

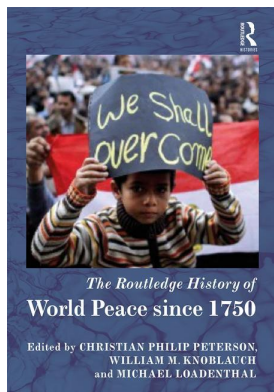
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THREE APOSTLES OF NON-VIOLENCE

An introduction to the religious thinking of Tolstoy,
Gandhi, and Abdul Ghaffar Khan

Anna Hamling

The twenty-first century, with its disturbing level of violence, needs the teaching of strong and charismatic leaders such as L. N. Tolstoy, M. Gandhi and Abdul Ghaffar Khan, each of whom professed visions of a non-violent world and searched for the possibility of peace between nations, religions, communities, families, and themselves in the twentieth century. This chapter examines and compares their religious teachings of non-violence and analyzes the extent to which their non-violent thinking (as a strategy to achieve peace) was successful in practice. Lev Nikolaevicz Tolstoy (1828–1910, Russia), Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948, India) and Abdul Ghaffar Khan (1890–1988, Pakistan) had the capacity—either through their writings or through their actions—to change the course of history by transforming the idea of violence into a constructive peace-building experience. Here, I focus on the similarities in understanding the concept of non-violence by all three thinkers and some of their actions that transformed the lives of millions of their followers. How did all three thinkers and activists inspire others to believe in Truth and practice non-violence? To what extent did Tolstoy influence Gandhi’s thinking on non-violence and how did Abdul Ghaffar Khan become inspired by both of his predecessors? This study examines only the most relevant parts of their teachings to serve as a bridge in initiating intercultural dialogue in the contemporary world. Non-violence did not only mean the absence of war for these three thinkers; it meant giving people the opportunity to live together in peaceful coexistence through the creation of diverse communities that tolerated individual differences.

Defining non-violence

The contemporary theories on non-violence were founded on the theories, works, and activism of L. N. Tolstoy, M. Gandhi and A. G. Khan. It was their moral, ethical, philosophical, political, and social understanding of non-violence that influenced and advanced the theoretical works of Sharp, McCarthy, and Kruegler, and Galtung among others. For example, in *Exploring Nonviolent Action*, Gene Sharp, one of the most prominent scholars on non-violence in peace studies defines it in the following way:

[A] technique of conducting protest, resistance, and intervention without physical violence by: (a) acts of omission (that is, the participants refuse to perform acts

which they usually perform, or are required by law or regulation to perform); or (b) acts of commission (that is, the participants perform acts which they usually do not perform, are not expected by custom to perform, or are forbidden by law or regulation from performing); or (c) a combination of both.¹

He also outlines nine types of non-violence: *Non-resistance, moral abstinence, non-violent revolution, selective non-violence, satyagraha* (word from Sanskrit used by Gandhi), *direct action, passive resistance, peaceful resistance, and active reconciliation*.² Other definitions refer to non-violence as a strategy to achieve peace.

The definition is expanded in *Theory Building in the Study of Nonviolent Action* by McCarthy and Kruegler who claim that:

[Non-violence] is an active, not a passive behaviour which is used to influence the course and outcome of any given conflict. Secondly, it is a strategy for protesting, resisting, and intervening and cannot be equated with conflict resolution tools such as negotiation or mediation. Thirdly, non-violence operates outside of institutionalized channels. Fourthly, the effects of non-violent protest, resistance, and intervention can be assessed independently, regardless of whether violence is also present in the conflict in question or not. Lastly, non-violence takes the form of specific methods which were classified by protest and persuasion, non-cooperation, and non-violent intervention.³

Johan Galtung, the founder of modern peace research states that while peace and non-violence are often used interchangeably, in fact they are two different sides of the same coin. Peace is an ultimate goal for a person or a society; it can be achieved through an applied commitment to non-violence.⁴ However, it should not be perceived only as a technique or strategy to achieve the ultimate goal of peace. In the case of Tolstoy, Gandhi, and Ghaffar, non-violence was perceived as a philosophy, one that provided them with a framework for structure in their lives. It also equipped them with a code of conduct and meaning during their lives' journey. It helped them to find their own personal and social identity in the world and share their objectives with others, objectives that were based on building non-violent societies.

