ISLAM AND GANDHI ON PEACE AND NONVIOLENCE

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Abstract

One of the basic issues of modern times is how to construct a nonviolent and peaceful society and achieve the goal of a one-world community that lives in peace and harmony. Islam and Mahatma Gandhi's approaches, in this regard, are remarkable. Both share same aims about common ethical concepts such as nonviolent, compassion for all creation, freedom, justice, patience and tolerance. There are remarkable similarities between the ideas of Gandhi and teachings of Islam, particularly in the concepts of peace and nonviolence are concerned. This article, thus, mentions about the concepts of peace and nonviolence (ahimsa) as propounded by them. It handles attributes of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha* such as "loving sinners and even your enemy", "having no intention to harm others", "rest on God", "consistency of word and action", which are held forth by Gandhi. Furthermore, this article deals with similarities of Gandhi's teachings with "ehsan" (benevolence), "tavakol (trust in God), "al-niyyat" (intent) and "an-nasîha"(sincerity) in Islamic thought.

Key Words: Ahimsa, Nonviolence, Peace, Satyagraha, Islam, Gandhi, Ehsan (Benevolence), Sincerity.

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Öz

İslam ve Gandi'nin Barış ve Şiddetsizlik Konusundaki Yaklaşımı

Günümüzde hemen her bireyi yakından ilgilendiren temel konulardan biri, bütün insanların barış ve güven içinde yaşayabileceği toplumsal bir yapının nasıl inşa edileceği meselesidir. İslam'ın ve Gandi'nin bu konudaki yaklaşımları dikkat çekicidir. Zira her ikisi de barış, şiddetsizlik, eşitlik, merhamet, hoşgörü gibi ortak değerler üzerinde durmaktadır. Gandi bu hususta *ahimsa* ve *satyagraha* gibi öğretileri ile kendine özgü bir yol belirlemiştir. Onun bu öğretileri, herkese iyilikte bulunma, Tanrı'ya güvenme, söz ve fiilde tutarlı olma ve başkalarına zarar verme amacından uzak durma gibi özellikler taşır. Gandi'nin bu düşünceleri ile İslam'daki ihsan, tevekkül, nasihat ve niyet gibi kavramlar benzerlik gösterir. Bu makalede ilk olarak İslam'ın ve Gandi'nin barış ve şiddetsizlik konusundaki görüşleri ele alınmış daha sonra da bunların benzer yönleri mukayese edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kavramlar: Ahimsa, Şiddetsizlik, Barış, Satyagraha, Islam, Gandi, İhsan, Samimiyet

Introduction

Human search for truth, love, nonviolence and peace has been perennial for centuries. In spite of all the impressive advances of modern sciences and technology, religion still exercises a powerful influence on the minds of millions of human beings. Religions, more or less, teach goodwill and peace among all human beings. They in general have considerably helped to humanize individuals' relations and to create and sustain the higher values of human conduct.

While acknowledging that Islam and Hinduism have different religious beliefs, there are conspicuous similarities between the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi and doctrines of Islam, especially so far as the concepts of peace and nonviolence are concerned. In this context, Islam's and Gandhi's understanding of peace and nonviolence has a place in leading to humankind toward such a quality since making a peaceful world is one of the main purposes of them. The aim of this article, therefore, is to discuss the Islamic and Gandhian approach to peace and nonviolence. While the first section examines the Qur'an and the hadith that give such perspectives on the topic, the second section deals with Gandhi (1869-1948), who promoted peace and nonviolence through his activities and teachings such as *ahimsa* and *satyagraha*. Moreo-

ver, in this paper it has been targeted to compare Islamic and Gandhian perspective on peace.[1*]

