Kom, 2025, vol. XIV (2) : 63–77

UDC: 316.647.5:177
28-852.5 Хомеини Р. М.
24-852.5 Ганди М.
DOI: 10.5937/kom2502063R
Original scientific paper

Social Peace from Theory to Act: The Perspectives of Imam Khomeini and Mahatma Gandhi

Hamid REZANIA SHIRAZI

Al-Mustafa International University, Qom, I. R. Iran

Davoud RAHIMI SOJASI

Shahed University, Tehran, I. R. Iran

Peace and dialogue within the contemporary world are objectives shared by many religions and civilizations, advocating peaceful coexistence, tolerance, and dialogue while eschewing violence and tyranny. This article seeks to compare the late leaders of two civilized nations: Iran and India. By examining the perspectives of Gandhi and Imam Khomeini, we aim to understand their respective visions for achieving peace and creating societies free from violence, colonization, and tyranny, utilizing dialogue and religious ethics. Here are the findings of our research: (1) both were charismatic figures with particular worldviews, (2) their practices and methods were rooted in religious and traditional backgrounds, (3) they both believed that politics should be guided by religious ethics, viewing power or governance as a means rather than an end, (4) their primary shared objective was to resist aggressors, dispel fear and weakness among their followers, and instill courage, (5) while Imam Khomeini concurred with Gandhi on the importance of exercising self-restraint and self-control in the face of enemies, he differed by considering unconditional forgiveness as naïve. Moreover, both leaders emphasized the importance of rationality as a central strategy, positioning them as proponents of dialogue and peace grounded in rational thinking. The research methodology is qualitative content analysis.

Keywords: *Imam Khomeini, Gandhi, peace and dialogue, rationality, social peace*

Corresponding author: hamidrezania@miu.ac.ir

Corresponding author: d.rahimi@shahed.ac.ir

Statement of the Problem

> "The afflictions plaguing our nation mirror those experienced by the people of India, and the journey we've undertaken parallels that of Gandhi and other prominent Indian figures."—Imam Khomeini

Social interactions among individuals form the foundation of communication within society. When these interactions are predominantly positive and enduring, outweighing negative and disjointed ones, society tends to achieve a state of peace. Conversely, if negative interactions prevail, tensions often arise. This principle extends to the international stage as well. Therefore, peace and war can be understood as inherently social phenomena. While the study of peace necessarily involves an examination of war and its contributing factors, insights gleaned from the experiences of peaceful leaders worldwide offer reliable sources for such analysis.

Social issues often gain recognition as such through figures and statistics. The loss of peace resulting from wars has inflicted countless tensions, destruction, and casualties throughout history, disproportionately affecting women and children, underscoring the imperative of addressing this issue. While social factors such as language, religion, ethnicity, race, and customs have contributed to the divisions among nations, they are not the root causes of wars but rather provide fertile ground for conflict. A significant contributing factor to colonization and exploitation is the manipulation of these divisions by governments to further their agendas. The occurrence of two world wars in history, along with numerous contemporary conflicts, has underscored the critical importance of establishing and maintaining peace. However, it is essential to acknowledge that achieving peace necessitates consensus, whereas war can be instigated by the decision of a single individual.

Neglecting structural factors that contribute to peace while reducing it solely to individual agency is a mistake observed by some sociologists and psychologists. Furthermore, overlooking metaphysical considerations deprives peace theories of the analytical depth provided by theological perspectives. Despite the extensive writings on peace by Western intellectuals, their Orientalist approaches often limit their ability to uncover the underlying truths. Some of these intellectuals have proposed concepts such as the "virtuous city," utopian societies, and ideal governments as the ultimate aspirations of peace-seeking endeavors, yet none of these ideals has materialized. What unites these idealists is their failure to consider concrete realities, historical contexts, geographical factors, and the dynamics of societal transformations. Moreover, there are those who attempt to impose peace upon other communities through violent means and mass killings. However, fostering openness to dialogue with diverse cultures

and ethnicities represents a norm that holds the potential to promote peace within human society and prevent conflicts and wars.

