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GANDHI, YOGA AND THE ISSUE OF SPIRITUAL
DEVELOPMENT. IS THE NOTION OF
NONVIOLENCE (*AHIMSA*) APPLICABLE IN
HISTORY?

Abstract: The fact that spiritual development is needed both on an individual and social level is an issue all traditional societies were acquainted with. The laic and materialistic contemporary world is a mere historical, de-ontologized background which, while promoting individualism and competition, puts aside the trans-historical spiritual values, that have always defined man as a humane and human being, either in religion, or culture. This paper describes the motivation which was provided for man's spiritual development in Yoga and Christianity, which had, on the one hand, a socializing, integrating function, and on the other hand, a compensatory one. Gandhi's politics and policy founded on nonviolence and truthfulness is contrasted with man's nihilistic nature, if not trained to develop his spiritual traits. Today's redefinition of culture and education, which neglects man's spiritual values, is the reason why, by contrast, we provided a large space for explaining Gandhi's views and Yoga, which might be models to be followed even in a laic world, in which personal development should be backed up by man's spiritual growth, if we want to survive as human beings.

Keywords: Gandhi, Yoga, Christianity, spiritual development, *ahimsa*, laic society

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is hard to imagine history without wars and violence. However, in the 20th century, the Indian leader, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, known better as Mahatma Gandhi (*maha* meaning ‘great’ and *atman* meaning ‘soul, spirit, life’), tried to set a unique, peaceful historical example, based on the principle of *ahimsa*.² Being initiated in yoga himself, Gandhi’s endeavor was to apply the traditional yogic principles both in life and in politics. ‘Gandhi was a deeply religious thinker. Although he was profoundly influenced by Hinduism, Christianity, and Jainism, his religious thought cut across all of them and was in a class by itself.’ (Parekh 1997, 35). In nowadays laic society, it may be hard to deeply understand Gandhi’s way of thinking, living and leading India, without the testimony of a spiritual and philosophical support belonging to the same background. Therefore, besides Gandhi’s own expressed ideas and ideals, it is valuable to highlight that the renowned yogi, Paramahansa Yogananda, not only initiated Gandhi into *krya yoga*, but he also wrote a significant text about him in his book, *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Chapter 44. Gandhi’s portrait, drawn by his guru, provides a complex texture of concrete descriptions, in which various traditional Indian aspects of thought, spirituality and life are intermingled, going hand in hand with the practical perspective of ‘*individual development*’, *from a yogic perspective*. Traditional yoga is a spiritual path, providing ‘codes’ of behavior meant for man’s ‘inner growth’, both as an individual and as related to society and even overall life. Spiritual development/evolution, a key to ‘individual development’ in all traditional societies and in Christianity, differs from the conception of ‘personal development’ in laic societies, which apprehend man’s development from a materialistic and individualistic perspective, founded on personal success and competition, as it will be further explained.

² *Ahimsa*, a complex notion, specific to Indian thought, means: nonviolence, harmlessness, love and compassion for all living beings. ‘The avoidance of harm to any living creature in thought or deed’ (Gandhi, in: Yogananda 1946: 330)

2. MAHATMA GANDHI (MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI):
A POLITICIAN, A YOGI, A SAINT, AND/OR A MARTYR?

Spiritual evolution or ‘inner growth’ requires, for a true yogi, constant practice, awareness and responsibility as related to oneself and the others: ‘The ideals that regulate my life are presented for acceptance by mankind in general. I have arrived at them by gradual evolution. Every step was thought out, well considered, and taken with the greatest deliberation.’ (Gandhi 1961, 6). Gandhi believes that applying the yogic principles in life, will only enhance spiritual growth and awareness, that takes place anyway: ‘If we turn our eyes to the time of which history has any record down to our time, we shall find that man has been steadily progressing towards ahimsa’ (Gandhi 1961, 29)

Today, in a laic global society, founded on investments of capital and profit, it is hard to imagine any political leader, in any country of the world, behaving as Gandhi did, as described by Yogananda (Yogananda 1946, 324-337): living in an *ashram* or monastery (Gandhi lived in the *Maganvadi* ashram in Wardha) and practicing *karma yoga* together with his followers (the path of unselfish action that should act according to *dharma*³, without being attached to the fruits or personal consequences, and which purifies the mind, as the *Bhagavad Gita*, states), practicing yogic techniques such as *antarmouna* (silence, non-speaking), *pratyahara* (the retreat of senses), giving *prasad* (a material substance of food that is a religious offering), fasting, meditating, singing *kirtans* (a religious musical form with shared recitation), being humble and ready for self-sacrifice, ready to shed his own blood, than the blood of others for the cause of truthfulness (*satyagraha*) and non-violence in thought and deed (*ahimsa*), being impartial, i.e. discriminatively objective even towards his wife, non-harmful even in his diet, regularly practicing

³ The law of Dharma: (in Indian religion and tradition) the eternal and inherent nature of reality, regarded in Hinduism and in yoga as a cosmic law underlying right behavior and social order.

<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/dharma>

rituals, such as *BhutaYajna*, *PitriYajna* and *NriYajna*⁴, getting initiated into *kriya yoga* and learning its techniques, looking for his true self (*atman*), beyond historical conditioning, or conditioning of any kind, thinking and feeling beyond nation, religion and materialism. Moreover, Gandhi taught his strict followers in the ashram the vows of *satyagraha* (truthfulness) and *ahimsa*, as follows: ‘Nonviolence; Truth; Non-Stealing; Celibacy; Non-Possession; Body-Labor; Control of the Palate; Fearlessness; Equal Respect for all Religions; *Swadeshi* (use of home manufactures); Freedom from Untouchability. These eleven should be observed as vows in a spirit of humility.’ (Yogananda 1946, 326) And, besides this, as Yogananda reminds us: ‘Fifty years of public service, in prison and out, wrestling daily with practical details and harsh realities in the political world, have only increased his balance, open-mindedness, sanity, and humorous appreciation of the quaint human spectacle.’ (*ibidem*, 327) This is the man that (aside from facilitating a successful non-violent revolution) was able to unite disparate religions in the name of freedom and justice. Gandhi even convinced India’s Muslims to unite with Hindus, Jains, and Buddhists (although briefly) in non-violent protests against the British Empire in India, and, finally brought the independence of India in 1947. ‘By putting his Great *Maha-Atma* Soul against the vast armed force of the world’s largest, strongest modern empire, Mahatma Gandhi proved the strength of invisible soul-force.’ (Wolpert 2001, 263) This is the man that attempted to emancipate the