1. Islamic Approach to Peace and Nonviolence

The word 'Islam' is derived from the word *silm*, which means reconciliation, peace, submission, and deliverance (Ibn Manzûr 1375/1956: 289-290). Islam refers to the monotheistic religion revealed to Muhammad, peace be upon him, in 610 CE and the name of Islam was instituted by Qur'an, the sacred scripture revealed to Muhammad (Maturidi 1986: 393-395; Sarıçam 2003: 82; Sinanoğlu 2001: 1). Islam, as the word itself suggest, has connotation of peace and submission. Muhammad (pbuh) describes Muslims in his saying, *"A Muslim is he/she from whose hand and tongue the Muslims are safe"* (Al-Bukhari, Iman: 10). Islam's purpose is to make this world a place where all beings are peacefully protected so as to bring human bodies closer to God, where peace prevails and preeminent. For this reason the Islamic concept of peace, for instance, *salam* is central to Islam and plays a fundamental role in providing a vision of social harmony and unison.The Arabic word *salam* meaning "peace" or "health" has been in general use a salutation or greeting since the era of the Qur'an. It is a salutation that the Qur'an has most to speak about *salam* (Parrinder 1987: 221-222). This word became the common salutation in the Islamic world and its usage has been recommended in the Qur'an. God invites men to the 'abode of peace' *(dar al-salam*), both in this life and the next (Yunus 10/25).

According to Islam, God has created human beings *in the best form and nature* (At-Tin 95/4). Since the one who can give life and death is God, it is forbidden to kill. Besides this, the Qur'an, which orders that all people and creatures be treated with compression and mercy, equates the slaying of a person unjustly with the slaying the whole of human beings. Qur'an declares, *"... whoever kills o soul, unless it be for manslaughter or for mischief in the land, is like one who killed the whole of mankind; and whoever saves a life, is like one who saves the lives of all mankind*…(Al-Maidah 5/32).[2] From the Islamic

1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at an international conference entitled "Peace and Progress: Role of Religions," 11-12 February 2012, Aligarh.

2 There are many hadiths relating to the subject. Some of them are as follows: "*Killing a Muslim unjustly is as great offense as exterminating the whole world"*. Nesai, *Tahrim ad-Dam*: 2; *"There is no doubt that your blood and your possessions are inviolable to you*". Al-Bukhari*, Ilm*: 37; "*Those who kill a non-*

point of view, killing a human being unjustly is as grave crime as slaying the whole of humanity. In Qur'anic perspective one person's life is equal to the lives of all human beings. Hence, equally, saving one's life is regarded as being same as saving the lives of all people.

The Qur'an gives honor and glory to all humankind equally. This point is crucially important because it shows that Islam considers killing to be crime against not only Muslims but also all human beings. Furthermore, Islam demonstrates great emphasis on the virtue of peace and it does not allow anyone to respond to an evil deed with another evil deed (An-Nisa 4/128; Fussilat 41/34).

Islam holds human life most honorable and issues many rules to protect human happiness in this world and the Hereafter (Al-Shatibi, 1425/2004: 7).[3] It commends proper prudence to stop war, anarchy, chaos and injustice. Therefore, peace is essential in Islam and war is a secondary situation resorted to in case of defense and to stop or prevent violent strife, anarchy, coercion, tyranny, mischief, torture, rebellion, and oppression and when freedom of teaching of faith is violated. Islam, hence, does not permit war to be undertaken in order to compel people of other religions to convert to Islam. There is no assert in Islam to make the entire world completely Muslim (Al-Baqarah 2/191; Al-Maidah 5/48; Zuhayli 2008: 716-717).

Islam came as the religion for all humanity and the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), was the first to be honored with a duty toward all humanity (Saba' 34/28). He is a prophet of compassion sent not only for humankind but also for all realms of existence. The Qur'an says, *"And We have sent you but as a mercy to the worlds"* (Al-Anbiya, 21/107). Prophet Muhammad, in his personal life, was a living example of peace and nonviolence. Neither verbal nor physical violence was ever attributed to him. Violence against all creatures is prohibited in his teaching. When he and his followers were attacked, he did

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Muslim who has made an agreement with Muslims; or a non-Muslim subject who has accepted Islamic authority, will not even come close to Paradise". Al-Bukhari, *Diyat*: 30, Abu Dawud, *Jihad*: 153.

3 The Qur'anic verses and hadiths order five principle values. These are known as the "*zaruriyat al-khamsa"* (the five indispensable conditions), must be protected. These five values and conditions are life, religion, progeny, the mind, and property. See in detail, Al-Shatibi, *Al-Muwafaqat fi usul ash-Sharia*, (Beyrut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1425/2004), vol. 2, pp. 7-10.

defend but he made peaceful dominate as soon as it was possible, even at the risk of his own life.[4]