The roots of contemporary non-violent theories and practices can be found in many of the world's ancient religious traditions such as Taoist, Buddhist, Jewish scriptures, and the New Testament. More recently, the works of writers such as Leo Tolstoy, who advocated a radical Christian pacifism, and Mahatma Gandhi who borrowed two Sanskrit words, *-satya* (truth) and *-agraha* (taking, firmness), have both contributed to the development of a theoretical concept of non-violence at the end of the twentieth century.⁵ They offered new, diverse strategies and a range of practices to non-violent means that led to historical, social, and political changes in the context of the commonalities of their religious traditions. But just how did they manage to motivate and instill passion for the journey of non-violence in their followers?

L. N. Tolstoy became known across the globe for his novels *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. In his lifetime, he was enormously famous in his country, Russia, not only among the intellectuals and privileged classes but also among common and poor people. Abroad, Tolstoy enjoyed great popularity for his artistic works, his battle for religious liberty in

Russia, and for his criticisms of the Orthodox Church, the government, and pedagogical approaches to teaching.⁶

It is not by coincidence that the names of Tolstoy and Mahatma (*Great Soul*) Gandhi are linked together. Gandhi sent a letter to Yasnaya Polyana (the home of Tolstoy and his family), a few months before the Russian writer and believer in non-violence died on Astapovo Railway Station at the age of 82 in 1910. This letter praised Tolstoy's teachings on non-violence and Gandhi called himself Tolstoy's follower. He and his Russian kindred spirit created a "law of universal love." Both men left autobiographical records: Tolstoy wrote *Confession* (1879–1880), and Gandhi wrote *My Experiment with Truth* (1925–1928). They were moral educators but became voices of consciousness in their respective nations of Russia and India, as well as in their two respective religions: Christianity and Hinduism.

One of the most committed followers of both Tolstoy and Gandhi's teachings on non-violence was Abdul Ghaffar Khan, often referred to as Badshah (Leader/King). Khan, from Pakistan, was perceived as an Islamic Gandhi. Not so well known in the West as Tolstoy or Gandhi, Khan's Islamic faith, his belief in pacifism, and the creation of a non-violent army of Pashtuns (Red Shirts) in colonial India's Northwest Frontier Province provides more examples of how non-violence can inspire millions to become a follower of one charismatic thinker.

L. N. Tolstoy

Tolstoy's religious belief in non-violence in his post-conversion period (after 1870) was the key to his religious pacifism. The Russian writer was an aristocrat brought up in the dogmatic faith of the Russian Orthodox Church. As a young boy, he stopped going to confession and started questioning the sacraments imposed by the Church. After Tolstoy's religious crisis at the age of 50, his purpose in life was to spread the word of God, fight for social and religious justice in Russia, and educate the poor.⁷ His rupture with the Russian Orthodox Church occurred for two reasons: The Orthodox Church denied other Christian denominations' "correct" understanding of the faith; Tolstoy also disagreed with the position of the Church regarding war. For Tolstoy, what mattered was a man and love for his neighbor. "How could Russians kill their enemies in any war in the name of the faith of their Church?" Tolstoy could not find any logical answer.⁸ For him, religion did not reside in the preparation of man for a future afterlife; it was to provide strength for the present life as a non-violent participant willing to take on suffering.

Tolstoy understood that "the truth" could be found in tradition, and in the Gospels. His profession of faith was much simpler than that of the Church and more accessible to the poor. All the teachings of the Church seemed superficial to him. He could, however, accept the superficial, despite being incomprehensible to him, if the Church did not oppose loving one's neighbors. For Tolstoy, religion and faith were not separated from intellectual life. Faith, respect for one another and loyalty are the values that all human beings should profess.⁹ Non-violence (non-resistance to evil), meant that a person refused to judge questions of life and death and condemn other people because he/she had no right to do so.