Contemplating the issue of peace through the perspectives of Imam Khomeini and Gandhi can foster an intercultural dialogue. Peace, as a shared concern across all cultures, finds its expression through dialogue, the mechanism by which these concerns intersect. Therefore, it becomes essential to explore Imam Khomeini's thoughts and practices concerning this matter. In a world where globalization serves as the primary slogan of dominant systems, often contributing to global and regional conflicts and wars, addressing the issue of social peace becomes imperative. As Giddens notes, the proliferation of nation-states globally has coincided with a proliferation of tools for warfare. This underscores the necessity of tackling the problem of social peace. Factors such as wealth and power have historically hindered genuine exchanges between humans and cultures. Consequently, peace has acquired a transcultural significance, serving as the cornerstone of effective communication. While cultures can indeed be sources of conflict, cultural evolution can also be oriented towards peace. Thus, peace, dialogue, and culture form a complementary triad capable of transforming hostilities into mutual understanding.

In this article, our objective is to analyze peace through the viewpoints of two influential Eastern intellectuals and leaders: Gandhi and Imam Khomeini. By juxtaposing their perspectives and examining their lived experiences, we aim to formulate a comprehensive understanding of peace.

Studying the lifestyles of great world leaders, examining their movements, revolutions, and contributions to their respective societies, and comparing them with other successful leaders can offer valuable insights for the present and the future. Central to such comparisons are the historical contexts in which these leaders emerged, the adversaries they faced, and their strategies and motivations for their struggles. While Imam Khomeini and Gandhi exhibit significant differences in their approaches and backgrounds, there are notable similarities in their political methodologies and their contributions to the political transformation of Iran and India. Both leaders shared a profound belief in peace for all humanity and advocated for dialogue among diverse sects and religions. This article seeks to briefly assess these differences and similarities, enriching our understanding of these influential figures.

Intertwinement of Religion and Politics in the Views of Imam Khomeini and Gandhi

Imam Khomeini consistently upheld the revitalizing school of Islam, which he affectionately referred to as "dear Islam," as the guiding principle across all domains, including politics, dialogue, and respectful interaction.

Similarly, in the first half of the twentieth century, Gandhi and, in the latter half, Imam Khomeini were revered as unique exemplars of religious politicians. What truly distinguished them was their innovative and rational utilization of tradition, exemplified by their rejection of any separation between religion and politics. Both leaders remained steadfast in their adherence to religious and ideological principles, yet their commitment did not deter them from engaging actively in politics; rather, it propelled them to play prominent roles in this arena. This sentiment is echoed in the frequent statements made by both Gandhi and Imam Khomeini regarding their stance on this matter.

Gandhi expressed his deep attachment to religion, which he regarded as the embodiment of truth, asserting that it was this attachment to truth that propelled him into the realm of politics. He firmly and uncompromisingly contended that those who argue for the separation of religion from politics are fundamentally misguided about the essence of religion (Jahanbegloo 1993: 13). For Gandhi, politics devoid of religion is inherently corrupt and must be avoided at all costs (Gandhi 1975: 119). He emphatically declared that he could not conceive of a life devoid of religion, even for a moment. Many of his political associates were cognizant of the fact that his political endeavors were deeply rooted in his religious convictions, a perception that Gandhi readily affirmed. He openly acknowledged that his political engagements and all other aspects of his life were fundamentally shaped by his religiosity (Gandhi 1975: 119). Furthermore, he went so far as to assert that every action and practice of a religious individual emanates from their religious beliefs.

The Iranian society, shaped by religious influences since ancient times and currently defined by its Islamic identity following the adoption of Islamic principles and culture, encompasses various sectors including academia, politics, industry, and sports. This Islamic identity permeates different facets of society. From an educational standpoint, learning is regarded as a religious virtue, with the value attributed to the pens of scholars considered greater than that of the blood shed by martyrs on the battlefield in service of God. This emphasis on knowledge fuels individuals' fervor for learning. Over the past millennium or so, prevalent fields of study in Iran have been predominantly cultivated within Islamic seminary schools, where subjects ranging from Quranic exegesis to literature, medicine, and astronomy were taught and explored. Scholars who emerged from this educational system were well-versed not only in Islamic sciences such as jurisprudence, principles of jurisprudence, literature, logic, theology, and philosophy, but also in fields like astronomy, medicine, and architecture.

