

practice--which is the idea behind every assembly--Jewish, Christian, Muslim or otherwise. Gülen put it this way:

Salah ... [is when] patience is put into practice ... It is also the most appropriate and propitious ground for social agreement and harmony and the clearest sign of the formation of a Muslim community. Everyone who is able to make belief a part of their nature through prayer and ... dive into the depths of the life of the heart through it, and see themselves as an inseparable part of a community like a firm, solid structure in its warm and peaceful clime, can easily overcome the hardships along the path of servanthood. (96)

Prayer, in short, builds deep peace--within, and without.

Third, what I call engaged empathy is both a marker of and a seed that grows deep peace. Gandhi of course frequently expressed empathy for the suffering of the untouchables, or the Sudra who were shunned in India's rigid *varma-dharma* caste system. Indeed, Gandhi's entire campaign of *satyagraha* engaged empathy to foster the full inclusion of men and women, girls and boys, without exception, in a democratic India--a vision still very much in the process of being realized, as in other democracies around the globe.

Gülen came to be known throughout Turkey as the "crying hodja," the crying teacher, because he would frequently weep during sermons. In fact, Gülen's crying while preaching often had the effect of triggering entire congregations to weep along with him. When I first began studying Gülen, this seemed strange--even potentially manipulative or toxic. But as I interviewed people, and studied his thought, it became apparent that what he was expressing through his tears was not only the suffering of Muslims, who Gülen frequently described as having "fallen behind" the rest of the world in democratic values, education, technology, and so forth--but even more, Gülen's tears indicated an individual in touch with the deep suffering that is, finally, the lot of every human being. As the Buddha put it in the First Noble Truth: life is suffering. And yet Gülen's empathy did not end with emotion. Instead, following in Gandhi's path of activism, he sought to engage Muslims with those practices and agencies that would foster the alleviation of suffering, insofar as possible. As he put it many times, encouraging his students to go to Tajikistan, or Nigeria, or Philadelphia--to live and work with the poor: "being with the oppressed is the same as being with God." (315) Practically, engaged empathy for Gülen, as for Gandhi, also meant advocating for the full inclusion of girls and women in society, and especially in all levels of education. He articulated this advocacy for women and girls in an officially egalitarian, but in practice ruthlessly patriarchal Turkey. (251-259) Engaged empathy also motivated Gülen to speak out against the casual racism common in Turkish society, notably against the Kurds, and to grow trusting relations with the Christian and Jewish communities in Turkey. (259-268) Finally, given these initiatives, it should be no surprise that among the agencies begun by people of Hizmet was an NGO to offer relief in war zones, or after climate catastrophes or other disasters. The name of the agency was *Kimse Yok Mu*, which translated from Turkish means "Is Anybody There?" Persons cultivating engaged empathy identify

suffering wherever it exists, and they direct resources toward bringing comfort to the oppressed. That was and is a mark and catalyst of deep peace, too.

Fourth, deep peace grows as people practice what I call principled pluralism. Gandhi was firm in his practice of Hinduism, which he explicitly “prized above all other” traditions. (10) But Gandhi also recognized that “every religion holds both truth and untruth.” (50) He therefore held that “a curriculum of religious instruction should include a study of the tenets of faith other than one’s own.” (51-2). Gandhi’s reading of the Christian theologian (and novelist) Leo Tolstoy was particularly formative in shaping his teachings of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha*. As a Hindu, Gandhi finally put the idea of principled pluralism like this: “I pray not that others may believe as I believe, but that they may grow to their full height in their own religion.” (53)

For Fethullah Gülen, principled pluralism is evident in an idea central to his teaching and practice: *hoşgörü*. The term is often translated as “tolerance,” but as I learned from Dr. Scott Alexander, Professor of Muslim-Christian studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, *hoşgörü* is a compound word meaning literally “to see nicely.” Still following Alexander, for Gülen and for people of *hizmet*, to translate *hoşgörü* accurately requires a theological interpretation. Thus, “to see nicely” means that when we meet someone from a different tradition, or encounter their ideas and practices, *we seek to see them as God sees them*, according to Alexander. And that means that when we encounter someone with different beliefs or practices than ours, we see them above all *with eyes of mercy and compassion*. Mercy and compassion are the two most frequently mentioned attributes of God in the Qur’an, and mercy and compassion are regularly invoked whenever Muslims gather, in the Bismillah. In his own words, for Gülen

hoşgörü which we sometimes use in place of respect and mercy, generosity and forbearance, is the most essential element of moral systems. . . Under the lens of *hoşgörü* ... mistakes and faults shrink into insignificance. Actually, the treatment of [the One] Who is beyond time and space always passes through the prism of *hoşgörü*, and we wait for it to embrace us and all creation.” (286)

Principled pluralism is the deep peace to know where one stands, and because of that clarity--to be able accept all others, working together for the common good.