The Qur'anic verse, '*peace is better'* (An-Nisa 4/128), constitutes the foundation of Prophet's message. It is suggested that peace is superior in all aspects of life. In addition to this, the Prophet dealt with the issues and affairs of peace and tolerance in relationships between individuals. God says, "*Be fearful of God and make peace among yourselves*" (Al-Anfal 8/1) and also in another verse it is declared that *"if two group of believers fight against one another make peace among them*" (Al-Hujurat 49/9). These Qur'ânic verses demands the Prophet and his followers to solve their disputes and disagreements through making peace

As a result of Prophet's method, this depends on peace and nonviolence, most of people's hearts and minds changed. Thereby, they came to demonstrate compassion toward all other humans and even the smallest creatures. The Prophet did not make this conversion through the use of force or coercion. It was his nonviolent and peaceful lifestyle that changed his society. He conveyed and clarified the revelations of the Qur'an to human beings through the way of compassion and peace.

The Muslim, who believes and practices the Qur'an and the sayings of Prophet Muhammad, is a person who inspires trust everyone and even in everything. Such a person does not harm anybody by deed or by word. As stated in several verses (Al-Baqara 2/208; Muhammad 47/4; An-Nisa 4/90; Al-Mumtahana 60/8) and in many hadiths (Bukhari, Jihad: 112; Muslim, Jihad: 19; Abu Dawud, Jihad: 89), peace is essential in Islam and war is deemed as *arizi,* means secondary, situational or accidental (Yazır 1979: 2424). Moreover, behaviors of Muslims with other people should be based on the principle of peace and nonviolence. Along these fundamental principles, Islam

4 One example of this kind of event is the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah. In this occurrence, aspect of peace of Prophet can be clearly seen. See, Al-Bukhari, *Sulh*: 862. Another hadith narration gives also an example from the life of Prophet Muhammad: An Arabian from the desert, Bedouin, came to the prophet and pulled his garment so violently that one could recognize the impression of the hem caused by violence of his pull. The Bedouin said, "Order for me something from Allah's fortune which you have," asking for some of the booty. The Prophet turned to him and smiled without any anger and then ordered that a gift be given to him. See, Al-Bukhari, *Khumus*: 337.

acknowledges that every believer has the right to preserve his/her religion, life, progeny, honor and sacred values.

Islamic principles constitute of the foundation of positive action, which goes deeper than simply refraining from any kind of unjust aggression. Through the peaceful spirit of Islam and without violence or coercion with other civilization and religions, Muslims are called to convey the Divine messages peacefully for the sake of upholding truth and enlightenment for the entire human beings (Al-Mumtahana 60/8). In the light of Qur'anic principles and Prophetic statements, Muslims did not force the local population of places that they conquered to convert to Islam. They also did not interfere with the local values of the places they have reached; on the contrary they preserved them with the awareness of ethnographers (Özdemir 1994: 68). Besides this, the Muslims permitted the followers of other religions under their rule to practice their own faith. They did not prevent to build mosques, churches, and synagogues side by side (Turan 1969: 162; Eroğlu 2013: 17). This respect and tolerance toward different beliefs arises from the essence of Islam.

2. Gandhian Approach to Peace and Nonviolence

Hindu tradition of nonviolence is evident in several predominantly devotional-mystical movements that originated in different cultural regions of India. Many philosophers and poets such as Shankara (d.820), Ramanuja (d.1137), Madhava (d.1276), Ram Mohan Roy (d.1833), Keshab Chandra Sen (d.1884), Debendranath Tagore (d.1905), Aurobindo Ghosh (d.1950), and Mohandas K. Gandhi (d.1948) emphasized on the ethics of love for the whole of humanity. However, this paper, merely, focuses on Gandhi who converted the religious-ethical value of nonviolence into the practical ethics of a nation and whose doctrine of nonviolence had a great impact on the contemporary social and cultural life of humanity.

Mahatma Gandhi, who was an activist and a practical philosopher, grew up in a family and a tradition that had always respected orthodox Hindu ways of religion. He had studied the Gita and the Ramayana, and also the Vaisnava and the Jaina literatures at his childhood. Besides these he had also first-hand knowledge of Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam. These studies kindled his religious insight, shaped his understanding of peace and sharpened his moral sense (Juergensmeyer 1987: 482-483; Lal 1973: 92; Gandhi 1983 17-17).