In our contemporary era, Imam Khomeini, serving as a beacon of such scholarship in Iran, drew upon jurisprudential principles alongside rational

religious doctrines to underscore the importance of peaceful interactions for the broader Muslim community.

Imam Khomeini further emphasized the inseparable bond between religion and politics, asserting that Islam is inherently both a devotional and political religion. According to him, devotion to God is intricately linked with political affairs, just as politics is intertwined with matters of devotion, reflecting the foundation of Islamic politics upon religiosity established by the Prophet of Islam. He staunchly proclaimed that Islam is fundamentally political in nature, where even acts of worship and devotion carry political significance (Imam Khomeini 2006: 29).

Hence, the actions of both Imam Khomeini and Gandhi were rooted in the rich tapestry of cultural and religious traditions. Viewing political matters as extensions of religious morality, they were not driven by a desire for governance and the acquisition of power, despite having embraced such roles. In contrast to the typical ambitions of politicians, statesmen, or revolutionaries who prioritize governance and political dominance, Imam Khomeini and Gandhi regarded governance merely as a means to enhance the well-being of people across various spheres of life.

Imam Khomeini made a clear distinction between what he termed as "satanic and animal politics" and "divine politics." For him, the correct form of politics is one that enables people's well-being and happiness through adherence to religious principles. He viewed religiosity as inherently political, capable of motivating and guiding individuals toward actions that serve their best interests. In Gandhi's perspective as well, political authority entails the power to organize the affairs of people's religious and national lives through elected representatives at the national level (Imam Khomeini 2006: 218; Gandhi 1975: 20).

Imam Khomeini and Gandhi possessed unique wisdom that allowed them to deeply engage with the respective traditions of Shiism and Hinduism. They adeptly discerned how to utilize these traditions and religious resources to foster greater harmony among various religions and denominations. They demonstrated an ability to reconcile the seemingly opposing imperatives of the modern world with those of tradition, all the while embodying the highest ideals of mysticism, renouncing worldly pleasures, and embracing a devout ascetic lifestyle. Their teachings and practices were imbued with the richness of past traditions, enriching the norms they propagated and the methods they employed in their endeavors.

It is essential to acknowledge that their commitment to religion did not imply a rejection of reason or blind adherence to religious dogma. Both Imam Khomeini and Gandhi believed that any allegedly religious norm or tradition that contradicted reason, rationality, or morality should be discarded.

In essence, these leaders were characterized by their pragmatic and realistic outlook. Imam Khomeini's bold critiques of Shiite clerics who held biased and prejudiced views of religiosity, whom he labeled as "rigid" and "self-righteous," along with his dedication to philosophy and other intellectual disciplines, exemplify his rational approach to religion and religious traditions. Similarly, Gandhi also embraced a realistic and rationalistic perspective on religion. Both leaders approached crises and other circumstances with deep insight and pure rationalism, employing rational perspectives to devise creative, novel, yet practical solutions.

In this regard, both Imam Khomeini and Gandhi shared the conviction that religions serve as proponents of peace, consistently advocating for dialogue and employing principles such as "best manner of reasoning," "speaking with respect," and "speaking gently"—all of which are Quranic phrases.

Thus, to effectively address contemporary challenges, it is imperative to revisit and re-embrace authentic religious principles and reclaim our reservoir of values. It was through these values that leaders like Imam Khomeini and Gandhi garnered authority, enabling them to meet the needs of the impoverished populations of Iran and India. Their embodiment of moral integrity, tireless dedication, and unwavering efforts in combating colonialism showcased them as exemplary leaders.

Struggles Interwoven with Calls for Peace

Imam Khomeini asserts that the primary effective strategies for confronting oppressors across all eras include the path of martyrdom, drawing inspiration from the Ashura movement, and embracing the notion of expecting a savior. The anticipation of a savior instills hope and fervor among Muslims engaged in struggles against oppression, while the readiness for self-sacrifice or martyrdom fortifies their resolve to sacrifice themselves for their cause.

Imam Khomeini, drawing from the Quranic teachings, holds the belief that the impoverished will ultimately inherit the earth, compelling tyrants to fulfill the neglected rights of the underprivileged. He advocates for humanity and all nations to embrace the methods of prophets, grounded in rationality and dialogue. As a mystic, jurist, theologian, and politician, Imam Khomeini presents a unique perspective on peace, one that extends beyond mere politics and is based on a coherent theoretical framework. Every Muslim aspires to foster a society where peace reigns supreme and violence is absent. The insights of Imam Khomeini offer a pathway towards realizing this objective.

