

Three Cosmovisions: Oriental, Indigenous and Occidental Thinking on Peace

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1. Introduction

Religions have played a crucial role in the history of civilizations and are still doing so to surmount dangerous threats such as wars, terrorisms and global injustice. However, the expansion of West European culture in the world and its imposition on non-European cultural behaviours transformed the pluralistic nature of human cultures and thinking into a monolithic Eurocentric and later Occidental imposition, due to global ideological drivers (Preiswerk 1984; Syamsuddin 2005), dominant military security thinking, conquest and an economic globalization based on free-market ideology. Potential clashes among civilizations could emerge, e.g. between Islam and the West and between Western civil rights fundamentalism and Chinese socialists. But there is also a new process of Eastern spirituality renewing Western society and its spiritual loss. These processes are visible in yoga and meditation groups, Buddhist churches and socialization of Eastern values such as ahimsa, satyagraha, and self-discipline and control. The economic achievements in China and India reflected in a substantial reduction of poverty are other indicators of different values opening a hope for a different globalization with human face.

2.1. India's Nonviolence

Peace in *Hinduism*¹ is related to religious beliefs. During the past 5,000 years, it grew in syncretism creating numerous sects, integrating dissidents, new gods and different religious practices. Within the doctrine of 'karma' the individual reaps the results of his actions through different lives. The liberation from suffering and the compulsion of rebirth is attainable through the elimination of passions, the comprehension and respect of the other, and the union with god. Hinduism has no single founder or central religious organization and this syncretism stressed tolerance and mutual co-existence with permanent renovation. The core element of violence, linked to exclusive doctrines, is absent. Security is interlinked with the safety of authorities, who guarantee the security of the people. Hinduism anchored social differences to birth through the caste system and created conflicts for resource appropriation and numerous poor people.

Jainism conciliates the inner world with freedom, transmigration and relativism as spiritual and moral guiding principles. God is not creator and protector, but living in society with nonviolence (ahimsa); truth (satya); non-stealing (acharya); celibacy (brahmacharya) and non-possessiveness (aparigraha) opens an infinite potential in humans in perception, knowledge, power and bliss for freedom and spiritual joy of soul. Jainians propose a perfect system of democracy and an emphasis on equality of opportunities to achieve freedom and spiritual perfection. Their ethic practises signifies religious tolerance, moral purity, spiritual contentment and harmony among self, others and the envi-

¹ Hinduism is the world's third largest religion, representing 13% of world population. The 'Veda -the liturgy and interpretation of the sacrifice- and Upanishad', which contain the Brahman doctrine, are sacred scriptures. Later theistic elements were developed in the '*Bhagavad-Gita*'.

ronment through perception, knowledge and conduct (Majumdar 1968; Shree Chand Rampuria 1947). *Jainism* recognizes the natural phenomena as symbioses of mutual interdependence, which has created the bases for modern ecology and nonviolence or ‘ahimsa’ (Radhakrishnan 1952; Radhakrishnan/Moore 1957; Radhakrishnan/Muirhead 1958).

*Buddhism*² developed a ‘way of the middle’ (*Bodh-Gaya*) through meditation. Buddha transmitted his maxims within monks (*bhikkhu*), nuns (*bhikkhuni*), and male (*Upasaka*) and female laypersons (*Upasika*). His teachings were based on tolerance for other religions, races, social groups and a peaceful living together. Buddha did not recognize a god, a soul, a caste or any other discrimination against humans and nature. He taught with his life how to find freedom and peace on earth.

Mohandas K. Gandhi’s thinking was deeply influenced by these Indian religious and moral traditions. By learning through mistakes he understood that people are resistant to change and he worked on himself to find the truth (*satya*). The concept of *ahimsa* or active non-resistance, represented by the little voice inside guiding oneself to do the right things, is at the same time the guiding force for the eternal universal forces. His exercises with truth challenged his personal life, but also the British colonial forces (Gandhi 1982, 1996). *Ahimsa* offered also a new model of conflict resolution and non-violent struggle for independence.

2.2. Chinese Thinking on Peace

Kongfuzi (551-479 BCE), born as a poor villager, consolidated political theories and institutions and created a value system for living in peace within an organized society. Human behaviour depends on five virtues: humanism, uprightness, morals, wisdom and sincerity and three social obligations: loyalty, respect for parents and ancestors, and courtesy substituting violence, conquest and exploitation.

