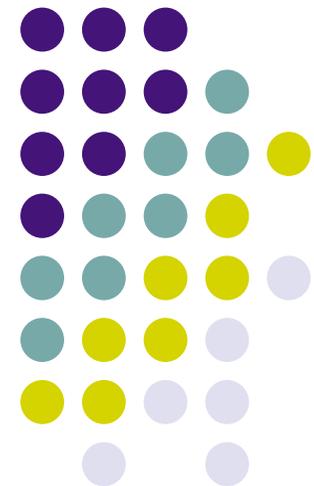
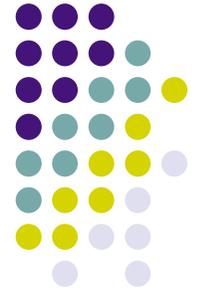


Challenges to Nonviolent Action

John S Moolakkattu

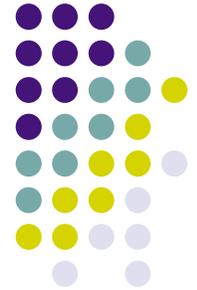
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Violence and its functions

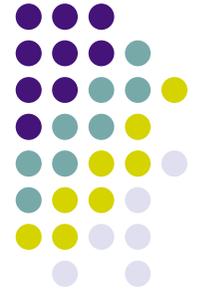
- Violence at the centre of revolutionary politics since French revolution-effective means for achieving political ends. Robespierre, Marx, Sorel, Fanon
- Self- sacrifice- political cause more important than one's life- associated with courage & dynamism- discipline- loyalty- duty
- V as Virtue- the violence of the bad guys should be resisted by applying the same by the good guys
- Man evil by nature argument
- V as necessity- because it is the stuff of politics- so no question of choice between V and NV. NV in fact sustains the V of the oppressors (Fanon). Violence has dramatic effect on spectators- Fascism
- V as progressive- the midwifery model- like the suffering of a mother when a baby is born



Types of Violence

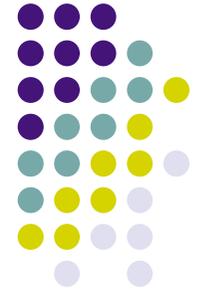
- Personal (direct/ physical) – any form of killing
- Structural (Indirect) – any form of oppression
- Cultural (belief that the violence of the above two kinds are OK)

- Peace = absence of violence (personal, structural and cultural).



Why violence is bad

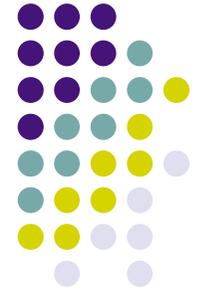
- It does not allow space for dialogue as it is based on an absolute belief in the rightness of one's cause
- It brutalises the victims as well as the offenders
- It leads to counter violence- need not always be the case.
- Its effects cannot be reversed
- It privileges force and the professions based on them.
- Violent revolutions are less participatory.....



Non-violent Action

- Any form of public action aimed at rectifying injustices, resisting invasion and bringing about desirable social changes through peaceful means. It is both a method of conflict expression and conflict transformation- dialogue and resistance.
- Democracy as an instrument of peaceful change. Democratic deepening as inherently peaceful- spread of democracy all over the world as good for peace since democracies ostensibly do not fight one another.
- The greatest strength of NVA is that you have some control over your actions. The effects of your actions are reversible unlike violence where the rupture cannot be reversed.
- It is not passive (Tolstoy), but an active method of asserting the power of the masses, one of withdrawing consent upon which oppressive structures are built. It is participatory. Suitable for asymmetrical conflict transformation given its tendency to side with the underdog – unlike mainstream conflict resolution theory.