When considering whether war or peace takes precedence, it is important to acknowledge the numerous Quranic verses that emphasize the importance of war and jihad, sometimes even equating faith with jihad. However, it is cru-

cial to recognize that materialistic or realistic perspectives never adequately address justice in times of peace. The failure to tackle the underlying causes of conflict and unrest, particularly injustice and oppression, has hindered the realization of genuine and sustainable peace worldwide.

The paramount goal of the prophets was to establish justice and world peace. Comprehensive development hinges on achieving peace on a global scale, as war and insecurity squander both material resources and human forces. Prevailing perspectives on the dynamics of justice and peace can be broadly categorized into materialist and divine viewpoints. From a materialist standpoint, peace is primarily defined as the absence or cessation of war, with little consideration for justice. Conversely, in the monotheistic perspective, peace devoid of justice is deemed meaningless. This stands in stark contrast to a range of materialist ideologies and distorted interpretations of divine principles. According to this perspective, the pathways to acquiring knowledge involve three fundamental elements: reason, religion, and sensory perception.

Imam Khomeini maintains that the pursuit of peace, justice, and serenity is an inherent aspect of the approaches adopted by prophets and their successors. It is not merely a hollow slogan or feigned pretense. Thus, the realization of human aspirations in the contemporary world and beyond is contingent upon the leadership of individuals who genuinely harbor love for humanity and ardently respect human dignity. Imam Khomeini fervently beseeches God to liberate the world from oppressors and bestow peace and serenity upon humanity, hastening the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (the Twelfth Shiite Imam), who is prophesied to establish justice, equity, and peace worldwide (Imam Khomeini 2006: 307).

From the Islamic standpoint, and in accordance with Imam Khomeini's perspective, peace holds value only when accompanied by the observance of human rights and the establishment of justice. In such circumstances, the true outcomes of peace, namely human tranquility and moral refinement, are actualized. Peace devoid of justice is seen as tantamount to submission and servitude. Imam Khomeini firmly believes that discussions of sustainable world peace are futile as long as global justice remains unattained.

Imam Khomeini asserts that fostering just and equitable relationships with others hinges upon the establishment of justice in global dynamics. He points to shifts in global power dynamics following the Islamic Revolution and the Iran-Iraq war, expressing his hope that these changes do not destabilize the global balance. He emphasizes Iran's commitment to maintaining equal relations with all parties, irrespective of their geographic location. Furthermore, he underscores the importance of reciprocating justice in relationships, emphasizing that Iran will treat others justly as long as they reciprocate with fairness and equity (Imam Khomeini 2006: 418).

Imam Khomeini maintains that achieving global peace necessitates the establishment of global justice. World justice serves as a fundamental prerequisite for the attainment of world peace. However, given that Western powers and states often prioritize their own interests over the pursuit of justice, countering them becomes essential to realize sustainable world peace.

Imam Khomeini consistently highlights the absence of a genuine commitment to justice in the intellectual frameworks of the West and the dominant front. He argues that ideologies such as liberalism and nationalism, while influential in Western thought, do not prioritize justice. Furthermore, he contends that Marxism, despite its professed emphasis on justice, fails to grasp the true essence of justice and inadvertently aligns with the principles of capitalism.

On the one hand, there are groups that prioritize war as a fundamental principle, advocating for perpetual conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims until Islam reigns supreme worldwide. Exclusionary or excommunicationist factions often act in accordance with such beliefs. However, others point to the Quran to argue that peace holds primacy. Indeed, there are approximately one hundred Quranic verses that emphasize peace. Furthermore, it is essential to recognize that verses related to jihad primarily refer to defensive or reactive measures. Additionally, the initial stages of jihad entail numerous prerequisites, rendering it exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, during the occultation of the Shiite Imam. Imam Khomeini repeatedly affirmed his belief in the primacy of peace, stating, for instance, that in accordance with Islam, we consistently oppose war.