⁴ One is *BhutaYajna*, an offering of food to the animal kingdom. This ceremony symbolizes man’s realization of his obligations to less evolved forms of creation, instinctively tied to bodily identifications which also corrode human life, but lacking in that quality of liberating reason which is peculiar to humanity. *BhutaYajna* thus reinforces man’s readiness to succor the weak, as he in turn is comforted by countless solitudes of higher unseen beings. Man is also under bond for rejuvenating gifts of nature, prodigal in earth, sea, and sky. The evolutionary barrier of incommunicability among nature, animals, man, and astral angels is thus overcome by offices of silent love. The other two daily *yajnas* are *Pitri* and *Nri*. *PitriYajna* is an offering of oblations to ancestors, as a symbol of man’s acknowledgment of his debt to the past, essence of whose wisdom illumines humanity today. *NriYajna* is an offering of food to strangers or the poor, symbol of the present responsibilities of man, his duties to contemporaries. (Yogananda 1946, 328)

lowest caste in Indian society, the Untouchables, leading a policy of equality.

Gandhi was an unfailing idealist who used yoga and religion, founded on ancient Indian codes of conduct and moral principles for man's *inner growth*, viewing *personal development* not as an individualistic issue, but as man's harmonious integration with the other people and with the world as a whole, to which all living beings are part of. He attempted to unite and create rather than divide and destroy, and thought that a religion that takes no account of practical affairs and does not help to solve them is no religion.

Gandhi's ideals, while defining the very Indian traditional thought and practice, fundamentally built on the idea of man's inner, spiritual growth in life, were massively apprehended and Gandhi, as a leader, got support from his nation. However, he was ultimately killed by his political opponents, who didn't like the partition of India and establishing the Muslim country of Pakistan, a murder that took place just a couple of months after India acquired its independence. 'Gandhi faced death without fear, thanks to his passionate faith in God's "'Truth' as in the 'law of Love'—*Ahimsa*—which he believed was as potent a remedy as prayer for all 'our ills.'"' (Wolpert 2001, 267). Today, lots of Indians worship Gandhi as a saint. Was Gandhi a politician, a saint, and/or a martyr? Therefore, is *ahimsa* (non-violence), leading to man's *inner, spiritual development*, applicable in history?

3. *AHIMSA* (NONVIOLENCE) IN A CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE AND THE ISSUE OF INDIVIDUAL SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

It is important to highlight the fact that the notions of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha*, as Gandhi's ideology and policy essence, cannot be properly translated into any other language, as they belong to a the specific cognitive background of classical/traditional Indian culture and thought, and are founded on a particular view of the world and ontology. As Gandhi himself concluded that these notions cannot be properly translated into English, he decided to teach those principles to the world,

using the Indian wording, while setting his own living example. That was the way for him to avoid theory, abstract speculations and ‘translations’ of any kind. After all, yoga as such is a comprehensive discipline that encompasses man’s psycho-physical and mental aspects, being founded on individual experience. The aim of yoga is man’s attaining a mental state of nonviolence which resonates with the eternal and inherent nature of reality. Therefore, *ahimsa* is to be attained practically in thoughts and deeds, rather than in theory and doctrines. *Spiritual development* is for a yogi what we call in the West ‘being humane’, which requires training:

‘I have found that life persists in the midst of destruction. Therefore there must be a higher law than that of destruction. Only under that law⁵ would well-ordered society be intelligible and life worth living.

If that is the law of life we must work it out in daily existence. Wherever there are wars, wherever we are confronted with an opponent, conquer by love. I have found that the certain law of love has answered in my own life as the law of destruction has never done.

In India we have had an ocular demonstration of the operation of this law on the widest scale possible. I don’t claim that nonviolence has penetrated the 360,000,000 people in India, but I do claim it has penetrated deeper than any other doctrine in an incredibly short time.

It takes a fairly strenuous course of training to attain a mental state of nonviolence. It is a disciplined life, like the life of a soldier. The perfect state is reached only when *the mind, body, and speech are in proper coordination*. Every problem would lend itself to solution if we determined to make the law of *truth* and *nonviolence* the law of life.’ (*idem*, 332)

Theoretically speaking, Gandhi’s understanding nonviolence and truthfulness are equally contained in the laic, ex-Yugoslav doctrine of ‘brotherhood and unity’, but also in the European *Chart of Human Rights*. However, Gandhi’s own ‘Chart’ of Human rights was the

⁵ The law of *Dharma*.

implementation of the immemorial laws, *Dharmasūtras*⁶ and *Dharmaśāstras*⁷, and their practical aspects of implementation by yoga, which Gandhi himself obviously practiced as a 'modus vivendi'. In this respect, Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Chapter 44, is a testimony for the *codes of conduct and moral principles that have to be followed for individual development*. Setting his own example, practically, and not in theory and words, Gandhi actually followed the prescriptions of Indian culture (*Vedas, Vedanta/Upanishads, Sutras, Shastras and Puranas*, etc.), an ancient culture, contemporary with the culture of Egypt, which, unlike the latter one, has existed almost in continuity since the 7th millennium BCE (discovered in the 20th century in the archeological sites of Harappa and MohenjoDaro/Indus valley civilization, where lord Shiva Pashupati is already present on seals, in a yogic posture).⁸

Similar sets of 'healthy' rules regarding the harmonious coexistence of an individual in a certain society, as backed by individual spiritual growth, are to be equally found in the tradition of Christianity, especially in the *Gospel of Matthew*⁹, known as *The Sermon on the Mount* (5, 6,7), which can be regarded as a collection of sayings and teachings of Jesus, which emphasize his moral teachings, similar to those one present in the *Sutras* and *Shastras*, like, for example: 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness/truthfulness: for they shall be filled (Matthew 5:6). Blessed are the peacemakers: for they

⁶ **Dharmasūtra** (Skt., dharma, 'law' + sūtra, 'aphorism'). Any of a class of Sanskrit prose texts concerned with law and rules of conduct (dharma). **Dharmasūtras** tend to be briefer than dharmaśāstras, consisting of terse sūtras or aphorisms which are seldom arranged in any systematic fashion (Oxford Reference; <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/dharmasutra>).