Two (or three?) forms of NVA



Principled

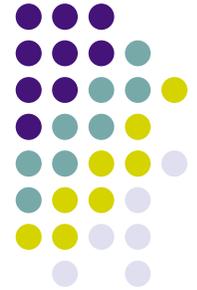
NV as a creed- a belief that it is only through non-violence that conflicts can be expressed and transformed in human affairs so as to achieve the maximum of debate using the faculty of both reason and heart. They are not obsessed with the cost- benefit consequences or the settlement of the issue, but on the possibilities of integration beyond settlement. It includes conscientisation- NV mobilisation and transformation. Values of trust, separation of person from the act, not exploiting the weakness of the opponent- struggle as a kind of truth contestation by the two parties eg. Gandhi- Moral jiu jitsu

Strategic/tactical: They use NV more as a tactic or strategy purely on cost-benefit calculations. Their intention is to defeat the enemy - nothing more than a commitment to the technique is necessary. They may neither have pure intention nor absolute commitment to NV as a principle. Eg. Gene Sharp & Albert Einstein Institution – political jiu jitsu – “ strategy for imperfect people in an imperfect world”. Importance of training - space for expressing anger.

A third group- a sort of middle path, which is committed to nonviolence as a principle, but is equally concerned about the consequences of actions..

Eg. perhaps Galtung

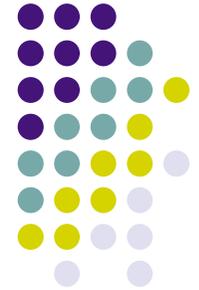
Possibility of moving from tactical to principled NV. The oppressor cannot distinguish between principled and pragmatic forms



Criticism of Gandhian NVA

- Marxist- NVA as reactionary- serve the interest of the oppressors.
- Violence is about defending life while NV is about sacrificing life
- Strategists say Gandhian NV is confusing and religious
- NVA should adopt the form of NV assistance in post-conflict situation (Vinoba vs JP in India)
- Feminists- cannot withdraw consent from patriarchy
- Some NVAs accused of being US sponsored

Important Nonviolent Resistance Campaigns since 1945



- **Pro-democracy movements - resistance • against authoritarian/semi-authoritarian regimes:**

Portugal 1974, Argentina 1977-81, Iran 1978-9, Philippines 1986 (People Power movement) and 2001 (People Power II), Chile 1983-9, Poland 1983-9, Haiti 1985, Burma 1988 and 2007 (Saffron Revolution), China 1989, Czechoslovakia 1989 (Velvet Revolution), East Germany 1989, Hungary 1989, Mali 1989-92, Nepal 1990 and 2006, Thailand 1992, Serbia 2000, Georgia 2003 (Rose Revolution), Ukraine 2004 (Orange Revolution), Kyrgyzstan 2005 (Tulip Revolution). Maldives (2008), Iran (Twitter) 2009.

- **Demands for civil rights in a multicultural state.**

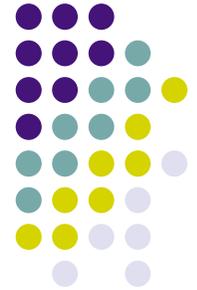
Black people in the USA (1950s and 1960s) and South Africa (1950-1990)

- **Movements seeking national self-determination or resisting external occupation:**

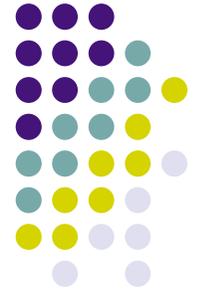
India 1919-1945, Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968, Tibet 1987-9, Palestine 1987-93 (first intifada), Kosovo 1990-99, East Timor 1988-99, Lebanon 2005 (Cedar Revolution).

Livelihood related movements – anti-globalization etc.