On various occasions, Imam Khomeini emphasized the importance of peace, expressing his desire for tranquility and harmony between nations. He made it clear that he harbored no intentions of engaging in war with either Islamic or non-Islamic countries (Imam Khomeini 2006). These sentiments are not merely rhetoric from a religious leader; they are grounded in the theoretical foundations of Islamic jurisprudence.

In the contemporary world, some individuals divide the globe into the "Land of Islam" and the "Land of Disbelief," suggesting a perpetual state of conflict between the two. However, Imam Khomeini contended that defense against aggression is a divine obligation. Regarding the theoretical underpinnings of these assertions, it is crucial to recognize that human nature is neither inherently good nor bad. Humans possess both an innate nature and instinct. If they align with their innate disposition, they are inclined towards peace; if they succumb to instinct, they lean towards conflict.

From Imam Khomeini's jurisprudential perspective, he maintained that Quranic verses regarding initial jihad are only applicable in the presence of an infallible leader, such as the Prophet or an Imam. Consequently, war is

permissible only under two circumstances: to repel aggression and to rectify injustice, provided it serves the interests of Islam.

Imam Khomeini observes that humans possess inclinations both towards peace and war, and the role of prophets was to guide and regulate these natural instincts. Upon examining Imam Khomeini's writings on war and peace, we encounter viewpoints that are nearly unprecedented among Muslim jurists and authorities. What sets him apart is his consideration of contemporary context, temporal factors, and the evolving needs of Islamic society alongside traditional sources of jurisprudence in his jurisprudential deductions.

The establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the eight-year defense against Saddam Hussein's aggression were pivotal events that further exemplified Imam Khomeini's unique perspectives and their alignment with real-world circumstances. He posits that war is not inherent to human nature but rather a product of societal conditioning. War, in his view, can serve as a tool for advancing humanity's interests, and its moral value or disvalue hinges on the objectives pursued. Consequently, wars aimed at upholding noble human values are deemed legitimate and justifiable, thus legitimizing initial wars. However, the initiation of such conflicts is contingent upon specific prerequisites, rendering it unfeasible in the present context. Furthermore, Imam Khomeini emphasizes that even initial jihad is fundamentally a defensive military strategy rather than a doctrine promoting aggression.

Legitimate defense is an inherent right for nations and countries, exercised to protect their territorial integrity. Similarly, legitimate collective defense extends to Islamic countries, aiming to safeguard their faith and uphold the rights of Muslims, driven by a sense of Islamic brotherhood and shared convictions. It is evident that, apart from specific circumstances like initial war under stringent conditions, Imam Khomeini's perspective on defense remains consistent with international law. His viewpoint not only complements international law but also addresses its gaps, particularly through the strategy of comprehensive defense. This approach encompasses both aggression and injustice as threats to international security and peace. Moreover, it advocates for legitimate defense in its broadest sense and emphasizes the principles of peaceful coexistence, notably rejecting dominance.

Rationality in Islam and Imam Khomeini's Approach

In both Islamic thought and Western culture, "reason" has historically held a prominent position, although there are notable differences in how reason is conceived, particularly in the post-Renaissance West. When examining the nature of reason and rationality in Islamic and Western traditions, two distinct approaches can be considered: epistemological and ontological.

When exploring rationalism, it becomes apparent that throughout history, there have been instances where individuals face uncertainties in choosing between different characters or traditions. In such circumstances, questions arise about which is preferable and who is correct. This dilemma prompts human reason to contemplate the most competent and worthy lifestyle. Consequently, taking appropriate action becomes imperative, and justifications may be sought through rational deliberation. However, it is important to acknowledge that the human heart may also play a role in this context.

In other words, one can delve into the role of reason and rationality in theoretical analyses within the humanities, examining their epistemic significance. Alternatively, one can explore the historical evolution, implications, and outcomes of the external realization of rationality.

In his political leadership following the Islamic Revolution, Imam Khomeini notably emphasized rationality, propounding the theory of the role of time and place in jurisprudential rulings. This theory, which had been a latent issue in Shiite jurisprudence, was sporadically mentioned in Shiite hadith and jurisprudential texts. Consequently, Imam Khomeini can be credited as the originator of this theory. Furthermore, compared to his contemporaneous scholars' perspectives on the role of time and place in jurisprudence, Imam Khomeini presented the most thorough and coherent theory. His meticulous approach aimed to ensure that Islam remains responsive and enduring, drawing upon rationality and ijtihad. Notably, he applied this theory prominently in the realm of politics.