For four years (1879–1883) Tolstoy dedicated his time to the enormous work of translating thousands of pages of the Greek Gospels into Russian with notes and critical commentaries for Russian theologians so they could verify that his translation was accurate and more detailed than other translations. Out of 613 commandments he chose five from the New

Testament that he believed best expressed the essence of Christianity. Of these five, the most important one that links his moral stand with Gandhi and Khan is: “*Thou shalt not resist evil.*”

According to Matthew 5:38–42 and Luke 6:29–30 the fourth commandment states:

You have heard that it was said, “*An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.*” But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.¹⁰

Tolstoy translated the Greek words “thou shalt not oppose evil” (often used in the sense of “thou shalt not resist the actions of the evil one”) as “thou shall not fight against evil” (ne boris so zlom) but he titled this chapter as “thou shall not oppose evil” (nie protivsia zlu zlom).¹¹ He claimed that Russia’s Greek Orthodox priests did not understand the essence of Christ’s words. How could they write that the commandment was against committing evil but not against harming others? Such an interpretation seemed illogical to Tolstoy who understood Greek words to mean: “Christ advises us not to return evil for evil; fire does not kill fire, and evil does not kill evil. Only kindness, when it finds evil, may conquer it.”¹² Tolstoy added that loving your enemies is a Christian value. He knew this from his childhood, but then he did not correctly understand these simple words:

Never do anything against the law of love. They taught me from childhood that Christ was God, and that His doctrine was divine. But at the same time, they taught me to respect the sacred institutions which protected me from violence and evil. They taught me that I should resist evil, they taught me to punish others and to judge them. According to these principles, everything around me, my personal security, my family, and my property depended on the law of Christ [a tooth for a tooth].¹³

In Tolstoy’s interpretation, the law of Christ is ignored in justice tribunals because the interpretation “evil with evil” is erroneous. Additionally, all ways of punishment constitute evil and, for this reason, all forms of human organized justice constitute an evil.¹⁴ He also claimed that the commandment “to love your neighbors” is essential to understanding the Kingdom of God.

According to Matthew 5:43–48:

You have heard that it was said, “*You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.*” But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do so? Therefore, you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.¹⁵

Tolstoy explained that Christ's words were not found in Mosaic Law. Once more he consulted the concordances of the Greek Gospels and searched for the words "enemy" and "neighbor." He was convinced that when the word "neighbor" was used in Hebrew, the meaning was that of citizens of the same town, or another Jew. Then he concluded that Christ's distinction was between the citizens of one town or of fellow countrymen and foreigners. In the Gospels, the word "enemy" is never used in the sense of a personal enemy, but rather in that of an enemy of the country. Tolstoy explained that in Mosaic Law Jews were asked not to treat badly the enemies of their land. The writer thought that he had already solved the problem of the incorrect use of these two words by interpreting the word "enemy" as an enemy of the nation.

Tolstoy recognized that there were hundreds of religions in the world, and thousands of superstitions; all had similar foundations but different forms and expressions.¹⁶ Even if religions have different exterior forms, they still have the same essence; it is the power of God's love that makes us strong. Some years later Tolstoy explained that he did not want to be associated with any particular religious denomination; he did not want to be labelled Christian, Buddhist, Confucian, Taoist, or Muslim. Instead, he argued that we all had to find our own internal faith and peace and dedicate ourselves to the service of the community.¹⁷

Tolstoy was a firm believer in an individual's ability to think and reason.¹⁸ In *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* he repeats that the Kingdom of God lies within the individual, not with the tsar, the church, or even a peaceful society. All that is needed to destroy the circle of violence is for individuals to refuse to participate in it. It was a dramatically simple and straightforward answer to a complicated problem.¹⁹ The problem, as Tolstoy saw it, was that mankind was stuck motionless in history; he postulated progress and renewal. *The Kingdom of God is Within You* was Tolstoy's culmination of generations of Christian pacifism, one based on the teachings of Mennonites and Quakers, for example.²⁰

