

GANDHI, JUNG AND NONVIOLENCE TODAY

The Relevance of the Feminine
in the Network Society

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The interaction between C.G. Jung's Deep Psychology and M. K. Gandhi's Nonviolent Philosophy may prove to be a decisive factor in comprehending some of the major dynamics of the contemporary globalised world. The rise of the Network Society (Castells, 2009) calls for a deeper understanding of the relationship between individuals and societies, at both the personal as well as the collective level. As we shall presently discover, this is something to which both thinkers' ideas can contribute. It is hardly surprising that in several fields, Jung's and Gandhi's visions are enjoying a resurgence of interest. For instance, since the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) protests in Seattle in 1999, there has been an increasing use of Jungian theories by alternative movements to redefine and sustain cultural identities. One notable example is that of the Brazilian leader, Leonardo Boff, known as one of the fathers of 'Liberation Theology', who has published all of Jung's collected works in Brazil. What is more, if Gandhi's nonviolence is at the heart of almost every ecological movement and constitutes the foundation of almost any intercultural dialogue, with the new social media movements it appears to have re-entered the heart of social experiments as well (Mitchell, *et al.*, 2013), exactly as it did in Gandhi's times.

This article attempts to situate, in its appropriate place, this particular link between these two disciplines in the context of contemporary global dynamics. It presupposes the approach of cross-cultural memory on the reciprocal influences between the East and West. In my analytical essay 'Open Karma' (2012), Jung's theories of the unconscious are tributaries of Indian and Eastern

philosophies, much as Gandhi's approach to nonviolence was to Western thinkers such as John Ruskin, Henry David Thoreau and the Romantic English poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley. Such reciprocal interactions, far from being a mere matter of historical debates, can help us decipher the meaning of today's reality by unveiling the emergence of new visions and values. Within this framework, a special focus must be placed on the interaction between the two fundamental tenets of Gandhi's philosophy and Jung's psychology: the concepts of Ahimsa and Anima. As we shall see subsequently, an understanding of their deep affinities leads to a broader picture in which the values of femininity are incorporated in contemporary networked societies.

THE ROLE OF NONVIOLENCE AND THE CONCEPT OF ANIMA

While historically and philosophically an ancient concept—'as old as the hills', as Gandhi himself used to say—nevertheless, the concept of Ahimsa has itself undergone a deep metamorphosis along with the Mahatma. Coined by the French thinker Edgar Morin, metamorphosis is a category of thought that fits perfectly with the new impulse that Gandhi gave to the notion of Ahimsa: i.e., to innovate entirely without revolution; and to deeply transform the present without disregarding the past. Gandhi found in the history of his country the strength to move much further ahead.

In addition, owing to an intense dialogue with Western thinkers and their ideas (Weber, 2007), Ahimsa was turned by Gandhi from a millenary individual path of redemption into a social and political tool. Anthony Parel (2009), a contemporary Indian thinker, observed that Gandhi used Indian classical concepts to illustrate that, in our times, *moksha* could be attained through *artha*. Gandhi regarded Ahimsa not merely as a political weapon in the pursuit of independence from British domination, but also relevant in the quest for the moral renaissance of India, which was embodied in his famous 'constructive programme'. Nonviolence became an ethical socio-politic programme, showing how vital, adaptable and capable of regeneration this concept is, even millennia after its conception.

Moreover, for Gandhi, nonviolence was first a question of the human factor, of personal choice, of nurturing the inclination towards the appropriate attitude. But if nonviolence is synonymous

with a complete inner–outer interaction, what has surprisingly always been relatively lacking is a comparative study of what nonviolence must imply for the human soul: the interaction of nonviolence with psychic dynamics. The only important essay in this field was American psychoanalyst Erik Erikson's *Gandhi's Truth* (1969), which earned him the Pulitzer Prize. Erikson had developed his form of psychoanalysis from Freudian roots, a highly historicised one, which he later developed even further into the discipline of Psychohistory together with American psychiatrist, Robert Jay Lifton (1975).