Failed/Partially successful Campaigns

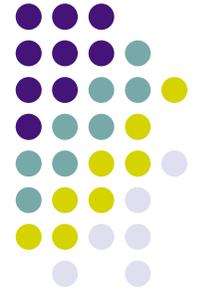


- Failed: e.g. Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968, the Tiananmen Square protests in China, Tibet, Burma).
- partly successful: the Palestinian first intifada, the US civil rights movement, which contributed to ending official segregation in the deep South but did not change the economic and social discrimination suffered by African Americans



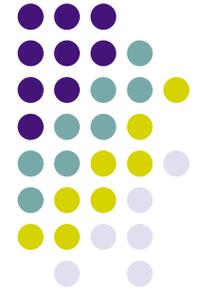
However

- NV campaigns do not guarantee that a spirit of nonviolence will prevail once the struggle is over, especially if the activists adopt them for purely tactical reasons. In many instances, people power fell short of achieving a social transformation to a more participatory society.
- We can also have scenarios in which violence leads to better ends, perhaps due to other factors than violence per se.
- Hence should we not say that nonviolence is better rather than saying that violence will always fail



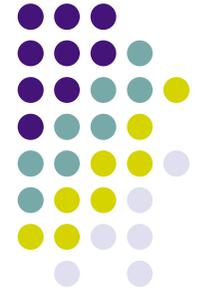
further problems

- Deficiencies of the consent theory in non-democratic non-western societies. Eg. China and Burma. Political power is not just the relation between the ruler and the ruled.
- Every NVA should be home grown- not imported from outside. But external support can be crucial eg. South Africa. Galtung-great chain of nonviolence
- Social distance between the parties as a factor contributing to success or otherwise
- Extreme asymmetries esp. in ethnic conflicts and the effect of NVA. Sri Lanka as a case



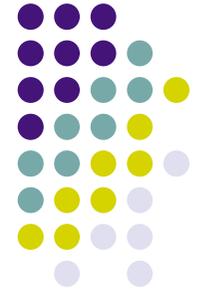
Challenges

- Need for greater engagement with believers in violence. The cause of NV better served through such debates.
- Planning for nonviolent actions, improving understanding of NVA(many activists participate without knowing its potential- or knowing Gandhi)
- Making non-violence a whole system organising principle- transforming the sciences- especially political science.
- NV for wrong causes as it becomes more popular or counter nonviolence. Haziness – eg. Both abortionists and anti-abortionists use NV. NV against socialist regimes- eg. Venezuela.
- Should we teach our adversaries NV. Some would say yes because it will create a less violent world.



Some Considerations

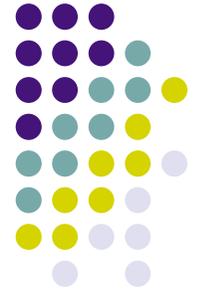
- The medium of expression of conflict is linked with the message. Was it not possible for Municipal workers to desist from rubbishing the streets and yet express their grievances? When you use violence people think your intention is to destroy society.
- When we engage in actions, if we are decent in our behaviour (dress and demeanour), and our slogans are right, we are likely to get greater respect and publicity. Eg. Black activists entering white only restaurants, Iranians shouting 'Allahu Akbar' rather than 'down with Ahemedinejad', nuns in the front of the movement against Marcos in 1986.
- NV activists need to be self-reflective. They should not allow themselves to be co-opted, and should be self-financed as far as possible(accusation that Ukraine and Lebanon revolutions were US sponsored).
- Documentation essential- exposing of attacks. Resisting the counterattacks – eg. In the US NV activists are known as low level terrorists. Use for eg. War veterans, victims of 9/11 in NVA.
- Appealing to other roles of people- eg. Soldiers as fathers, as friends etc.



Some further considerations

- While one should plan for actions and learn from previous cases (both successful and failed), each action has to be sensitive to the context. Salt may not catch the imagination of the public elsewhere as it did in Gandhi's India. Hunger strike common in India, but may not be appreciated in other cultures. Using proxies for NVA (for various grounds) in the West may not be respectable in other cultures
- New forms of action need to be developed. Sharp's 198 methods (NV protest & persuasion 54; non-cooperation 103; and NV intervention 41) could be improved or expanded upon through creative efforts. How do we decide about a method of action or sequencing of actions if more than one are contemplated?
- In every movement, there will be some violent acts. How can we isolate them so as to minimise their impact on the overall character of the movement.
- Singing, dancing and festivities- how this can be factored in

Sun Tsu



“ To fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy’s resistance without fighting”

Thank you