Tolstoy's idea that non-violence is not utopian was confirmed when a group of peasants refused to serve in the military on Easter Day in 1895. Weeks later, rejecting conscription, they destroyed their weapons and pronounced their opposition to the violence and injustice in Russia "Behold, these people exist!" Tolstoy would later exclaim.²¹ The Doukhobors (The Spirit Wrestlers), he discovered, were vegetarians who advocated the abolition of private property and had pledged to refrain from sexual relations for religious reasons.²²

How could human nature be violent (as Tolstoy's critics claimed) when thousands of Doukhobors were living a peaceful life in the rough and tumble atmosphere of the Transcaucasia? How could Tolstoy's vision be utopian if non-violence and peace were possible to achieve? In 1901, 70,000 Doukhobors immigrated to Canada to avoid repression. They settled near Winnipeg. This migration was made possible thanks to the generosity of their beloved teacher Nikolaevicz Tolstoy, who had also become an educator at his newly founded primary school for impoverished children.²³

Tolstoy's actions and writings reflect his belief that the essence of religion lies in endless perspectives of achieving equality among all, and that our relation to eternity is the same for everybody. Therefore, the recognition of the equality of all people (in the Christian variant, through their brotherhood in relation to God) is the most important moral imperative. Tolstoy's Golden Rule (i.e., "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.") was essential to live in harmony with all and could result in living a non-violent life. It was a philosophy that would inspire another icon of peace, Mahatma Gandhi.

Mahatma Gandhi

Although equally devoted to peace, Gandhi's personality was not as passionate and overbearing as that of his Russian predecessor. In the words of Romaine Rolland, "Gandhi is a Tolstoy in a more gentle, appeased, and, if I dared, I would say, in a more Christian sense, for Tolstoy is not so much a Christian by nature as by force of will."²⁴ One of the most well-known examples of non-violent struggle during the twentieth century is that of Gandhi's struggle against British colonial rule in India. Gandhi was the foremost practitioner of Indian non-violence, and his prolific writing formulated the theory of non-violence for others.²⁵ Gandhi drew upon religious traditions, including the writings and metaphysical thinking of Tolstoy, which led him to believe that non-violence was a moral necessity and a way of life.²⁶ In this pursuit, Gandhi introduced the term *satyagraha*, or "truth force," which consists of the two Sanskrit words *satya* (truth) and *agraha* (firmness). This term describes a non-violent strategy and emphasizes the spiritual element inherent in any non-violent action.²⁷

Tolstoy's influence on Gandhi, even if often overlooked, resides in the similarities of their religious ideas. Both men studied Hindu and Buddhist religious thinking.²⁸ Gandhi read the Christian Gospel and analyzed the Sermon on the Mount. He knew well the *Bhagavad Gita* (part of the Sanskrit epic *Mahābhārata*) and Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*. According to biographer, J. J. Doke, Gandhi often said that "there is no distinction between Hinduism as represented in the *Bhagavad Gita* and the revelation of Christ; both must be from the same source."²⁹

Gandhi belonged to a Hindu Jain sect that preached non-violence in the same way that the Christian Sermon on the Mount was interpreted. It was based on the same pivotal message of universal love, self-sacrifice, strict abstinence from sex (doctrine of *brahmacharya*), and vegetarianism practiced by both Tolstoy and Gandhi. In Tolstoy's case, however, even in his post-conversion period, the idea of the abstinence from sex was alien to him.³⁰

Gandhi's pacifism inspired the citizens of his country as exemplified in this quote:

I venture to suggest in all humility that, if India reaches her destiny through truth of non-violence, she will have added no small contribution to the world of peace for which that nations are thirsting. . . . For peace will not come out of the clash or arms, but out of Justice, lived and done by unarmed nations in the face of great odds.³¹