If we delineate Islamic rationality into epistemic, moral, and instrumental aspects, Western rationality appears primarily focused on the latter. Consequently, we view it as incomplete, lacking the depth necessary for comprehensively interpreting the world, humanity, and life (Rahimpour Azghadi 1999: 108).

1) Epistemic rationality (large-scale rationality): This level of rationality encompasses understanding the philosophy of life and recognizing humanity's exceptional and pivotal position within it, along with the role of reason in harmonizing human relationships with both the world and the divine (Ibid.). Often termed as "wisdom" or "fundamental rationality," it transcends mere experiential and sensory knowledge, relying heavily on reason and intuition while also drawing upon experiences. However, it should not be conflated with the discipline of philosophy. This form of rationality primarily addresses issues related to worldview, theology, and human nature. It serves as the foundational and essential level of rationality, acting as the basis for all other forms of thought, including instrumental rationality. Numerous Qura-

nic verses and hadiths emphasize the importance of reason, knowledge, understanding, and insight, asserting that Islamic faith is rooted in rational knowledge. This stands in contrast to Christian and liberal perspectives where faith and religion are often separated from reason and knowledge (Ibid.: 113).

2) Moral rationality (axiological rationality): Reason plays a crucial role in shaping the moral landscape of humanity (Ibid.: 107). Within Islamic thought, there exists a form of rationality that acknowledges human desires and interests but emphasizes a balanced approach between worldly pursuits and considerations for the afterlife, redirecting attention away from mere self-interest. While Islamic thought does incorporate a cost-benefit calculation, it operates on a more nuanced and comprehensive level. This is because the costs and benefits of actions are weighed against the backdrop of an eternal existence, endowed with divine spirit, free will, and moral responsibility, which vastly differ from, and even conflict, those of temporal phenomena and material bodies (Ibid.: 119).
3) Instrumental rationality: This aspect of reason involves the calculation and anticipation of worldly gains and losses aimed at achieving economic prosperity and societal well-being (Ibid.: 107). Instrumental rationality operates in conjunction with fundamental reason, drawing explicitly or implicitly from its theoretical underpinnings (Ibid.: 112). In the context of Islamic development and civilization, instrumental rationality is informed and influenced by fundamental rationality. All human economic and political decisions and actions ought to be rooted, to some extent, in fundamental rationality. While instrumental rationality is undeniably essential, it alone is not sufficient. This level of rationality constitutes a facet of "practical reason", spanning from everyday family life to national economic strategies, management, and civil policies. What Western sociologists and development theorists typically refer to as reason and rationality aligns closely with this form of instrumental rationality.

In Imam Khomeini's perspective, rooted in Islamic beliefs, we encounter a comprehensive understanding of rationality. Similarly, Gandhi's delineation of the ten principles for his movement and its adherents reflects the presence of epistemic, instrumental, and moral forms of rationality, evident throughout his movement and his analysis of religious pluralism. However, Gandhi rejects the notion of absolutism in rationality, likening it to a form of modern idolatry. He warns against the dangers of omnipotent reason, suggesting that when rationalism perceives itself as all-powerful, it becomes a monstrous

force. According to Gandhi, omnipotent reason is even more perilous than idolatry—worshipping inanimate objects like stones and trees. It is essential to note that Gandhi's stance does not advocate for the suppression of reason but rather emphasizes the importance of purifying it (Jahanbegloo 2000: 76).

Respectful Call to Peace

Just as Gandhi's principle of non-violence finds its roots in religion and tradition, Imam Khomeini's strategies, such as the anticipation of a savior and martyrdom, also derive from religious and traditional sources, grounded in Islamic beliefs regarding combating injustice, oppression, and tyranny. The primary shared objective between Imam Khomeini and Gandhi in adopting such methods to confront aggressors is to eradicate the remnants of fear and weakness among their followers, and instead instill courage and fortitude within them (Gandhi 1975: 59). This imperative arose from the colonial policies in India and Iran, which had eroded the cultural self-assurance and confidence of the populace in both countries, reducing them to a state of submissiveness and timidity. Hence, both Gandhi and Imam Khomeini recognized that revitalizing and unifying people against aggressors necessitated restoring their sense of bravery.