⁷ **Dharmasastra** is a collection of ancient Sanskrit texts, and refer to the treaties (shastras) which give the codes of conduct and moral principles (*dharma*) for Hindus. The concept of dharma is important in both Hinduism and yoga, which also share roots with Hinduism.

⁸ Along with Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia it was one of three early civilizations of the Old World, and of the three the most widespread.

⁹ King James version (KJV) is used.

shall be called the children of God (*ibidem* 5:9). Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (*ibid.* 5:10) Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment (*id.* 5:21) Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; but first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift (5:24). Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.' (*id.* 5: 38-44)

The idea of self-sacrifice, as part of inner, spiritual development is equally present in yoga and Christianity. "According to Gandhi, sacrifice is an indispensable companion to love. What love demands is a going beyond, a self-transcendence. He can love who only believes in giving and not in taking. In short, only who is selfless he can love. Gandhi says, 'Love never claims, it ever gives. Love ever suffers, never resents, and never revenges itself.' " (Jhumu and Bhumali, 2017: 4) Here, Gandhi's explanation of love is meant to open up the meaning of *ahimsa* to the Western culture, by alluding, in our opinion, to the well known Christian 'law'/'code' of love, as it is defined in the *First Epistle to the Corinthians in the New Testament* (1 Corinthians 13).¹⁰ It should be

¹⁰ 13 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. 4 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; 6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; 7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all

highlighted that in the original Greek, the word *ἀγάπη* agape meaning 'love' is used throughout (not 'charity', as in the English translation).

Gandhi's approach to life is so strikingly similar to the Christian one, that it is no surprise that he liked Christ, but, being contemporary with the atrocities of both World Wars in the 20th century, he didn't like the Christians (i.e. those people who proclaimed themselves as being Christians and, in spite of this, killing). Paramahansa Yogananda quotes Gandhi's opinion about Jesus Christ:

I am sure that if He were living here now among men, He would bless the lives of many who perhaps have never even heard His name . . . just as it is written: 'Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord . . . but he that doeth the will of my Father.' In the lesson of His own life, Jesus gave humanity the magnificent purpose and the single objective toward which we all ought to aspire. I believe that He belongs not solely to Christianity, but to the entire world, to all lands and races." (Yogananda *op.cit.*, 332)

As a spiritual path in a laic world, yoga envisages that the Western Christian society has been founded on the same principles of 'inner individual development' that have been neglected in the contemporary world. In our opinion, the need to revive those Christian spiritual traits on a global scale is the reason why Yogananda (who, besides being a great yogic master, was well acquainted with the *Bible*, he often quotes) was sent to the United States as a spiritual missionary, by his guru, Sri Yukteshwar; the same may be the reason why Gandhi also alludes to the Christian spiritual teachings, as similar to the yogic spiritual path, in a laic world. Moreover, Gandhi, who wrote not only for

things. 8 *Charity never faileth:* but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.⁹ For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. 10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. 11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. 13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

the Indian auditorium, but especially to make himself understood in the West, took his initiation in *krya yoga* from a master, who had already conquered the laic West by yogic spiritual techniques.

It appears that all traditional societies have good, humane, wise and practical principles, founded on the immemorial laws and experience of people living together. The difference between these laws, that are often transmitted orally (i.e. in India: *Shruti*– transmitted by hearing; *Smriti* – by remembering), and the modern prescriptions, rules and regulations is significant, as history itself has recently proved it, not only in the Balkan region, but in the two horrifying World Wars of the 20th century. On the other hand, traditional people were able to identify themselves with even the ‘unwritten laws’ that were necessary to live in harmony with the other people, living beings and nature in general. All other laic prescriptions and regulations are felt as ‘external’ to man’s *inner spiritual being*, and can be observed, in order not to be punished by the institutions of law, and not out of true love, respect, truthfulness and real lack of aggression. Although non-violence and fraternity, tolerance and respect for ‘thy neighbor’ have always been the right ways for individual development and spiritual growth, both in the laic and religious societies, it seems that the history of mankind has been often defined by individuals who have not considered the harmony of their mind, speech and actions as a priority, as Gandhi has.

The essence of those prescriptions applied by Gandhi is also the essence contained, as mentioned, both in the ex-Yugoslav ‘brotherhood and unity’ doctrine, but also in *The European Chart of Human Rights*¹¹, and it can be briefly formulated: ‘my human rights are limited by the other peoples’ human rights’, in any society, be it a laic, or a traditional one. Equal human rights, as a common denominator of the laic Convention on Human rights and the human rights of traditional/religious societies, although similar, make an important difference. In the laic variant, there are no clues of the motivation why man should behave in the ‘desired’ way, in case the ‘desired way of behavior’ does not suit one

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Convention_on_Human_Rights

in a certain situation or circumstances, which may be social, political, or even psychic-physical and personal. In other words, the laic variant of human rights is deprived of a view of the world based on profound ontological and cognitive factors of motivation. Is the presumption of the laic Chart of Human Rights that the individual faith, creed, education, view of the world, etc. has already motivated the person to obey the laic rules in order for him to adopt 'the desired behavior'? Or must 'the desired behavior' be obeyed for not being punished by law? The main difference between the traditional and the laic prescriptions on human rights is the fact that, while the former take into account individual, inner spiritual growth and *spiritual personal development*, the laic variant contains no indications/assumptions, nor provides any motivation for man's wisdom and inner growth. Moreover, contemporary education in schools of any level is focused on acquiring practical knowledge, meant to assure success in a competitive world, while being deprived of empathy on an inter-personal humane level. What institution of today is responsible for inner spiritual growth, in the context of personal development?

