



TOLSTOY'S DOCTRINE OF NON-RESISTANCE TO EVIL AS SOCIAL ETHIC

MARY SAMUEL

Research Scholar

Jai Narain Vyas University

Jodhpur (RJ) INDIA

ABSTRACT

Non-resistance to evil is indeed meant for the moral and spiritual idea of absolute good. Practising non-resistance to evil is not just the doctrine for personal behaviour but also a social practice unfolding an entirely new perspective in an individual life while leaving a great impact on social mannerism too. Tolstoy carries a central place in the moral ethical systematic teachings. Considering non-resistance to evil as a principle of life, it creates in an individual a philosophical and ethical perspective towards the society as whole. Tolstoy asserts on the inclination of a person towards the quest of understanding the finite life and its position and its manifestation of moral discipline, tolerance and meekness. This basic doctrine demands practice of it every single day which manifests not just the ideological lifestyle but also moral behaviour of an individual.

Keywords: Tolstoy, non-resistance, evil, morality, social ethics, responsibility, call of conscience.

INTRODUCTION

It was Tolstoy's moral and spiritual quest that led to his teaching of non-resistance to evil presented in his philosophical and religious creativity and still carries relevance in today's modern era. In his articles "Do not kill", "Criticism of Dogmatic Theology", "What my Faith is" and "Criticism of dogmatic Theology," he asserted on the importance of moral improvement in life as well as in arts, considering the doctrine of non-resistance to evil associating it with the law of love which will result in human life as sacred and inviolable. His philosophical and religious doctrines show that his philosophy of non-resistance was basically his way to epitomize and justify spiritual being. A holistic analysis of the religious

MARY SAMUEL

1Page



and philosophical doctrine of Tolstoy shows that the philosophy of non-resistance is nothing but a special way of substantiating and embodying spiritual being.

It was this deep Platonism of Tolstoy which was congruous and emulsion of Christian doctrines. Tolstoy saw the originality of spiritual being in the delusion of world of things and call of conscious to every person to overpower the material realm of evil through effectual way of non-resistance to evil. According to him, the philosophy of non-resistance to evil was the quintessence of the philosophy of incarnated spirituality to overpower the evil. It gets easy to discern man's grapple to maintain peace and justice, if one comprehends the peculiar and unconventional manifestation of violence and evil. Nevertheless, one has to go long back to the historical period than what is exposed to the modern society to find a solution to the elementary issue of the general societal development. It would, invariably, want an incessant effort on the parts of world community, societies and every individual to identify non-resistance to evil as the greatest value in one's life and practice it every single day.

Tolstoy acknowledged the fact that it was impossible to completely eradicate violence from the society therefore he asserted on the idea of non-resistance as a norm rather than an ideal to which everyone must strive. Guseinov conformed to the moral doctrine of Leo Tolstoy by saying that his prime motto was to do and bring out goodness. By examining the philosophical and religious perspective of Tolstoy, what comes out is that he believed not merely on the intellectual position of non-resistance as a norm but also it certainly an imperative position too in life that carries moral binding force. It is, inevitably, non-resistance that morally improves the inner state of a person. Meleshko asserted Tolstoy's evangelical commandment "do not resist evil" was perceived not only as a principle of personal behaviour, but also as a law of social life, opening a new perspective on the spiritual evolution of humanity.

Non-resistance is demonstrated as the law of love. According to Tolstoy, the simple phrase "Do not resist evil" clearly banishes the concept of violence. He asserted that it contained the essence of the Gospel doctrines which he considered to be the meaning of life. Inevitably, violence is the opposite of love. Tolstoy has associated violence with three meanings. First, he associates violence with murder or threat of murder which furthers generates the need of prisons and justice to physical or external destruction. Secondly, violence is associated with external influence, the need of which arises when there is not internal agreement between two. Third, when one tries to subdue the will of other. Therefore, we can say that violence is an act which is entirely opposite to love.

Tolstoy considered love to be of highest fundamental law of life. According to him, love is mandatory to maintain morality in the world. We do find the concept of love taken to the

MARY SAMUEL

2P a g e



level wherein the divine principle is manifested through love. “God is love, and he who abides in God, God is in Him.” (1Jn. 4:16)

Moreover, the ethics of non-resistance is not confined to the ethics of self-improvement, it points towards a better social life too. The main idea of this ethic is to understand the fact it is not just for oneself to practice it as a rule rather as a law of social life. Therefore, we can say that the ethics of non-resistance is no longer confined to the belief of personal redemption but as a deliverance from evil to all. The whole idea of non-resistance to evil is to make an effort to overpower social struggle which comes on the way to moral opposition as what some may consider good, others may not find and vice versa. Non-resistance is more than just giving up. It carries an affirmative moral connotation. It is necessary to realize the inherent indubitable sanctity of human life. A person is inherent of sacred soul and not just perishable body. If one refuses to be violent, it will shift into a realm which is of good spirit and it can bring out only good and constructive solution to win over the situation with equal agreement. It should be no doubt that the Tolstoy work on his concept of non-violence is called as “Kingdom of God is within you”. It is through entering this realm, a man understand his incompetence to comprehend the meaning of life and death. If one understands his shortcomings, it will be much easier to understand that it is not given to man to judge another man. If one does judge another, he is indeed deceiving himself. The ethic of non-resistance enables one to understand to judge the self and not others because it is quite not possible to rule over other’s soul. Others do not need correctness rather one need to correct oneself every moment. Non-resistance allows man to manifest his internal moral improvement. Tolstoy did not confine his understanding of non-resistance to evil within an individual self or in relation with other person rather it covers the entire realm of moral and natural life in the centre of which lies the conscious of person which can make the right choice by mastering and implementing the ethics of non-resistance.

Tolstoy considered non-resistance as an implementation of Jesus Christ’s teaching for social life and non-resistance as a significant method to modify qualitative relationship in a society, to achieve peaceful unity and integrity between people life. Therefore, we can rightly say that Tolstoy severely criticized any kind of violence showing that it contains in it moral inconsistency. Now a question arise, what if one faces violence or what to do when in direct encounter with violence. This is where the true meaning of what Tolstoy meant comes out. Tolstoy meant that one should not respond evil to evil because it will only generate the same kind in thousand fold. Non-resistance to evil, does not means, aiding it by being indifferent towards it rather confronting it with purpose of bringing forth good out of evil. The whole idea of non-resistance to hate the evil in man and to love human in that person and same principle applies to everyone including self. Also in able to resist evil, a person must learn the quality of humility, the desire to overpower pride in self and the eager desire to better than others. Tolstoy’s idea of humility is connected with the idea of human reasoning. According

MARY SAMUEL

3P a g e



to him, every individual carries reason within him and therefore must understand people are rational beings and their decision must be out free consent and will.

Therefore, the whole idea of Tolstoy's ethical concept of non-resistance assert on the fact that non-resistance to evil should not be by compulsion rather a person must possess the quality of humility by shunning misdeeds, practicing more rationality and flexibility and by and large, love.

REFERENCES:

Bean, Chen. *The principle of not doing as a religious and moral doctrine of L. N. Tolstoy*. Tula. 2004.

Huseynov, A.A. *Tolstoy's Ethics*. 2001. Pp. 495-496.

Matveev, M.V. *The Principle of Non-violence of Tolstoy in the cultural and historical heritage of Russia*. Modern High Technologies. 2008. Pp. 27-28.

Meleshko, E.D. *Philosophy of Non-resistance: Systematic teaching and spiritual experience of life*. Tula. 1999. pp. 2-3

The Holy Bible: New International Version. Zondervan. 1984.