That being said, these two leaders held slightly different interpretations of courage, although they ultimately converge, as will be outlined below. For Gandhi, courage, characterized by a specific form of self-sacrifice and self-restraint, is synonymous with non-violence. Indeed, non-violence represents the pinnacle of courage and valor, while the use of force and violence signifies fear. Gandhi openly acknowledges his own past cowardice, admitting that he once succumbed to fear and resorted to force and violence. It was only after overcoming his own fears that he came to appreciate the value of non-violence. Consequently, he asserted that non-violence cannot be embraced by those who fear death or perceive themselves as lacking in resistance. Thus, for Gandhi, non-violence emerges from an internal struggle, rather than from fear.

Courage, according to Gandhi, resides in spiritual and internal fortitude rather than physical or material might. It involves asserting one's rights through enduring personal suffering, a stark contrast to armed resistance. Courage, characterized by self-restraint and inner resilience, taps into genuine, non-material, and non-physical strengths. It entails voluntary defiance against the aggressor's will, rejecting submission and resignation to fate. It represents a form of passive resistance, a refusal to cooperate without seeking retribution, and a willingness to sacrifice oneself without harming others. Gandhi famously remarked that a nation prepared for boundless sacrifice can attain remarkable heights. He portrayed the Indian nation as viewing death as a mere pillow on which to rest, a sentiment that imbued them with a formida-

ble strength capable of defeating the aggressors. Conversely, Gandhi deemed individuals who cower in the face of danger as deserving of the label "coward" (Gandhi 1975: 85).

Cowards resort to violence and harbor hatred in their hearts, readily willing to kill their enemies without hesitation. Non-violence remains entirely foreign to them. Gandhi, in his elucidation of the non-violence method, explains that when one refuses to act against their conscience, they tap into their spiritual strength. He illustrates this notion by offering the example of a government enacting a law that he finds disagreeable. If Gandhi were to compel the government to revoke the law through force and violence, he would be employing physical or material force. However, if he were to defy the law and accept the punishment prescribed for it, he would be harnessing his spiritual force, which necessitates self-sacrifice.

Gandhi espoused three principles that he regarded as the foundation of his political and social endeavors, serving as the basis of his resistance against Western influence. These principles can be summarized as follows: (1) There exists only one ultimate reality in the world, which is self-knowledge. (2) Those who attain self-knowledge comprehend God, the world, and others, while those lacking self-awareness remain ignorant. (3) There is a singular force, freedom, and justice in the world, embodied by self-governance. Those who possess self-control hold sway over the world (Abedi 2008: 20). Imam Khomeini also endorsed these principles, integrating them into his personal and social life. Indeed, his opposition to Western culture was rooted in these very principles.

According to Gandhi, if a physically weak individual surrenders to the enemy or flees, it would be seen as an act of cowardice. However, if they use their strength to confront the enemy and perish in the process, it is considered a courageous action, albeit involving violence. Conversely, if they regard escape as dishonorable, refrain from striking the enemy, and perish in the resistance, that embodies the true essence of non-violent courageous resistance.

Imam Khomeini also places significant emphasis on courage, akin to Gandhi, albeit in a more comprehensive manner. Like Gandhi, he believed that enduring suffering could impart spiritual strength, thereby fostering courage within individuals. Imam Khomeini asserted that those who possess fear of God are fearless in the face of all else. Additionally, he regarded those who exhibit weakness in the presence of oppressors, opting to flee or surrender, as cowardly. However, unlike Gandhi, he did not confine courage solely to non-violence. While he acknowledged that non-violence and forgiveness are preferable to violence, he also believed that defensive violence could be permissible under certain circumstances, provided it is driven by divine intentions and adherence to duty rather than personal desires. Alternatively put,

Imam Khomeini considers self-defense against an enemy as rational. It is the presence of this pure divine intention that transforms warfare into a "holy defense," elevating it beyond mere conflict.