Lao Tse (around 6th century BCE) developed the ‘*tao*’ (way), representing the origin of the world order and the knowledge for guiding society through moral behaviour by peaceful means. ‘*Ren*’ (humanity, love for others) and learning during life represents the second pillar of his metaphysics. His ideal was a small country where the king knew his people who lived in small peasant communities, away from power and ambitions (Waley 1953: 102). He promoted the abolition of army and war, not precisely for moral reasons, but because any conquest was always insignificant compared with the unlimited internal resources of a person.

General *Tzun Tzu* integrated social concerns in his book *The Art of War*. He postulated that “the supreme art of war is to subject the enemy without fighting”. Moral thinking may become concrete only through congruent acting. The common well-being among subjects and rulers depends mutually and the political stability favoured scientific and cultural progress that has influenced Occident and America (García 1988). In peace terms, the small countries learnt through *shih-ta* to serve the big one and to find in this dependency protection and security. Their love and integration with nature spread over all Asia and is one of the core principle of harmony with other human beings and with environment.

Religions have played a crucial role in the history of civilizations to surmount threats, wars and global injustice. However, the imposition of European culture transformed the

²As a 35 year old prince Siddhartha Gautama (563-483 B.C.) was illuminated and renamed ‘Buddha’: the illuminated.

pluralistic nature into monolithic Eurocentric global ideological drivers (Preiswerk 1984; Syamsuddin 2005). Potential clashes among civilizations could emerge between Islam and the West (Huntington 1996) or between Western civil rights fundamentalists and Chinese socialists. Nevertheless, new processes of Eastern spirituality are renewing Western society and its spiritual loss, visible in yoga and meditation, Buddhist beliefs, care of environment, nonviolence and other Eastern values. The economic achievements in China and India with a substantial reduction of poverty indicate different value priorities and a globalization with a greater human face.

3. Latin America's Search for Peace

Two powerful empires emerged during the 14th century in Mexico and Peru (Pizarro 1978): the Aztec and the Inca. The key idea of indigenous religions was the *equilibrium*. The intimate relationship between caring for and fearing nature established a harmony between humans, nature, and divinities. Values of cooperation, dignity, freedom, love, solidarity, respect and peace were taught, together with a hierarchical system of power. Military force, science and technology improved livelihood, able to maintain a growing population in very different and difficult ecosystems. Crime, mismanagement of communal land and other behaviours against the social code had to be confessed. Sacrifices of animals, in severe cases of humans were offered for re-establishing the harmony between divinities, humans and nature. Pestilence, earthquakes, volcanoes' eruptions, famine and defeat were understood as a failure in the observation of the ceremonies, giving priests a parallel power to the emperor. People were educated to respect this intimate relationship, together with the respect for the political system.

Within their cosmogonist genesis of the Earth in both empires humans established a system of communication with divinities creating a dynamic process of control, obedience and negotiation to achieve equilibrium. The priests and military were inducing fear and dead in the subjugated regions. The hierarchical rule of power and the exploitation through tributes of large parts of the empire introduced suffering among the subjugated people, reducing their capacity of preventive peace-building and conflict resolution, but developed also science, astronomy, medicine, urbanization and technologies of irrigation.

Spain and Portugal conquest these empires and the Catholic Church imposed an ideological control that fostered economic underdevelopment and subordination to European power interests. Natural resources –food, gold, silver, minerals, medicinal plants, later oil and gas– were looted. Forced labour and new diseases decimated the indigenous population. To replace the native work force in mines and agriculture, the colonial powers brought African slaves to the Americas. This violent displacement created social fragmentation in Africa and America. Global European interests were imposed by authoritarian colonial, religious and military regimes, reinforced by a rape capitalism and occidental patriarchal dominance. After independence struggles and revolutions most Latin America countries suffered from the U.S. neo-imperial interests, based on the Monroe Doctrine.

Conquest, post-colonial exploitation and foreign interventions created in Latin-America a highly stratified social structure, dependency and small political, military, religious and economic elites. The accumulation of capital in few hands institutionalized the impoverishment of majorities, limited the creation of a middle class and created permanent tensions, rebellions, revolutions, guerrillas, and military coups (Valenzuela 1991). Therefore, Latin-America is the region with the highest income gap and after two cen-

ture of independence with a dramatic situation of poverty in almost half of the population and a rapid growth of urban slums.

Peace and violence characterized the history of the subcontinent, where local and regional violence created empires with high cultural achievements (Inca, Maya, and Aztec). Science, technology and food innovations spread from the subcontinent globally, and European colonization and independence reinforced the highly stratified society. However, the history of Latin-American' invasions, exploitation, ethnocide and neo-colonial threats resulted in the legal principle of non-intervention in the United Nations Charter. Many Latin-American states proposed mechanisms for conflict resolution within regional bodies prior to involving the Security Council, such as the Organization of American States. As neighbours of the new superpower, the subcontinent tried to protect the rest of the world from interventions it had experienced and which were justified with the Monroe Doctrine (1823).