Gandhi's theory of *satyagraha*, which goes right to the heart of his theory of human nature, was a highly original and creative contribution to theories of social change and political action. He was right to stress the limits of rational discussion and the dangers of violence, and explore new forms of political praxis that broke through the narrow straitjacket of the reason–violence dichotomy. *Satyagraha* took full account of the rational and moral nature of human beings and stressed the value of rational discussion and moral persuasion. And it was also sensitive to the human capacities for intransigence and moral blindness and sought to overcome these by awakening the shared humanity of the parties involved and transforming their mutual perceptions and relationships. *Satyagraha* aimed not just to resolve existing disagreements but to build deeper moral and emotional bonds, and thus both give the compromise reached a firmer foundation and make future conflicts less likely and less intractable. (Parekh 1997, 73)

Therefore the issue of ‘the spiritual development’, as scrutinized within a framework of social, professional, political, economic competition, and utterly neglected in contemporary laic education, results in the apprehension that individual development must be focused one’s career, earning lots of money, possessing goods that are ‘in’, being present in the media, etc. Contemporary society is individualistic and promotes the myth of ‘normal’ (as the renowned Canadian physician, Dr. Gabor Maté puts it), rejecting the so-called ‘pathology’ of the people who, for whatever reason, do not fit into it, and leaving the ‘pathological’ issues to be solved by pharmacopeia, although a disease may be contextual and cultural (culturally manufactured). ‘A society that cuts us off spirituality, from society, by idealizing individualism and by destroying social context, which our society does, which ignores our emotional needs, is going to be a society that generates pathology. This has to do a lot with our economic system, which says that what matters is not what we are, but how we are valued by the others. It is a materialistic society that values not what people are, but what they produce and consume. People that don’t need to produce or consume are shunned out of society. The very materialistic nature of this society dictates and promotes our separation from ourselves.’¹² On the other hand, as Joel Spring (2007, 250) observes: ‘this basic value of the industrial-consumption paradigm cuts across religious and political lines. Hindus, Moslems, Christians, Confucianists, pagans, dictatorships, communists, welfare socialists, representative democracies, monarchies, and authoritarian states all embrace the consumer model.’

The difference between nowadays laic and materialistic *Weltanschauung*, and the traditional ones is the acceptance of people for who they are: traditional societies accepted and integrated all human beings into society.

If the traditional, spiritual ‘inner spiritual growth’ (established by centuries and millennia of unwritten, or written codes of behavior) is left

¹² Dr. Gabor Maté - The Myth of “Normal”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_j5mmBa4mw

aside, can one conclude that the need for 'being better' than the other, for competing is an, actually, 'in born' characteristic of human nature, that ultimately gives way violence in the history of mankind? Gandhi, Yogananda, as well as some Indian contemporary scientists, as Jhumu and Bhumali are optimistic: 'Violence, therefore, is alien to man's nature. When the inner side of human is roused, his ahimsa nature becomes apparent. Gandhi has a profound belief in the inner reality of rational being. For him man should attempt to achieve the hidden divine power lying within him with the aid of non-violence. Otherwise there will be no distinction between himself and the brute. When all men will universally practice the non-violence, there will be divine bliss. Non-violence is the law of love that rules mankind. (Jhumu and Bhumali 2017, 4) If so, who is responsible for the 'inner side of humans' to be roused?

On the other hand, Western scientists, who have pondered upon man's inborn nihilistic structure, have been worried by the situation in the contemporary laic society, which neglects spiritual growth and awareness, when tackling with the issue of personal development.

4. HIMSAS AND AHIMSAS; HISTORY OR/AND CULTURE

Ioan Petru Culianu¹³, the Romanian philosopher, who was killed in unknown circumstances in Chicago, wrote about the nihilism of human nature (we can call it *himsa*, violence, as opposite to the notion of *ahimsa*, discussed above). His concern were the regulatory, normative role of traditional societies, the rituals of which had a double function: 1) *integrating/socializing function*, which positively channelized individual

¹³ Ioan Petru Culianu (1950-1991): Romanian historian of religions, culturologist and fiction writer. In 1972 he fled from the communist Romanian regime to Italy, went then to France and Holland, and then moved to Chicago, where he started his university career as Mircea Eliade's assistant, becoming later a professor himself. He had three PHDs and spoke fluently six languages. Having a broad scale of cultural interest, his main focus was the Renaissance and mysticism. He was murdered in bizarre circumstances at Chicago University, when he was only forty one.

energy and *himsa*, respecting the strict laws of a higher spirit of good and order, each individual adopted in the respective society/community, both for the individual welfare, and for that of the others; this integrating/socializing function was deeply tied to acquiring one's cultural, but also individual identity; and 2) the *compensating function* of myths and rituals (carnivals, banquets, celebrations), the role of which was to appease and compensate for the restraining effect of the above mentioned restrictions. In this context, nihilism, or *himsa*, will be explained in terms of the role of religion, which was performing its duties, with an immense wisdom, that covered ethological (biology of behavior), ecological, psychological, anthropological, sociological and economic areas of life. As the Indian society was a traditional society in Gandhi's time, Gandhi could lead it by means of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha*, which are traditional concepts he did not invent himself, but applied them equally in his life, and in the life of his society.

In European society, starting from the Enlightenment era, the institution of the State started, little by little, to take over certain duties which, by tradition, belonged to Religion. We deal with the phenomenon known as 'secularization'. *However, The State, whose social and psychological functions are different from the function of Religion, couldn't deal with channeling man's energy in a positive way.* Today, the possibility of the State to provide man with a meaning of existence in the world has been reduced to the Western production system. [...] Traditional rituals and myths cannot accomplish the *integrating* and *compensating* functions within society anymore. Nihilism [or *himsa*], 'that disturbing guest' attacks again man's house. Man, in the situation of being stripped of anything transcending him, comes up, maybe for the first time in history, as a being lonely and deprived of defense from the blind forces of instinct and aggression. The religion of the future, without which mankind itself would be brought to self-destruction, should ponder on all these things. (Culianu 2005, 239-240)

Moreover, after secularization, and man's 'liberation' from religion, the issue has not been solved yet, of what area of human activity culture itself belongs to. *Does culture belong to mere history, in which man is deprived of a trans-historical meaning of life, and is left as a pray*

to his nihilistic instincts, or culture belongs to the spiritual entities, which have always defined man within his human and humanistic praxis? The answer to this question is deeply related to the way *individual development* and 'inner spiritual growth' is defined and dealt with in a certain society.