Hence, Imam Khomeini's conception of courage and his advocacy for peace do not align entirely with the Western perspective, which typically confines courage to superficial physical triumph, neglecting considerations of intention, self-sacrifice, self-control, and fear of God. Similarly, his stance differs from Gandhi's approach, constituting a unique amalgamation of the two perspectives, yet distinct from both. While Imam Khomeini concurs with Gandhi on the importance of exercising self-restraint and self-control in the face of the enemy, he believes that such restraint should not exceed the bounds of reason and rationality. He views it as naïve to indiscriminately love, refuse to hate, or forgive the aggressor under any circumstance, recognizing that this could lead to irreversible consequences. Thus, Imam Khomeini posits that under certain circumstances, it is both permissible and rational to employ firmness, resolve, and reject compromise, albeit as a secondary measure subsequent to efforts to pursue peace and reconciliation, which have been rebuffed by the opposing party.

Conclusion

The above discussion highlights the following points:

1) Fighting against despotism and tyranny is crucial for maintaining peaceful relations with other countries.
2) Efforts should be made to reform international structures and organizations in a manner that benefits the global community.
3) Addressing the wealth disparity between nations and establishing social justice are necessary steps towards achieving peace.
4) International collaborations should be based on mutual respect to foster peaceful relationships.
5) Social reformers should prioritize rejecting political and economic imperialism and promoting peaceful coexistence among governments.
6) Imam Khomeini's concept of the guardianship of the jurist provided a theoretical framework within Shiism that parallels the concept of caliphate in Sunni Islam.
7) Peace should not be solely defined as the absence of war, as it can be disrupted by other factors.
8) Dialogue and religious morality, as emphasized by Imam Khomeini and Gandhi, can facilitate peaceful coexistence with other religions, nations, and governments.

In conclusion, it is essential to recognize that Imam Khomeini's perspective on courage entails a nuanced understanding that rejects both purely violent and purely non-violent approaches. Instead, he advocates for a balanced approach that integrates both, with a preference for peace and non-violence whenever possible. However, he acknowledges the necessity of violence in exceptional or secondary cases. This stance is evident in his practices against aggressors, like the Shah, where he prioritized peaceful protests and negative resistance over resorting to violence and military actions, akin to Gandhi's movement.

In mobilizing the Iranian populace, Imam Khomeini focused on revitalizing their sense of identity and instilling courage and self-confidence. He encouraged peaceful demonstrations and civil disobedience, such as soldiers deserting military units or citizens refusing to pay taxes. However, he also acknowledged the potential necessity of military force and violence in certain situations. Following the Islamic Revolution's triumph, his primary emphasis remained on non-violent approaches. Yet, in response to both domestic crises like the Kurdistan conflict and Amol incidents as well as foreign aggression like the Iraq-Iran War, he authorized defensive measures and counterattacks when necessary. Simultaneously, he pursued dialogues with nations globally.

Throughout history, eminent figures have consistently strived to uphold the honor and dignity of their nations and resist aggressors. Simultaneously, they have advocated for peace and harmonious coexistence among nations.

Received: July 13th, 2025
Accepted: November 11th, 2025

References

Abedi, Mohammad (2008), *Muqāyisih-yi sak-i siyāsī-yi Imam Khomeini* [A comparison of the political styles of Imam Khomeini and Gandhi], Qom, Tebyan.

Gandhi, Mahatma (1975), *Sarguẕasht-i man* [My life], translated by Masoud Barzin, Tehran, Bahjat Publications.

Imam Khomeini, Seyyed Ruhollah (2006), *Ṣaḥīfih-yi Imam*, 22 volumes, Tehran, Institute for Complication and Publication of the Works of Imam Khomeini.

Jahanbegloo, Ramin (1993), "Kunūnī-būdan-i Gandhi" [Gandhi's contemporariness], In: Mahatma Gandhi, *Dar justijūyi ḥaqīqat*, translated and edited by Khojasteh Kia, Tehran, Markaz.

Jahanbegloo, Ramin (2000), *Gandhi va rīshih-hāyi falsafī-yi ʿadam-i khūshūnat* [Gandhi and the philosophical roots of non-violence], translated by Hadi Esmaeilzadeh, Tehran, Ney.

Rahimpour Azghadi, Hassan (1999), *ʿAqlāniyyat* [Rationality], Tehran, Cultural Institute of Contemporary Science and Thought.