Mahatma Gandhi aimed to influence the conscience of people in India with his theory mostly through his speeches. He managed to shake the British Empire and "aroused three hundred million men and inaugurated in human politics the most powerful movement during two thousand years."³² Gandhi contended that non-violence was not a single virtue or a single quality of life; it was a congeries of qualities or virtues; it was a spirit, a way of life, a religion, or—as he would say—the law of one's being. He perceived non-violence as something far beyond the mere absence of physical contact or harm to one's opponent. Instead, non-violence was a state of mind and being. It encompassed what transpired in thought and speech. Because a truly non-violent practitioner could not engage in acts of deception and hatred, a Gandhian conception of non-violence included love, compassion, kindness, gentleness, courage, fearlessness, and humility. Gandhi's position on non-violence conjured many complex questions: Where is the place of rage in non-violence? What does

disturbing the peace and entrenched stability mean in terms of non-violent activism for social change? How do we capture inner feelings and thoughts that simultaneously harbor resistance? And how does one struggle for justice at the same time as he or she seeks love, common humanity, compassion, and kindness?

Gandhi explained the connection between *ahimsa* and the search for Truth in this parable:

It appears that the impossibility of full realization of Truth in this mortal body led some ancient seeker after Truth to the appreciation of *ahimsa*. The question that confronted him was, shall I bear with those who create difficulties for me, or shall I destroy them? The seeker realized that he who went on destroying others did not make headway but simply stayed where he was, while the man who suffered those who create difficulties marched ahead and at times even took the others with him. The first act of destruction taught him that the Truth, which was the object of his quest, was not outside himself but within. Hence, the more he took to violence, the more he receded from Truth. For in fighting the imagined enemy without, he neglected the enemy within."³³

Gandhi developed *ahimsa* from two religious traditions: Jainism and Christianity. Jainism is a reforming sect of Hinduism that renounced violence in action, thought, and word. Its founder, Mahavira, was born in approximately 600 BCE to an aristocratic family in India, but rejected his riches to travel through villages proclaiming ascetic life and the concept of reincarnation. Within this faith, violence is avoided not because one has sympathy or empathy for one's opponent but because violence corrupts the soul. For this reason, Jains avoid violent resistance.

Although Christianity preaches love, Gandhi's teaching was not borrowed from the teaching of any church or evangelist; it was Leo Tolstoy's radical application of love that attracted Mahatma Gandhi to the concept of love as a tool of resistance. In *The Kingdom of God Is within You*, Tolstoy interpreted literally the ethical teachings of Jesus and focused on the Sermon on the Mount.³⁴ Tolstoy took Christ's teaching on resisting evil to condemn the government, churches, and any other institutions that he believed were aiding the ability of the rich and powerful to inflict a tyranny of force over the poor and the marginalized.³⁵ It was a philosophy that had a profound impact on Gandhi.³⁶ He later wrote that: "Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is within You* overwhelmed me."³⁷ Armed with Jain's religious practices of love, Leo Tolstoy's radical interpretation, and the traditional Sanskrit interpretation of *ahimsa*, Gandhi developed *ahimsa* as a tool for the pursuit of justice. "Without love for ourselves and even people who hate us, we would not have made the progress we have made."³⁸ For Gandhi, every follower of non-violent resistance should abide by them. Non-violent thinking has to be open, not dogmatic; a non-violent way of judging meant being open to the differences between people. Living non-violently meant not exploiting or killing others and not taking more than one's fair share of resources, and non-violent love meant abandoning possessiveness or judgment. It was love coupled with detachment.

Gandhi's earlier beliefs, the search for truth, non-violence, love, fearlessness, land distribution, and equality of all religions, and his claim that non-violent activists had to make lifelong commitments to poverty and chastity were modified in his later thinking. How can one commit to lifelong poverty when poverty is a form of violence? Indeed, besides British colonial domination, another challenge that India had to address was the huge gap between the rich and the poor. Gandhi was postulating cooperation, reconciliation,

mutual understanding, and respect, but given the fact that Gandhi had an elite education and multi-religious upbringing, his concept of Hinduism was shaped by other religions, especially the Jain doctrine of ahimsa, the Muslim tradition of *zakat*,³⁹ and the Christian ethic of the beatitudes (good deeds). This encompassing and pluralistic approach to Hinduism is evident in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Abdul Ghaffar Khan

Such synthetic approaches to non-violence evolved from Tolstoy, to Gandhi, and finally onto Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Abdul was born in an Islamic family, in British Raj India where he accepted the Koran and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. He was taught to memorize the holy book but was disappointed with the cruelty and intolerance of some of his teachers who rejected the Christian Bible and punished students for questioning the Koran. Khan's mother was a religious and quiet woman, while his father believed in non-violence. Like Tolstoy, Khan did not set out as a preacher of non-violence in his youth. However, he supported, and physically fought for, the rights of the Pashtun minority and the creation of their own autonomous region which culminated in his imprisonment.