5. AT THE CROSSROADS OF CULTURES. CULTURE AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Comprehending religiosity as a structure of the human mind in general, which is 'molded' in time and space into different *Weltanschauungs* (or myths), Mircea Eliade¹⁴, as a historian of religions, envisages the possibility of transcending history at the crossroads where cultures really and authentically meet each other. He thinks that, for example, the Indian view of the world, and especially of history, could represent a good model for Western culture:

'It is not true that for the Indians the discovery of the cosmic illusion and the metaphysical thirst for the Being represent a total devaluation of Life and universal emptiness. We have started to understand that, maybe more than any civilization, India loves and respects Life and enjoys in it at all its levels. As *Maya* does not represent an absurd and valueless cosmic illusion, the way certain Europeans put it, while seeing human existence as coming up from Nothingness and going towards Nothingness. For the Indian thought, *Maya* is a divine creation, the cosmic play (*Maya* comes from the Sanskrit 'ma', to create), the aim of which is equally having human experience and

¹⁴ Mircea Eliade (1907-1986): a renowned Romanian philosopher, historian of religions, anthropologist, university professor and fiction writer, who lived in the exile (mostly in Paris and Chicago) after World War II. A specialist in Indian thought, he authored numerous scientific books dealing with the omnipresence of myth as a 'true story' in the history of culture. A certain 'myth', be it *sacred* or *profane*, man needs to identify with, represents an innate structure of consciousness that helps man to survive the atrocities of temporality and 'the terror of history', as myth provides life with a trans-historical, ontological and cognitive meaning.

freeing oneself from that experience. Therefore, being aware of the cosmic illusion does not mean, in India, to discover the universality of the nothingness, but *it means that any experience in the context of the world and of History is deprived of ontological value*; therefore, our human condition should not be regarded as such, as an aim. /.../ The awareness about it is established by taking another attitude, an attitude which Krishna reveals to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, namely: continue to remain in the world and to take part in history, but take care not to attach to History an absolute value. This is not a call for us to renounce History, but it is the danger to idolatrize History, that is the message of the *Bhagavad-Gita*.' (Eliade 1998, 61-62)

It is valuable, to the same extent, to ponder about the meaning of history in Christianity, which is itself *a historical religion, in which time is irreversible*, unlike other religions in which time is cyclically reversible. Christ, as God's son, incarnated in history, in order to help man. *Entering history, Jesus saves not only man, but he saves history itself* by converting the disturbing, absurd historical events, providing them with a trans-historical meaning. From Eliade's perspective, the trans-historical message offered by Christianity could be helpful today, when mankind is confronting the 'terror of history'. By identification with Christ, the modern man could learn how to confront the painful historical events. Having in view the fact that for Christianity historical time is important, *the Christian religion is by definition the religion of 'the fallen man', of modern man who has lost the paradise of archetypes and regeneration*. If this is so, the man of today should follow the example of the Indians, and not attach to history an ontological value. He should try to understand the trans-historical meaning of Christ's model, who suffered in history, in order to redeem within the frames of meaning that are beyond history itself. And those frames are spiritual. What Eliade called 'trying to understand' means, actually, the need of man's spiritual growth, from temporality and materialism to trans-historical, ontological values, no matter to what particular culture those spiritual values belong to. However, ontological issues have been neglected lately. Culture, for example, as it has been until recently apprehended, even in laic, materialistic societies, was regarded as a trans-historical solution to escape 'the terror of history', channeling man's energy into a world of

trans-historical values. For both T.S Eliot and Mircea Eliade, culture inherited mankind's spirituality and was able to transcend mere history in the contemporary, laic world deprived of gods and religion. *After the Enlightenment era, and the phenomenon of 'secularization', it was culture, which took over some of the psychological, anthropological, or sociological functions, that Culianu revealed as important, for channeling man's energy in a meaningful way, meant for inner spiritual growth.* Moreover, culture was able to mirror the false standards adopted by man in temporality and in a certain society, reminding him of his true ontological status in the world, dealing with gnoseological issues, or widening his perspectives by symbols, archetypes, metaphors etc. It was culture, beginning with the Greek tragedies that encouraged man to ponder on the relation between his own spiritual needs *versus* the imposed social norms, etc. After the Enlightenment, culture was dealing with man's spiritual values, which, by definition, were stable in time, i.e. provided man's trans-historical humane image beyond temporality, in a spiritual, trans-historical background. Nowadays', in a de-ontologized world, a redefining of culture took place, which is different from the humanistic and humane perspectives, and especially it is far from the traditional definition of values, which were spiritual, and lasting in time. Cultural values have been lately evaluated as 'goods' to be bought and sold, i.e. a book has been appreciated by the number of 'clients' buying it and, therefore, cook-books have had the best rating in book shops. Spiritual inner development, as founded on culture, has not only been absent in contemporary education, but also perceived as almost 'undesirable' in a laic background founded on the economy of liberal capitalism (Chomsky 2017, Principle #2 / Shape Ideology)¹⁵. As a result, a redefining of culture, as being a sort of a 'melting pot' took place, in which national food specialties (for example) are put together, at the same cultural value level as the achievements of arts and literature, which

¹⁵ See more in: Chomsky, Noam. 2017. Requiem for the American dream : the principles of concentrated wealth and power. Edited by Peter Hutchinson, Kelly Nyks and Jared P. Scott. New York: Seven Stories Press

is, again, a sort of denial of the importance of inner spiritual growth, as being part of personal development.

6. YOGA, SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND THE ISSUE OF DISCONNECTING FROM TEMPORALITY. 'BEER YOGA'

Within the above mentioned contemporary context, in which both religious and cultural values have been gradually reinterpreted and modified, yoga has been more popular than ever, as a 'universal means' to attain 'inner spiritual growth', which is obviously felt as necessary on a global scale, regardless of the materialistic, historical, socio-political, economic and cultural framework. Yoga, as a means of relaxation, the ultimate aim of which is spiritual development, regarded as 'inner growth', has been lately more and more popular, both in traditional and in laic societies. This means that both Mircea Eliade and Ioan Petru Culianu were right about man's inborn need to find a spiritual meaning for overall existence, man feels he is part of. Gandhi and Yogananda were also right when insisting on the education and discipline needed for man's spiritual growth by *ahimsa*, as a practice to be practiced, not only pondered upon. Nowadays yogic instructors (be they real or fake 'gurus'), have also been aware of man's need for spiritual development and 'inner growth', which has been neglected in contemporary education, and, therefore, a whole profitable 'industry' of 'spiritual teachers' has popped up, in which man, cannot often properly discern what real spirituality is, and what is not.