Finally, then, deep peace means a way of relating to others that we can call social enterprise. It is here, perhaps, that Gandhi and Gülen most directly diverge. Gandhi had little place for modern economics, modern capitalism or socialism, and modern civilization. Trained as a lawyer, he largely renounced modernity by living in an ashram and following village ways. Gülen, who grew up in a village, eventually traveled to and preached, taught, and lived in the great cities of Turkey--Erzurum, Edirne, Izmir, and Istanbul. Throughout his life, he interacted regularly with business leaders who had accumulated wealth and could put it to use to solve the problems of ignorance, poverty, and violence. At the heart of the various *Hizmet*-related schools, media, banks, hospitals, and all the rest--was a principle called *istişara*. *Istişara* is a

Turkish word with an Arabic root (*şura*) that translates as “mutual consultation.” People of *Hizmet* consulted with each other on any enterprise, debated with each other, sought the counsel of elder siblings. *Abis* and *ablas*--elder siblings, are informal roles very important in *Hizmet*. Through mutual consultation, people sought to hold each other accountable for the success of any venture. This culture of consultation and accountability led to enterprises akin to those the economist Muhammad Yunus, in his book *Creating a World without Poverty*, called “social businesses.”¹²

For Gülen, *istişara* “is a vital attribute and an essential rule. ... Consultation is mentioned in the Qur’an to the same degree as [prayer].” (294) Consequently, “the most intelligent person is the one who most appreciates and respects mutual consultation and deliberation, and who benefits most from the ideas of others.” (295) In practice, consultation grew the gifts of all people engaged in a project. *Istişara* fostered talent by inviting people’s voices and skills into a process. Consultation was also a way to hold accountable leaders--since no one’s voice was automatically granted authority: authority had to be earned. Gülen wrote: “neither seniority nor title, nor status, nor being a personage of esteem can be a factor for making another’s person’s opinion more credible.” (296) Through this commitment to *istişara*, people of *Hizmet* grew deep peace--they learned to trust each other, and they earned trust from others. *Istişara* was the DNA of the various enterprises they began; again--the schools, construction companies, media businesses, hospitals, banks, and more. Practically, again, these enterprises were akin to what Muhammad Yunus called “social businesses.” They existed to be sustainable--to generate wealth, but they existed even more to mobilize resources to solve problems in society--to serve all stakeholders. I compare these enterprises historically to the way the Society of Friends or Quakers began--with mutual consultation and deliberation at the heart of social enterprises.

To conclude: what I have pointed out to you in this paper are correlations, not causality, between the thought and practices of Mahatma Gandhi and the thought and practices of Fethullah Gülen and the global *Hizmet* community. I do not know how much of Gandhi Gülen knew or studied--I would now like to ask him that question! But both men communicated a hopeful vision for the world; indeed--both were convinced that peace was not only possible, but peace was unfolding and growing in history around them. Gandhi put it this way, in a letter to a U.S. publication in 1935:

Not to believe in the possibility of permanent peace is to disbelieve the godliness of human nature. ... If the recognized leaders of [humanity] who have control over engines of destruction were wholly to renounce their use, with full knowledge of its implications, permanent peace can be obtained. This is clearly impossible without the great Powers of the earth renouncing their imperialistic design. This again seems impossible without

¹² Muhammad Yunus, *Creating a World without Poverty: Social Business and the Future of Capitalism* (NY: Public Affairs Press, 2009).

great nations ceasing to believe in soul-destroying competition and to desire to multiply wants and therefore increase their material possessions. It is my conviction that the root of the evil is want of a living faith in a living God.

And Gandhi then directed his challenge directly to Christians:

It is a first-class human tragedy that peoples of the earth who claim to believe in the message of Jesus who they describe as the Prince of Peace show little of that belief in actual practice. It is painful to see sincere Christian divines limiting the scope of Jesus' message to select individuals. I have been taught from my childhood and tested the truth by experience that the primary virtues of [humanity] are possible of cultivation by the meanest of the human species. It is this undoubted universal possibility that distinguishes the humans from the rest of God's creation. If even one great nation were unconditionally to perform the supreme act of renunciation, many of us would see in our lifetime visible peace established on earth. (42)

May it be so.

You should not be surprised by now to learn that Gülen shared a similar, if broader, vision of a world at peace. He wrote:

Our old world will experience an amazing “springtime” before its demise. This springtime will see the gap between rich and poor narrow, the world’s riches will be distributed more justly, according to work, capital, and needs; there will be no discrimination based on race, color, language or worldview; and basic human rights and freedoms will be protected. Individuals will come to the fore and, learning how to realize their potential, will ascend on the way to become ‘the most elevated human’ on the wings of love, knowledge and belief.’ ... Yes, this springtime will rise on the foundations of love, compassion, mercy, dialogue, acceptance of others, mutual respect, and rights. It will be a time in which humanity will discover its real essence. Goodness and kindness, righteousness and virtue will form the basic essence of the world. No matter what happens, the world will come to this path sooner or later. Nobody can prevent this.

We pray and beg that the Infinitely Compassionate One will not let our hopes and expectations come to nothing. (358)

And again, I say, and on this I shall conclude: Amen.

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