Gandhi, they too were torn between defending their respective nations from the onslaught of the aggression and making shifts towards use of little military action as the circumstances warranted. He was critical of the war and the military action that ended in unprecedented violence. He was also extremely pained at the use of atomic bomb and condemned it as a ghastly act. He said that war criminals should be reformed so as to make them peace emissaries; the war criminals were 'not confined to the Axis Powers alone'. He said that Roosevelt and Churchill are equally responsible for war and not just blame the Fascist leaders Hitler and Mussolini. He lamented the humiliation meted out to the opponents during the war times.

That the peace overtures did not take place during the war times cannot be asserted. As Gandhi continued to proclaim his opposition to war, peace efforts, though in small numbers were being made during that time. An example is being cited from the description given by David Patterson: "As the war continued with no apparent end in sight, however, concerns about the purposes of the war and the nation's peace aims surfaced. In the fall of 1914, a new group, *Bund Neues Vaterland* (New Fatherland League), was founded in Berlin. Consisting of intellectuals, liberals, socialists, and pacifists, with sympathetic support from reform-minded diplomats, aristocrats, and businessmen, the league set forth an internationalist program. It hoped for a negotiated peace, but its members were mostly united in their opposition to ultra-nationalists' annexationist war aims.

Though comprising only a few hundred members, the group managed to publish and circulate a number of pamphlets that articulated its internationalist program (David Patterson, p. 8).”

Gandhi was opposed to the war and its destruction. He said that it did not benefit anyone; instead it wrought upon serious consequences to those who directly and indirectly participated in it leaving a trail of loss in terms of people, finances and resources. He also questioned as to why few men should decide who the aggressor and who the victim is. They all belonged to the same mould as they participated in the war. He was pained that instead of sorting out conflicts peacefully, nations resorted to war thereby leaving behind all the efforts being made by peace-loving people all over the world. Thus Gandhi’s pacifism oscillated between his principles of idealism and patriotism. But we need to remember that it is his astounding contribution towards non-violence that inspired many leaders to pursue peaceful methods for liberating themselves in future without shedding blood.

**Check Your Progress Exercise 2**

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

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

- 1) Mahatma Gandhi is a staunch pacifist and advocated non-violence thoroughly. Discuss at length.

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**9.5 PROMINENT PACIFISTS**

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**Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910)**

Among the pacifists of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Count Leo Tolstoy stands tall. Russian writer and philosopher, he fought in the Crimean war but became a Christian pacifist. He greatly influenced Mahatma Gandhi with his writings and also had communicated with him on several occasions. Gandhi considered him as his spiritual guide and mentor.

**Albert Einstein (1879-1955):**

Scientist of great eminence, Albert Einstein was a great pacifist too. He abhorred violence and war and advocated peace. He was full of praise for the principles of Gandhi’s non-violence and truth and considered as one of the greatest human beings that walked on this earth. Einstein openly declared that he was a militant pacifist asserting his position as a peace-lover. He said that people should refuse to go to war and only then the wars would end.

**Emile Arnaud (1864-1921):**

An advocate of non-violent conflict resolution, he propounded the use of the term ‘pacifism’ in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He was known for his ideas on justice, humanity, harmony and tolerance towards each other.

**Bertrand Russell (1872-1970)**

A staunch opponent of war, Russell campaigned against use of military action against others. He advocated nuclear disarmament and was also jailed for expressing his views on First World War and America's entry into the same. A devoted pacifist, he wrote extensively on peace and its usefulness.

**George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)**

A playwright of eminence, he defended and advocated pacifism as the most effective way to solve conflicts. He often quoted Sermon on the Mount for talking peace.

**Martin Luther King Jr (1929-1968)**

An eminent leader who led American Civil Rights Movement, King Jr was a staunch follower of the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi who refused to leave non-violent principles. His perseverance for peace and tolerance made him one of the most respected leaders of non-violent movements.

**Aldous Huxley (1894-1963)**

Writer and pacifist, Huxley wrote the famous work Brave New World. He was opposed to war and was a staunch proponent of non-violence. He was even rejected for American citizenship as he refused to commit to take up arms to defend it if necessary. He was opposed to war and denounced it vehemently.

**Sophie Scholl (1921-1943)**

A young student, she was highly opposed to war and participated in the distribution of anti-war leaflets to generate awareness among the public. She opposed the Nazi ideology of Germany. She was consequently executed after being termed as participating in the high treason activities in 1943. She was outspoken till the last moment of her life against the Nazi leaders.

**Helen Keller (1880-1968)**

Political activist, author and lecturer, Helen Keller took an anti-militarist stance. She was a champion of the women's rights and also supported causes that opposed military intervention of nations.

**Vera Brittain (1893-1970)**

She was a peace activist and writer and during World War II, she began addressing the people through letter known as Letters to Peacelovers. She was a practical pacifist as she helped the war effort by working as a fire warden and travelling widely to raise funds for Peace Pledge Union's food relief campaign. She wrote articles against apartheid, colonialism and called for nuclear disarmament.

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## **9.6 RELEVANCE OF PACIFISM IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD**

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The word Pacifism is not a common word in usage today. More often we hear nuclear disarmament, anti-war campaigns, and conflict resolution and so on. Many theorists have come out with the ways and means of conflict resolution and how we can make this world a better place to live in. Does this mean pacifism lost its relevance? Are there no proponents for this invaluable concept? We can



convincingly answer in the negative. Pacifism as a word might not be in usage. But its relevance stands as the most viable alternative to war. This ideology is opposed to war. Its relevance has not faded; instead today the problems of the world have multiplied. We have wars over different issues; we have wars to attain and establish peace. In this conflict ridden world, pacifism stands as a relevant option in a different name in different parts of the world. Pacifism was well rooted in European countries. Later on, it found resonance through eminent leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and a galaxy of prominent leaders all over the world.

**Check Your Progress Exercise 3**

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

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

1) Write a short note on the contribution of the pacifists around the world.

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**9.7 SUMMARY**

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In this Unit, we have studied the origins and rise of pacifism as a concept and how it came to prominence during the war years and after. We have come to understand the different types of pacifism and what its main objectives are. One of the most prominent leaders in the world, Mahatma Gandhi advocated pacifism and voiced his support for the same. His satyagraha or nonviolent force is also influenced by this concept. Some of the most learned men of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries have voiced their support for pacifist ideology and by opposing wars and in the process even drawing the ire of their governments. Nevertheless, pacifist ideology and its anti-war stance continue to inspire the activists of peace and harmony. That this continues to come into the discourses of writers, artists, activists and policy makers speak volumes of its relevance even in the contemporary world.

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**9.8 SUGGESTED READINGS**

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Sharp, Gene. *The Methods of Nonviolent Action*, Porter Sargent Publishers, Boston, 2005.

Gandhi on Pacifism, (IGNOU Publication on the course Political Thought).

David S. Patterson., *Pacifism*, International Encyclopedia of the First World War (Online edition, last updated 8<sup>th</sup> October, 2014)

Gene Sharp., *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Practice and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Potential*., Porter Sargent Publishers, Boston, 2005.

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## 9.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Your answer should highlight the idea of peaceful settlement of dispute through peaceful means of petition, talk, and dialogue .Non Violence and the peace as essential to dispute settlement.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) The contribution of Gandhi to the cause of peace building through love, truth and non violence needs special mention.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) Your answer should include the contribution of Albert Einstein, Bertrand, Martin Luther King Jr ,Aldous Huxley ,Helen Keller .



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