The contemporary spiritual religions Culianu thinks about might be traditional yoga and Buddhism, on one condition: if they follow the real, ancient source and don't become *Beer Yoga*, for example, presented on BBC News as: 'Have you got the bottle to try it?'¹⁶

In our opinion, traditional yoga and Buddhism resonate with contemporary society because they are presented mainly as laic spiritual disciplines, providing techniques of relaxation, in the first place, but promising inner awareness and spiritual growth to a stressed society, in

¹⁶ <https://www.google.com/search?q=beer+yoga&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&client=firefox-b-ab>

which not even higher education is a guarantee for having a stable, secure existential and living background.

7. YOGA: HISTORY AND TEMPORALITY VERSUS LIBERTY

When we approach an ‘exotic’ culture, as the Indian one still is, to which yoga and Buddhism belong, we tend to understand especially those segments, which we have already been acquainted with in our education, cultural orientation, our affinities and needs, and the historical moment and place we live in. The novelty, the unknown, might be either neglected, or represent a ‘cultural shock’. An excellent, classical example is E.M Forster’s novel, *A Passage to India* (1952). The Eurocentric point of view, as a personal background, could not grasp, in spite of one’s willingness to, a culture dating, almost in continuity since the 7th millennium BCE. India is a country torn apart between extreme poverty and bandits on the one side, and unimaginable luxury, on the other, dwelling together. Paradoxically, the spiritual practices that were born here represent an exquisite cultural achievement of mankind, relying not only on the ancient philosophical texts, but also on the practical methods and techniques of ‘handling’ with man’s various aspects of the physic, psychic, mental and spiritual behavior, in which awareness is the key to inner growth. As Eliade noticed in his Introduction to *Yoga, Immortality and Liberty*¹⁷, looking down at the British colony and the narrow European positivist, anti-religious, and anti-metaphysical views of the 19th century, were far from understanding the traditional Indian philosophy of life and yoga. It was only by the beginning of the 20th century when the achievements in the fields of deep psychology, poetry, micro physics and theoretical physics, that helped to grasp the structure of symbols, the role of myths, and the maturity of Indian mystics within wider horizons of thought. For a long time, philological studies used Sanskrit only as a reference for etymological purposes. (Elijade 1984, 18) The beginning of the 20th century also marked a period when European

¹⁷ In Serbian: *Yoga, besmrtnost i sloboda* (quotations translated by M. D.)

philosophers were inclined to ponder about the issues related to temporality in history. For more than one century, European science and philosophy had been successfully analyzing the factors that ‘condition’ a human being. It became evident that man is largely conditioned by his physiology, inheritance factors, by his social background, by the cultural ideology he is part of, by his subconscious – but overall, man is conditioned by the historical moment he lives in, and by his own, individual history. This Western discovery, ‘that man is, essentially a being in time and history, and that he is only that what History made him to be – no matter if he wants it or not – is still dominant in European philosophy. (Eliade 1984, 19)

The issue of man’s existence/life being conditioned by infinite factors, but especially by temporality in history has been called ‘human condition’ (‘la condition humaine’). However, the issue of being conditioned, and especially its correlate de-conditioning, which has been neglected in the West, represents the central issue of Indian thought. M. Eliade notices that it is the structure of man’s condition that represents the main interest India since the *Upanishads*, and therefore the whole Indian philosophy was, and still is ‘existentialist’:

If conditioning has been analyzed in Europe with the purpose of explaining the human being (i.e. his inherited and social factors in the 19th century), Indian thought was focused on establishing the borders of man’s conditioning, aiming to discover if there is anything outside those conditionings. Long before the deep psychology, India’s wise men and ascetics have researched the profound layers of the subconscious and realized that it is easier to detect and overcome the physiological, social, cultural, religious conditioning than the ‘samskaras’. The ‘samskaras’ are an obstacle, related to the unconscious mind, which keeps the latent content and structure of the predispositions, a sort of psychic ‘scars’. However, it is not the pragmatic aspect of the anticipation some of modern psychological techniques that is important, as it is not important to detect and analyze the conditionings, but the aim, for the Indians is to get rid of them, to de-condition oneself from them, to ‘burn them out’. (Eliade 1984, 20, 21)

The notions of ‘historicity’ and ‘temporality’ do not exist as such in Indian philosophy; but the identity of philosophical terminology is not as important as it is the fact that the issues are homologous, as it was shown above. The aim of the yogis is de-conditioning from *maya*, as ‘cosmic game’, ‘illusion’. *Maya*, is an ‘illusion’ because it is not part of the Being, but represents temporality, becoming, living in time, and it refers not only to cosmic becoming, but also to history. Illusion and temporality is the cause of man’s suffering. The Western parallel for the Indian *maya* may be regarded as ‘the human condition’, i.e. being conditioned by time.

Eliade notices that the yogic practices of de-conditioning, mentioned in Indian or Sanskrit texts, have come across exquisite discoveries, such as the *witnessing consciousness*, which is freed from its psycho-physiological structures and their temporal conditioning, the consciousness of the ‘saved’, i.e. of the one that succeeded to get over the borders of temporality/history, and is able to see the true, indescribable freedom. (Eliade 1984, 23) It is this kind of practical and attainable truth that Indian yogis want to attain (although with much difficulty and strenuous discipline). This is the explanation why Gandhi, whom we have portrayed at the beginning, lived that kind of ascetic life in his ashram and outside it. Moreover, Gandhi’s *Autobiography – The Story of My Experiment with Truth*¹⁸ refers to his life in temporality/history, while seeking for the absolute trans-historical truth, therefore acting in life in accordance with *dharma*, the way Arjuna and Jesus did: living in history, but not attaching to it an ontological meaning, as explained before. Actually, for Gandhi and the yogis inner spiritual growth, as part of personal development is a gradual, strenuous path, following prescribed codes of behavior and practice, the aim of which is to attain liberation from the illusion of *maya*, as temporality. From this point of view, Gandhi’s life and the life of Indian nation he led in time/history is just a stage of the inner growth of the Being, by following the *dharma*, and not neglecting it. *Ahimsa* and *satyagraha* were both ‘charts’ of personal

¹⁸ In Serbian: *Autobiografija. Priča o mojim eksperimentima sa istinom*

development and the growing of a nation in temporality, i.e. in history, but the ultimate aim was the liberation of consciousness from the material conditioning, which was the true liberty.