In understanding the Gandhian perspective of peace, firstly, it is important to mention that Gandhi's thoughts about religion then some terms which are related with peace. Religion is defined as devotion to some higher power or principle. Gandhi accepts such a description but he only qualifies it further by saying that higher principle being Truth, devotion to Truth or God is religion. The basic conviction of Gandhi is that there is one reality that is nothing but Truth (Young India: 12.5.1920; Gandhi and Dear 2002: 72). Religion, according to Gandhi, has the character of elevating and purifying one's nature. He believes that true religious spirit has the capacity of chancing one's nature because it is expression of the good elements present in man. For him, religion should pervade every aspect of life because he believes that true religion has to be practical (Lal 1973: 126-127). Gandhi would refuse any religious doctrines those conflicts with morality. Because he believes that true religion and true morality are inseparably bound up each other. He says, "*as soon as we lose the moral basis, we case to be religious. There is no such thing as religion over-riding morality*" (Young India, 24.11.1921).

2.1. Ahimsa (Nonviolence)

In Sanskrit, the word for violence is *himsa*, which is causing injury or harm to others. The letter "a" placed before the word, is being used for negative form of it. Thus assuming, *ahimsa* is abstaining oneself from causing any type of harm to others, whether physical, emotional or mental (Williams 2008: 1896). It is important to know that *nonviolence* only speaks about the most extreme forms of wrongdoing, while *ahimsa* goes much deeper to prohibit the subtle abuse and the simple hurt (Caillat 1987: 152-153; Arslan 2008: 71-73).

The usual meaning of *ahimsa* is "non-killing". Most often its meaning is made broader then *ahimsa* is conceived non-injury. In any case it is perceived as the opposite of *himsa*. Gandhi accepts this using and adds much more to its content. *Himsa* means causing pain or killing any life out of anger, or with the intention of injuring it. In this connection, *ahimsa* is refraining from doing all this things. In fact, in conceiving *ahimsa* thus Gandhi seems to be influenced by Jainism[5], which recommends the practice of *ahimsa* in thought, speech and action.

5 Violence is defined in Jain teachings as any action, attitude, thought or word, which results in harm to the 'vitalities', that is, al those elements necessary to sustain life. In the tradition of Jainism, everything possesses a soul. Since the

In Gandhi the word *ahimsa* has both negative and positive meanings and both of them are important. The negative meaning of *ahimsa* is non-killing or non-injury, but this presupposes that a nonviolent act is free from anger, hatred, malice, loathing and similar other considerations. *Ahimsa*, according to Gandhi, is not only refraining from causing injuries to creatures but also it stands for certain positive attitudes towards other living beings. Hence, the positive aspects of *ahimsa* are much more fundamental than its negative meanings (Andrews 1949: 132-133). Body and spirit, according to Gandhi, are two aspects of man. Body can represent physical power and therefore can do *himsa*. Yet, man's true nature consists in his spiritual aspects. Man as spirit is essentially nonviolent. For instance, while the senses or body can be injured, the soul can never be injured. It also shows that *himsa* is alien to man's nature. Therefore, the spiritual side of man is awakened; his nonviolent nature becomes apparent (Lal 1973: 109-110; Gandi and Dear 2002: 127).

In its positive aspect, *ahimsa* is nothing but *love* which is a kind of feeling of oneness. *Love*, according to him, is the energy that cleanses one's inner life and uplifts him, and as such, love comprehends such noble feelings as benevolence, tolerance, kindles, generosity, forgiveness and compassion. *Ahimsa*, on the other hand, demands a sincere striving to free mind from feelings such as jealousy, revenge, hatred, despising and so on, in view of that these kinds of feelings create obstacles in the way of love (Bose 1981: 160).

It is known that to love is a very difficult discipline which entails and involves supreme energy and strength to love. Hence, Gandhi says that nonviolence is not meant for the weak, but for the strong. He believes that nonviolence is basically an expression of weakness and lack of strength. Only he can be truly nonviolent who has conquered fear. The capacity to kill is not a sign of strength; the strength to die is the real strength. Solely, one who has this kind of strength in him he can assert to have risen above fear and is able to practice nonviolence. One who is practicing *ahimsa* has the strength to overpower his adversary, and still he practices *ahimsa* because this principle

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universe is an organic whole, governed by cosmic order, all the living beings in it are fellow members of one another. The universe is a sort of republic of souls, having no creator, and no master except the moral law that governs them. The supreme virtue, according to Jainism, is non-injury to all living beings (ahimsa). The supreme virtue, according to Jainism, is non-injury to all living beings (ahimsa). See in detail, Natubhai Shah, *Jainism the World of Conquerors (I-II)*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2004), vol. 1, pp. 108-112.