In his own words:

As a young boy, I had violent tendencies; the hot blood of the Pashtun was in my veins. But in jail I had nothing to do except read the Koran. I read about the Prophet Muhammad in Mecca, about his patience, his suffering, his dedication. I had read it all before, as a child, but now I read it in the light of what I was hearing all around me about Gandhi's struggle against the British Raj. When I finally met Gandhi, I learned all about his ideas of non-violence and his Constructive Program. They changed my life forever.⁴⁰

Khan joined the Guides' corps of Sikhs and Pashtuns for a career as a British officer, but left after witnessing an incident of British racism against a fellow Pashtun. When Khan realized that most Pashtuns lacked formal education, he started establishing local schools for children.⁴¹ It was not common for a spiritual Muslim leader to fight for female educational and religious equality, but Khan firmly believed in gender equality, claiming that in the Koran "women have equal share with men."⁴² Khan even spoke with great passion about men who "reduced Islam. . . . Islam means the submission to the will of God, serving Him through service of His creatures, irrespective of caste, creed, or color and striving ceaselessly for truth and justice."⁴³ Khan continued: "violence needs less courage than non-violence. Violence always breeds hatred. Non-violence breeds love."⁴⁴ In other words, Khan not only rejected female social subordination, but questioned masculinity in a patriarchal society.

Khan founded a social but non-violent movement called *Khudai Khidmatgar* (The Servants of God Movement) in 1929 to educate people about social reform and to end the rule of the British (in the still undivided India) in a non-violent way.⁴⁵ He tirelessly travelled to little villages and even staged dramas showing the value of non-violence. His movement soon grew in strength and membership; Khan attracted more than 100,000 Pashtuns, a remarkable achievement in a culture known for equating aggression with valor.⁴⁶

The British in Northern India fought Khan's movement and subjected his followers to property destruction, torture, and even murder. British officials even imprisoned Khan for fifteen years due to his activism, but prison only strengthened his belief in non-violence.

As he later explained: “For what is faith until it is expressed in one’s life? It is my inmost conviction that Islam is *amal, yaqeen, muhabat* (work, faith, and love) and without these the name Muslim is sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.”⁴⁷ After prison, Khan mimicked Tolstoy and Gandhi in his religious pluralism, stating that “the principles of all religions are the same, though details differ because each faith takes the flavor of the soil from which it springs.”⁴⁸ Like Tolstoy and Gandhi, Khan was aware that all major religions include pacifists and warrior elements in their scriptures, even Islam; yet he preached the gospel of non-violence to his movement of Red Shirts (Nathans) according to God’s name (Allah in Arabic), who was the most Compassionate and the most Merciful of all.

The comparisons deepen. Just like Tolstoy in his post-conversion period, Khan, after he had overcome the violent tendencies of his youth, believed that “Muslims have to forsake the methods of violence.”⁴⁹ He also knew Gandhi well; when there were riots in the state of Bihar in 1946 and 1947, both men traveled across the region to try and resolve the conflicts through non-violence. After they succeeded, they hoped to bring about Hindu–Muslim unity.⁵⁰ According to Easwaran, an Indian scholar of Khan’s life, Abdul stated that “There is nothing surprising in a Muslim or Pashtun like me subscribing to the creed of non-violence. It is not a new creed. It was followed 1,400 years ago by the Prophet all the time when he was in Mecca.”⁵¹ Khan’s contributions to overcoming violence and teaching his Frontier Province people about non-violence were praised by Prime Minister Nehru as the fulfilment of Islamic tradition.⁵²