4. Greek, Roman and Christian Thinking on Peace

In Europe, peace thinking emerged from early Greek's 'eirene' and Roman concepts of democracy, citizens' rights, and *Pax Romana* and was linked with internal security, well-being and prosperity. It mediated between private and public goods and among citizens and states. Socrates' dialectical method transformed through education human beings into moral ones. Plato' 'transcendental idealism' searched for eternal 'forms'. In the Platonic tradition peace is an act of will and a superior value, justifying all means to attain it. Aristotle' 'eirene' understood virtue between two vices, cowardice and rashness, and peace as process between different vices and virtues.

The Roman Empire consolidated its civilization with 'Pax Romana', and offered 'king's peace', once the ruled submitted to the will of the ruler' norms. 'Pax Augusta' was a desideratum of thinkers and writers (Cicero, Livio, Virgilio), determining that there is no just war, and peace is the highest value for humans. Augustine's Neo-Platonism facilitated the acceptance of the Christian doctrine. The purification of the soul by self-control, moral education and submission to the 'divine will' consolidated the hierarchical male dominated structure of church with a power beyond the Roman Empire ('pax Augustana'). Saint Thomas Aquinas linked peace with joy (*gaudium*) and related it to love (*caritas*). His inner peace represented the rule of God on the world and in the soul, similar to oriental beliefs. These cross-cultural connections linked together physical acts and intentional spirituality for a peaceful behaviour.

Nevertheless, the Christian Church persecuted other religions, organized Crusades, genocides and killed millions through the inquisition. Their peace understanding reinforced the military logic of 'tooth for tooth' pragmatism. Peace was understood in its negative sense as 'absence of war'. With the adoption of non-intervention into the internal affairs of established states (Westphalia Peace, 1648), a legal system emerged, able to secure goods beyond military protection: the paradigm of legal protection of *private property* (Richards 2000). The *state of law* from ancient Greece offered society the peaceful use of conquered goods and territories and a system of legal inheritance in the patrilineal line.

Thus consolidated a second paradigm against peace: *patriarchy*³. Its mythological origin goes back to the irrigation societies and incipient social differentiation. Christian

³A mythological justification emerged when the male half-god Zeus controlled lightening and thunder and took power over earth and the sky, justifying a hierarchical, violent and patriarchal dominance.

church, Islam and Judaism based their ideological control of power on gender and social classes' discrimination, subjection and exploitation. The division of labour resulted in a *division of power* legitimizing the exercise of power, war and violence, until the *American Declaration of Independence* (1776) and the *French Revolution* (1789) reclaimed the *sovereignty for the people*. Independence movements in prosperous colonies combined with the disintegration of great empires (e.g. Napoleonic, Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, etc.) consolidated capitalism with wealth in metropolitan powers and increased poverty in colonized countries, but never questioned the patriarchal power exercise.

During the *enlightenment* Grotius, Montesquieu, Rousseau and Kant developed a cooperative paradigm to challenge the bellicose pragmatism of Machiavelli and Hobbes. Liberal thinkers (Locke, Hume) questioned hegemonic interests, but could not avoid wars, torture, concentration camps, genocide, and concentration of wealth. They established the legal bases for an idealist world based on human rights and personal responsibility within the capitalist system. Kant proposed in his 'eternal peace' peace equality for all citizens and a republican constitution with democratic and representative organs. Within a 'League of Nation' the danger of wars should be reduced and the right of a world citizen is granted by the hospitality principle. The difference between morale and policy made him transfer to the people the adoption of laws for controlling violence of powerful monarchs and statesmen.

Industrialization pushed peasants out of their land, and the new *social class* configuration (Marx/Engels 1945) caused insecurities for workers through an intensive process of exploitation of their work force. Men were transformed into breadwinners and women into housewives. Marx denounced the inhuman reality of British capitalism. Together with Engels (1902) he created the First International, a movement for economic and intellectual liberation through a united struggle of the working classes. Intellectuals and workers fought together for securing new rights and *social struggles* increased. In her humanitarian Marxism Rosa Luxemburg stressed the need for democracy. She believed that only through revolutionary mass action of the proletariat it was possible to achieve international socialism and peace. A permanent tension remained and Keynes' (1935) welfare state provided temporary support for needy citizens, when economic circumstances avoid caring for themselves.