'*is a conscious and deliberate restrain put upon one's desire for vengeance'* (Young India, 12.8.1926).

Nonviolence (ahimsa), according to Gandhi, is not a manner of passivity, indifference and sluggishness. Although seeds of nonviolence lie deep down in the heart; they are expressed and given shape in actions. In this respect, nonviolence is a dynamic and active process involving continuous and persistent deliberations, actions, efforts and strains. Nonviolence requires extreme patience and endurance on the part of one, who is using this method, but this endurance is not a sign of inactivity or indifference, it is an expression of a conscious and inner effort to force the so called opponent to see and realize his own faults. Therefore, nonviolence is conceived as a gospel of action (Gandhi and Dear 2002: 97-99). Gandhi believes that *ahimsa* takes account of this dynamic and non-final state of relationship among human beings and seeks to heal, to bring together since it spring from an inner realization of the sense of unity (Bose 1981: 161).

2.2. Satyagraha

The key to an understanding of the Gandhian perspective on peace, nonviolence and his principles, is the comprehend in depth his revolutionary mode of action which he called *satyagraha*. *Satyagraha* consists of two words *satya*, meaning "truth" and *agraha* meaning "insistence" (Williams, 2008: 1659-1660). *Satyagraha* is '*agraha'* of 'satya' and hence it means holding fast to truth. Therefore the word of *satyagraha* demands a deep sincerity and vigorous love for Truth. This term which is the technique of *ahimsa*, or the way of life, in broad strokes translated as "insistence on truth", "truth-force" or in some cases as "love-force" or "soul-force" (Bose 1981: 159; Lal 1973: 114). *Satyagraha* is basically based on love like *ahimsa*. Without this basic love it is not possible to practice the technique of *satyagraha*. This concept appears to Gandhi as a religious pursuit and rests on a religious belief. According to this belief there is one God behind all universes (Lal 1973: 114; Gandi 1983: 138).

This word is described as a force against violence, injustice and tyranny by Gandhi. All this evils emerge on account of a neglect of the truth that is all-comprehending and all- pervasive. The most effective force against these evils can be the one which would force them to evaporate, and only *satyagraha* can do this one. The purpose of *satyagraha*, which has been described as a method of conversion, is not to embarrass the wrong-doer. It does not proceed in terms

of threats and it does not appeal to fear. Its intention is to bring about and led to a *'change of heart'* as named by Gandhi. For this goal and target, there must be love even for the opponent. Distrust or loathing of any kind will obstruct the success of *satyagraha*. *Satyagraha* tries to convince the wrong-doer to abandon his wrong behaviors and actions. It, therefore, based on the persuasion that through *ahimsa*, love and conscious suffering the forces of evil can be neutralized (Gandhi and Dear 2002: 89-90).

Gandhi is aware that although this technique, *satyagraha*, can be used by everybody, it cannot be followed in a loose, insincere and casual attitude. It requires a very strict moral and religious discipline. Gandhi in this connect mentioned a number of qualities which a *satyagrahi*, who deals with *satyagraha*, must possess. One of them is that a *satyagrahi* must be open-minded; he must not have any mental reservations. Another one is a *satyagrahi* must be essentially sincere and honest. Besides this he has to be entirely selfless and fearless. For Gandhi, one of the prime virtues of a *satyagrahi* is humility. Honesty and integrity must be his goal and ideal. Moreover, he must have strength of character and a resoluteness of will. Therefore, he must be firm in his dealings and conducts. The other important virtue of a *satyagrahi* is to become a prototype. Therefore, there must be conformity between the thought and action of a *satyagrahi*. According to Gandhi, a *satyagrahi* has always to deal with adversaries. If he does not have tolerance, he will lose self-control and thus will damage the success of *satyagraha*. Hence, he must have tolerance in him (Lal 1973: 119; Gandhi 1983: 138-139). Besides this, the most fundamental requirement is that a *satyagrahi* must have a living faith in God. A faith in God is the religious pre-requisite of the life of a *satyagrahi*. Because, in fact, the entire principle of *satyagraha* is based on the concept of one God (Raju 2000: 52).