8. THE STAGES OF YOGA AND GANDHI'S SPIRITUAL 'EXPERIMENTS' IN HISTORY

As an 'instrument of help' for understanding the methods and techniques of both yoga and Gandhi's profound creeds, we will try to make a short review of interpretations of Patanjali's *Yoga-Sutras*, containing aphorisms, grouped into four chapters, which is regarded as the 'theoretical' basis of yoga. In his study, *Patanjali and Yoga*¹⁹, Mircea Eliade states that:

Patanjali himself confesses (Y.-S., I, 1) that he, actually, does not do anything, but make public and review the doctrinal and technical traditions of yoga. The closed societies of Indian ascetics and mystics had known, of course, long before him, the yogic practices. Patanjali retained, from the technical recipes preserved by tradition, those ones that had been exquisitely verified by a secular tradition. With regards to the theoretical background and the metaphysical foundation of these practices, his contribution is minimal. He only broadly resumes the Samkhya philosophy, which he subordinates to a rather superficial theism. The philosophical systems of Samkhya and Yoga resemble to such extent that the majority of affirmations in one of them, are equally true for the other. (Eliade 1992, 15-16)

Patanjali's aphorisms, difficult to understand, without being already into yoga, have been interpreted by various Indian commentators to which Eliade alludes, but the practical aspect of the issue has been better revealed by great masters of yoga, like Swami Shivananda Saraswati, today considered as a Saint of India, and in whose ashram Eliade lived in Rishikesh for six months in 1930. In contemporary India, the practical aspect of yoga has been the similar in all the *ashrams* of the

¹⁹ *Patanjali și yoga* (quotes translated from Romanian by M.D.)

great yogic masters. The purpose here is to find out to which stages of yoga Gandhi's main notions of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha* belong.

Shivananda (Sivananda 2010, 47) refers to the eight 'accessories' of yoga, prescribed by the sage Patanjali: *yama* (restraint), *nyama* (religious observances), *asana* (body postures), *pranayama* (the control of breath), *pratyahara* (the retreating of senses), *dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (meditation), *samadhi* (superconscious state). Swami Nirajananda Saraswati (from Shivananda's yogic lineage) states that: 'Sage Patanjali compiled eight systems or practices of yoga, known as *ashtanga yoga*²⁰. Later, *ashtanga yoga* was renamed *raja yoga*. The word *raja* means ruler, and, normally it is the mind that rules your life. However, when you become a master of the mind and develop total mastery over all mental processes, you become the controller, guide and ruler of your mind and nature. By managing the mind, you can control and guide your entire life.' (Niranjananda 2011, 115)

The gradual de-conditioning of the mind is a process to be learned:

'You have to realize the mind from the beginning. In order to read a book and understand it, you need to first have mastery over the language. You have to learn the ABCD. You have to learn the words, learn how to form sentences, and in due course, when you have acquainted that skill, you are able to read any book and comment on it. Similarly, without basic training and education, you cannot have a peaceful mind. (*ibidem*. 117) The practices of *yama* and *nyama* are like scissors which prune the tree of the mind. This is how *ashtanga yoga* begins. (*idem*: 119) The first four accessories (*yama*, *nyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*) constitute *bahirangayoga*, the practicable, attainable, external yoga for pruning, trimming and fine-tuning the mental behavior. The remaining four, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi* constitute *antarangayoga*, internal yoga, in which the powers, faculties and potential of the mind are cultivated. They are methods by which one is able to cultivate the positive strengths of the mind. Reflecting upon this system and process of *raja yoga*, you will

²⁰ In Sanskrit 'eight' is 'ashta'; in hindi is 'at' (M. D.)

come to an understanding that it is one of the best sequences available to humankind for rediscovering, managing and awakening the strengths and qualities of the mind. *Yama* is the first component of *bahiranga yoga*. The five *yamas* are: *ahimsa*, absence of violence; *satya*, truthfulness; *asteya*, honesty; *apangraha*, non-possessiveness; *brahmacharya*, mental firmness.' (id. 120)

One can notice that, even if Gandhi is known to the Western world by the notions of 'ahimsa' and 'satyagraha', in his ashram life (*The Autobiography of a Yogi* by P. Yogananda is a testimony for this), Gandhi actually applied the 'ABCD' of Patanjali's yoga, namely *the yamas*, i.e. 'the practicable, attainable, external yoga for pruning, trimming and fine-tuning the mental behavior'.

The conclusions that can be drawn from Gandhi's 'experimenting with truth', by applying yoga in politics are interesting: 1) individual behavior and responsibility, indicated by all the *yamas*, is of utmost importance, and every human being must set a highly respected example before relating or communicating with the others; 2) policy and politics should be performed in deeds, not only in words; and if words are used, there must be a harmony between man's mind, words and actions; 3) one should find one's inner strength, that everybody has, and it is only a matter of self-discipline to be truthful to oneself and to the others; 4) yoga, no matter what one's faith or nationality is, can provide one the 'instruments' and the ways for man to evolve as true human being, and man has this possibility even in laic societies. That is the reason why, Gandhi's harmony of thoughts, words and deeds can be regarded as a truthful example of inner growth, which is needed on the path of self-development, both for political leaders and people in general, to which yoga can serve as a theoretical and practical model in contemporary laic society.

9. IS AHIMSA APPLICABLE IN HISTORY? (CONCLUSION):

On the other hand, the answer to the question of our title: 'Is *ahimsa* applicable in history?' cannot be fully positive, as many wise men, full of virtue, who authentically tried to bring peace, truthfulness and equality to the world, were killed (Jesus, Mohamed, Gandhi, Martin

Luther King, etc.); unfortunately, the murders of non-violent, most often defenseless people, whose names are not even remembered are facts that make the history of mankind.