Neoliberalism substituted the welfare state paradigm arguing that from the free-market the benefits will automatically trickle-down. The outcome is a regressive globalization process with a relatively wealthy northern and a poor southern society, where only elites can link up to the modern system of consumerism. In the early 21st century, more than three billion human beings live in poverty, similar to the situation in the 18th century when rape capitalism (McGregor 1989) created an exploited and peace-less society.

At the international arena and after five centuries of colonialism and two World Wars, the founding members of the United Nations agreed in its Charter on the goal "to maintain international peace and security... to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace" (UN Charter, Preamble). Nevertheless, since 1945 the UN was unable to promote an era of development and well-being for the whole world, due to the longstanding Cold War. The scientific and technological progress promoted a globalized world with improvement only for minorities.

In terms of conceptual development, the idea of peace changed from a static no-war and negative peace to a more dynamic process of enabling social change with sustainability,

equity and equality in terms of freedom from want and freedom from fear. In the South, the basic idea of Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1998) admitted that marginal have been deprived of their voices and therefore, denied their role as active co-creators of culture and future. By reverting this process, marginal could transform there selves the situation of oppression into cultural liberation.

5. Comparison of the Thinking on Peace in diverse Traditions

In theoretical terms Confucius, Lao Tse and Tzun Tzu could somewhere stand for the three ideal type traditions. Confucius represents the oriental *rationalist* or *pragmatist*, similar to Grotius. Lao Tse is more representative for an Eastern *idealism* or *radicalism*. Similar to Kant, he is trying through laws and agreements with smaller countries to establish a peaceful co-existence and mutual interdependence. Finally, the thinking on war of Tzun Tzu could be initially compared with Hobbes and classified as *realism*. However, his vision to avoid at any cost wars and interpreting armed struggle as a primary defeat also makes him a pragmatist. While this comparison of Chinese and Occidental philosophical and political thinking and praxis is perhaps overdrawn, it gives the possibility to show that 2000 years earlier Eastern cultures have developed philosophical concepts, which were retaken in Occident since the 16th century AD. The Chinese integration of humans and nature and their educating processes converted all three masters into forerunner of their society, that are able to overcome the evolutionary constraints of rational or idealistic cultures of peace that have existed in other cultures and religions.

Colonial conquest, globalization, and exclusion brought both challenges and opportunities of peace-building for philosophy, religions, UN institutions, governments, social movements and individuals. At the same time, the present stage of world development and globalization are using the accumulation of knowledge to concentrate wealth in a few hands, contributing to new insecurities, violence, environmental destruction, and also terrorism. Internal wealth gaps and extreme exploitation often foster opposition by the excluded what affected also those in power. Thus a new peace thinking is emerging going beyond the regressive globalization paradigm.

Finally, new threats linked to global and climate change are affecting both hemispheres, whenever threatening more the South, and preventive behaviour and remediation requires global cooperation for mitigation and adaptation, affecting present productive processes and scientific-technological development. In addition, as world society is closely linked, peace efforts, violence or war in one part often systemically affect wider regions (see the effects of the wars in Afghanistan and the Iraq on increasing terrorism, the interlinks of forced migration, but also the global learning process from Gandhi's ahimsa).

In synthesis, the tensions among individual responsibility, free-market ideology and socio-political domination have created social tensions and a geographically division of the world in North and South. The social stratification in rich and poor inside the countries and between them has increased social vulnerability and marginalization that have been aggravated by race, ethnic and gender discriminations creating four basic contradictions: physical violence and terrorism; structural violence and social inequality; gender violence and inequity and environmental threats. These four oppositions open at the same time the following challenges for peaceful behaviour: 1) cooperation with solidar-

ity and equality vs. isolationism and elite behaviour; 2) cultural diversity and equity vs. economic monopoly; 3) nonviolent peacebuilding or ahimsa vs. himsa and physical violence; and 4) spirituality and sustainability vs. secularity and global environmental changes.

World population dreams of stable and equal livelihoods, a green and healthy world, where humans live in harmony and cooperate to mitigate the threats posed global environmental change, and a social organization able to prevent physical, social and natural threats. A world with increasing scarce and polluted resources requires new models of dialogue, negotiation and sharing. Tolerance, mutual understanding, respect for diversity, co-existence and cooperation among world civilizations and development strategies based on equality open ethical and practical concerns, where different traditions contributes to the wisdom of peaceful co-existence and peacebuilding for nonviolent conflict resolution and global human progress without discrimination and violence.