In brief, peace and nonviolence, for Gandhi is one of the most important goals of humankind and it is the highest virtue. In addition to this, tolerance, love, honest and forgiveness is the ethical dimensions of nonviolence. Nonviolence is also based on such a basic teaching, which is that all persons are equal. Hence, love every being is a vital condition for the realization of God. Furthermore, the practice of *ahimsa* requires some firm peculiarities, believing in God is the precondition of them.

3. Comparison

The ideas of Gandhi regarding peace and nonviolence are greatly compatible with the teachings of Islam. One of the main principles of nonviolence in Islam, for instance, is stated in the well-known saying of the Prophet, "La dharar wa la dhirar" (Al-Hâkim: 2345). This statement can be translated as "not to harm and not to be harmed". A person can find a great similarity between this prophetic saying and Gandhi's teaching of *ahimsa*, which especially based on harmlessness and nonviolence (Merton 1964: 13).

In Gandhi's thought both *ahimsa* and *satyagraha* have some particular aspects which are required in order to achieve peace and nonviolence. Gandhi believes, for instance, that the moral aspect of *ahimsa* is nothing but tolerance and love. Therefore, who want to be making peace at first he must have a character which is based on forgiveness and compression. It is also lays dawn the maxim that all human beings are equal. Moreover, no virtue, like *ahimsa* which is the highest value for Gandhi, can be practiced unless all being are allowed to live. Gandhi's this teaching is also the main principle of Islam. Because the Qur'an regards to human life as being exalted. In Islamic perspective, Life is one of the most important values for God Almighty. Life is the brightest proof of the unity of God, the most complex example of His Art and, the finest demonstration of His Mercy. That is the reason why in the Qur'an one person's life is equal to the lives of all human beings.

For Gandhi another condition of achievement of nonviolence is that the person practicing *satyagraha* should have no intention to do harm; therefore a *satyagrahi* has not to be violent in thought, word or action towards anyone even 'enemy'. The essence of violence is that there must be a violent intention behind a thought, word or performing, an intention to do harm to the opponent. The concept of 'intention', in this context, has a very significant role. Gandhi declares that before the throne of the Almighty, man will be judged not by his acts but by his intentions. For God alone reads our hearts (Young India, 08.08.1929; Klitgaard 1971: 150-151). The same concept can be seen in the tenet of *al-Niyyat* (intent) in Islam when Allah is the one who knows all things and can judge human actions not only outwardly, but according to the intention in the heart. The intention being what determines the value of an action according to the famous saying of the Prophet, "Actions are judged according to the intentions of doers" (Nasr 2009: 254).

Gandhi, furthermore, acknowledges that injustice in any form ought to be resisted by those who believe in nonviolence. For him the active state of *ahimsa* requires you to resist the wrong doer but with good intentions out of love and not hatred or anger. In this context, he declares that "To forgive is not to forget. The merit lies in loving in spite of the vivid knowledge that the one that must be loved is not a friend. There is no merit in loving an enemy when you forget him for a friend" (http://thinkexist.com/quotes/mohandas_gandhi/4.html (25.02.2014); Gandhi and Dear 2002: 90-91). Same approach is also found in the Islamic concept of *Ehsan* (Benevolence). The holy Quran states: *"Nor can Goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: then will he between whom and thee was hatred become as it were thy friend and intimate!"* (Fussilat 41/34) and "*Twice will they be given their reward, for that they have persevered, that they avert Evil with Good, and that they spend (in charity) out of what we have given them"* (Al-Qasas 28/54). It is understood from this kind of verses that notion of *Ehsan* includes both no hatred for the wrong-doer as well as to reply his/her bad deed with kindness.

According to Gandhi, a *satyagrahi* who implements of peace and nonviolence must be to firm in his dealings and conducts. There must be a consistency between his thoughts and actions. If a person mentions about peace and nonviolence, firstly, there must be conformity between his speeches and deeds. This is the basic precondition in the way of accomplishment of peace. Islam also declares that a person, who believes in a God and His all-pervading power, must be to honest in his all life. The Qur'an gives the illustration of the Prophet Muhammad (Al-Ahzab 33:21) who has a good example in God's messenger. This aspect of teaching of Gandhi is similar to Islamic concept of *an-Nasîha*. This main notion is stated in the well-known saying of the Prophet, "Ed dinu an-nasîha…" (Muslim, Iman: 95) which can be understood as "religion is sincerity".