When *ahimsa* is considered as overall peace on the planet, other yogic masters of the world, like Sadhguru²¹, living in the United States, are pessimistic: ‘When World War II ended in 1945 many nations around the world vowed that they would never fight again and never create such a horror that killed over fifty million people. But the reality is there hasn’t been a single day’s break in fighting since 1945. Some battle has been going on somewhere or the other on the planet. This is a clear declaration by human beings that the way we are right now, we are incapable of being peaceful. Whenever conflict flares up in the world today, people talk about peace. We need to understand, peace is not something we have to create. Conflict is our creation.’ (Sadhguru 2013, 1)

Therefore, *ahimsa*, as ‘nonviolence in thought and deed’, as Gandhi puts it, could be attainable in history, but only if a policy of man’s spiritual growth and awareness is established, in education, in the first place, and in culture. That kind of training is not an easy task in a materialistic society oriented on personal career development and competition. Even if it is not easy, maybe we should start thinking again that without spiritual values and man’s inner development, the use of the ‘jungle logic’ instead of inborn human reason, the planet will be nothing more than a ‘jungle’. Therefore, individual or personal development, as defined today, should always be backed up by spiritual values and motivation.

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²¹ Sadhguru delivered an inspiring speech at the United Nations for a Millenium Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders.

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GANDI, JOGA I PITANJE DUHOVNOG RAZVOJA.
DA LI JE POJAM NENASILJA (*AHIMSA*)
PRIMENLJIV U ISTORIJI?

Sažetak: Danas je reč „duhovnost“ skoro izašla iz upotrebe. Mi se njoj vraćamo u želji da razumemo pojam „duhovni rast“, koji je bio zamenjen sa sintagmom „lični razvoj / „personal development“, izraz vezan za stvaranje karijere. Pitanje „duhovnosti“ je utoliko zanimljivije ukoliko su ljudi svih tradicionalnih društava, uključujući i evropskog do Sekularizacije, znali za „duhovni razvoj“, a to je pretpostavljalo sleđenje određenih životnih normi i vrednosti koje su im omogućavale da se uspešno integrišu u društvo, to jest da budu „na miru“ sa sobom i sa svim ljudima.

U radu bacamo naglasak na Gandijev slučaj, jer je tu pojam „duhovnog razvoja“ izražen u principima nenasilja (*ahimsa*) i istinitoljubivosti (*satyagraha*), kao Gandijevi principi, vidljiv na delu, kao prisutan u istorijskoj praksi. S obzirom da je danas teško da se razume način na koji je Gandhi ne samo razmišljao, već i vodio Indiju, u radu smo izložili, za nas, „egzotične detalje“ vezane za njegov život u ašramu, a i za njegovu inicijaciju u *krija jogu* od strane poznatog jogina Joganande. Pojmovi *ahimsa* i *satyagraha*, koji stoje u temeljima Gandijeve politike, u suštini su pojmovi iz tradicionalne joge, prisutni kod Patandalija, te opisuju poimanje duhovnosti u indijskoj tradicionalnoj misli, koja se ne svodi na apstraktne teorije, već pretpostavlja značajne psiho-fizičke i mentalne vidove, zasnovane na individualnom iskustvu. Ti pojmovi se moraju razumeti na praktičan način, u vidu *saglasnosti između misli, reči i dela*, što je takođe jogistički princip koji Gandhi promovise i sam nastoji da primeni u svakodnevnoj praksi – a ne kao neku teoriju ili ideologiju. U tom smislu, za jogina „duhovni razvoj“, kome Gandhi teži, sledeći tradiciju svog naroda, jeste sinonim sa onim što bismo mi u Evropi pojмили kao „biti human“ i/ili „biti pošten prema sebi i

drugima“ – međutim, ta „ljudskost“ ne dolazi sama po sebi, već iziskuje praksu, kao edukaciju.

U našem radu, upoređujemo tu vrstu Gandijevog poimanja duhovnosti ukorenjenog u jogi sa sličnim hrišćanskim principima, prisutnim naročito u Isusovoj *Besedi na Gori* u *Jevanđelju po Mateju* (pogl. 5, 6 i 7) koji govore o istinoljubivosti i miru među ljudima i raspravljaju o čovekovom načinu ponašanja ne samo u pogledu postizanja mira u društvu, već i kao čovekov duhovni rast. U teoretskom smislu, Gandijeva i Isusova načela su zapisana i u današnjoj *Povelji ljudskih prava*, ali i u principima ex-Jugoslavije „bratstva i jedinstva“. U osnovi svih tih principa bi trebalo da stoji uzajamno poštovanje i razumevanje među ljudima. Zapadno evropsko hrišćansko društvo, iako inicijalno zasnovano na principima unutarnjeg duhovnog razvoja, u savremenom svetu, zanemaruje sopstvene principe. Sve se druge, proskribovane laičke norme ponašanja, kao one u *Povelji ljudskih prava*, mogu doživeti kao spolja nametnute. Ljubav prema ljudima, istinoljubivost, poštovanje i nenasilje (kao odlike pojma „duhovnog rasta“) obeležja su koja bi čoveka trebalo da okarakterišu kao ljudsko biće – te edukacija u tom smislu jeste veoma značajna i u laičkom svetu. Današnje zanemarivanje pitanja „duhovnog razvoja“, u uslovima u kojima su važne socijalne, profesionalne i ekonomske perspektive kompetitivnosti među ljudima, kao pitanje „ličnog razvoja“ (koji se opisuje u svakom *curriculum-u vitae*), dovodi do nemogućnosti integrisanja velikog broja ljudi u društvo i do poremećaja međuljudske komunikacije.

Kao zaključak, ostaju otvorena dva pitanja o kojima treba svi da razmislimo: 1) kako se može uticati na „duhovni rast“/humanost u okvirima današnje kompetitivne kulture? 2) S obzirom da su i Gandi i Isus (ali i drugi miroljupci: Mohamed i Martin Luter King itd.) bili ubijeni, kao i mnogi nenasilni ljudi, pitamo se da li se princip nenasilja uopšte može primeniti u istoriji?

Ključne reči: Gandi, Joga, hrišćanstvo, duhovni razvoj, *ahimsa*, laičko društvo

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