Conclusion

All three great figures—Tolstoy, Gandhi, Khan—taught universal and inclusive understanding of religions. They all tried to lead a very simple life: Tolstoy renounced his riches, Gandhi’s asceticism was legendary, and Khan denied luxuries of life to himself. All men rejected labelling religions and people, and each claimed that no religious tradition had a monopoly on Truth. Perhaps Gandhi’s words best mirror Tolstoy’s and Khan’s convictions:

Do people become enemies because they change their religion? Is the God of the Mohammed different from the God of the Hindu? Religions are different roads converging to the same point? What does it matter that we take different roads as long as we reach the same goal? All the religions are equal in the sense they are true. They are supplying the spiritual progress of humanity.⁵³

Khan interpreted Islam as a moral code with a focus on pacifism. Tolstoy interpreted Christianity in the same way, and Gandhi took a similar stance on Hinduism. Tolstoy drew his view on life from the Gospels and the words of Jesus, Khan from the Prophet Muhammad, and Gandhi from the *Bhagavad Gita*, Hinduism, and Jainism. To the contemporary Western world, that “the Truth” became a central notion to all three thinkers might sound superficial and simplistic, yet all three men created their own theory of non-violence rooted in their own religious traditions. It would be too simple, perhaps even too simplistic, to hope for twenty-first century intellectuals to take similar non-violent stances to engage peace around the world; however, it is worth remembering that non-violence, as practiced by these three icons of peace, truly did change the world.

As a testament to their legacies, figures no less legendary than Martin Luther King Jr., Lech Walesa, Nelson Mandela, Bishop Tutu, Aung San Suu Kyi, and Vaclav Havel were

adherents to their teachings. They all initiated and facilitated wide public dialogues to focus the world's attention on the irrationality of violent actions and decisions. The non-violent methods that Tolstoy, Gandhi, and Khan advocated in their teachings worked well in the Civil Rights Movement's (1954–1968) protests and marches, the Anti-Vietnamese war movement's sit-ins, protests, and hunger-strikes (1968) and Solidarity's occupation of the Gdansk shipyard against the communist regime in Poland (1980). These were successful. However, the protests in Tiananmen Square (1989) and the Arab Spring (2011) were not, and thousands of people were killed by the countries' military regimes.

What relevance does their thinking have for the contemporary world? Today, most societies are no longer isolated as they were during the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century. We live in a world where globalization has transformed our lives. In this context, Tolstoy, Gandhi, and Khan remind us that non-violence can work, but to achieve progress requires enlightened leadership and education. The strength of international dialogue initiated by Tolstoy, Gandhi, and Khan continues to inspire peace activists around the world, particularly the younger generation. However, (contrary to the beliefs of Tolstoy, Gandhi, and Khan) in the present global context religious or political ideologies are becoming more entrenched in some nations' leaderships, linked with a willingness to use violence against peaceful opposition.

Notes

- 1 Gene Sharp, *Exploring Non-violent Actions* (Boston, MA: Porter Argent Publishers, 1973), 20–21.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 45–49.
- 3 Ronald M. McCarthy and Christopher Krueger, *Toward Research and Theory Building in the Study of Nonviolent Action* (Cambridge, MA: The Albert Einstein Institution, 1993), 3–4.
- 4 Johan Galtung, *Transcend and Transform: An Introduction to Conflict Work* (Oslo: Transcend University Press, 2011), 56.
- 5 Véronique Dudouet, “Nonviolent Resistance and Conflict Transformation in Power Asymmetries,” in *Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation* (Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2008), 58.
- 6 Constance Garnett, “Translator's preface” to *The Kingdom of God Is Within You: Christianity Not as a Mystic Religion but as a New Theory of Life*, by Leo Tolstoy (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2005), xvii–xviii, 54.
- 7 Lev Nikolaevicz Tolstoy, *Diaries* in *The Complete Works of Lyof N. Tolstoi. 12 vols.* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1899), 87.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 87.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 8, 90.
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