The other similarity between the doctrines of Mahatma Gandhi and the foundations of Islam can be seen in understanding of every human being as a creature of God. For Gandhi, belief in nonviolence is depended on the assumption that human nature in its essence is one and thereof unfailingly responds to the advances of love. Like this in his thought a nonviolent resister rests on the unfailing assistance of God, which sustains him throughout difficulties that could otherwise be considered impassible (Pal 2011: 15-16). This conforms very well to the Muslim notion of humanity as one and created by God. That

is to say Islam considers humanity to be the most honorable of all creatures, equipped with consciousness and will, and thus recognizes freedom of belief as an indispensable right. The Qur'an expresses this principle as, *"And surely We have honored the children of Adam"* (Al-Israa 17/70). Islam, therefore, has declared that all people have honor, with no socio-political, racial-cultural discrimination whatsoever, and has awarded with a status above all other living things.

In Islamic and Gandhian thought believing in God is the fundamental necessity for practicing of peace. Yet, it must be known that the concept of God in Islam and in Gandhi's thought is not completely similar. For Gandhi, "God is Truth and Love, God is ethics and morality. God is fearlessness; God is the source of light and life. He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist. He transcends speech and reason. He is a personal God to those who need His touch. He is purest essence. He simply is to those who have faith. He is patient but He is also terrible. He is the greatest democrat the world knows. He is the greatest tyrant ever known. We are not He alone is" (Young India: 05.03.1925). Gandhi declared his beliefs first when he said "God is Truth". He would later change this statement to "Truth is God". Therefore, *satya* (truth) in Gandhi's philosophy is "God" (Gandhi 1955: 16-17). Even though concept of God, in some ways, is different from the viewpoint of Islam and Gandhi, our point is that believing in God is common requisiteness for both of them in the way of performing peace and nonviolence. Gandhi believes that a living faith in God provides a person an inner strength by which he can deal with the difficulties in the process of nonviolence. The belief in God and fearing only Him makes nonviolence the essence of all religions. Thus for a person who wishes to practice nonviolent resistance, one of the essential elements is faith in truth and religion (Gandhi and Dear 2002: 90). Gandhi acknowledges that *ahimsa* cannot be practiced unless one has a living and unflinching faith in God. The practice of *ahimsa* involves an inner strength, which can only be generated by a living faith in God. The love of God, in thought of Gandhi, would turn into a love of humanity which alone can make possible the practice of *ahimsa* (Gandhi and Dear 2002: 101; Gandhi 1983: 135-136). Therefore, for the practice of *ahimsa*, faith in God is the most supreme and essential condition. On the other hand, a Muslim, who believes in a God, Allah, struggles against injustices by using constructive efforts, patience and prayer, not with injustice. Because he believes, 'God is with the patient'. Additionally there is resemblance between Gandhi's con-

cept mentioned above and *Tavakol* which is one of the basic tenets of Islam. *Tavakol* means that everything in the world is in the hands of God and as such we must pin our hopes and faith only on him, rather than become subservient and subjects to other human beings (Taberî 1412/1992: 497; el-Cevziyye 1403/1983: 119-122).

Conclusion

Most of the verses of the Qur'an and hadiths (the Prophet's Traditions, reports of his deeds and sayings) emphasizes on peace, nonviolence, equality, compassion and love. They recommend solving disputes and controversies trough making peace. These are truthfully proves that peace and nonviolence is core of Islam. This kind of moral virtues and principle, on the other hand, constitute the essential concept of Gandhi's thought, which is called *ahimsa*, nonviolence. In this regard, both of them have propounded some principles since fulfillment of peace and nonviolence. Islam and Gandhi, therefore, dwell on the common ethical concepts. As a result of these similarities it is clear that making a peaceful world as well as constituting a nonviolent society is the common target of them.

The ideas of Gandhi regarding peace and nonviolence are to on a vast scale compatible with the teachings of Islam. Islamic notions like "an-nasîha"(sincerity), "ehsan" (benevolence), "tavakol (trust in God), and "al-niyyat (intent)" correspond to the concept of nonviolence of Gandhi and its qualities like "having principles in all circumstances, "having no excessive covetousness", "loving all creatures", "having courage in confrontation with violence" and "having no intention to kill or damage".

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