Using his psychoanalytic theory, which emphasises the interaction with the specific cultural dimension and the different phases of the analysand's personal life, Erikson, in his book, maintains that Gandhi's nonviolence was mainly a result of his complex relationship with his father that was in part traumatic (the very young Gandhi felt guilty for not caring for his father at the latter's deathbed). Undoubtedly, the core of nonviolence lies in the acceptance of an enormous sacrifice: a passive suffering in the face of violence, including the acceptance of death. In Erikson's view, Gandhi found such strength later in life also as an unconscious expiation for his lack of attention towards his dying father. We know that such an empathic spirit of sacrifice is an attitude that aims to awaken in the enemy the possibility of a change, to trigger a process within his or her soul, which will eventually lead to a new opening. This creates the basis for a dialogue, in which the humility of the *satyagrahi* is the crucial factor. Its beginnings in the nonviolent attitude is an open process that Erikson rightly calls the pursuit of 'truth in action'.

This insight—that only the development of facts would reveal how the political or social problem led to the decision to use nonviolence to find a solution—implies an integrity of the soul unparalleled, since it requires the *satyagrahi* to be 'willing to persuade and to enlighten, even as he remains to be persuaded and enlightened', as Erikson rightly reiterates. It is this attitude of the *satyagrahi*, of ethical, spiritual and psychological openness—something extremely difficult to attain and, even more, to maintain—that introduces us to the most important point. In his psychological analysis of Gandhi's role, Erikson emphasises right through his essay how much and how far the Mahatma's political

attitude implies a 'maternal' approach, and how extensively Gandhi's nonviolence presupposes a moral integrity based on compassion. For these reasons, Erikson can speak also of a sort of anthropological bisexuality incarnated by Gandhi in his political struggle for independence with 'a combination of autocratic malehood and enveloping maternalism', a concept afterwards used by other contemporary philosophers (Nussbaum, 2007). Ashis Nandy (2006) has pointed out that with Gandhi there was a 'rediscovery of womanhood as a civilising force in human society'. Undeniably, Gandhi was not himself exempt from several historically limited visions, dominant in his times, about the role of women (Patel, 2006). Nevertheless, on examining Gandhi's approach to nonviolence we can agree that, with him, for the first time in the modern Indian political dimension, and, as far as we know, on a global scale, an attitude was introduced based on traditional values of femininity. Here lies the crucial link between Gandhi's nonviolent vision and Jungian theories of the unconscious.

Jung's oeuvre cannot be comprehended unless placed within the framework of the historical attempt carried out by him to reevaluate the feeling function of the human psyche, something that, until that moment, had been matched with an inferior vision of femininity. This is probably the most important of Jung's endeavours, embodied in his most compelling concept of Anima. As the counter-sexual inner realm of men—women have Animus—Anima later became the link with the manifestations of the unconscious, the part of the psyche unknown to the ego. For Jung (1939), to become oneself means for the ego to deal with the unconscious since the latter is the source of the renewal of the human psyche and, therefore, human personality. 'The autonomy of the unconscious begins where emotions are born', said Jung, and Anima is the unavoidable medium—an energy converter of sorts—to such an experience (*ibid.*). This does not necessarily stamp Jung as an early feminist. In fact, post-modern developments in Jungian theories (Hauke, 2000) highlight the manner in which the concept of Anima had to be released from the grip of original male projections—which was the limit of Jung's approach—before becoming the link to the unconscious, *i.e.*, the way to deal with the 'other' that all human beings bear inside. Furthermore, the same concept of feelings had to be released from the excess of rationality with which it had been

approached by Jung. Nevertheless, it is in great measure due to Jung's pioneering work that an entirely new psychological accent may be observed on the value of femininity.

With Jung, a conscious cultivation of Anima becomes synonymous with the taming of emotions as the way to shaping and regenerating the personality. The values implied in such a psychic process belong to humanity as it constitutes the basic structure of the psyche, which is invariably the same all over the world. These values belong to any human soul, and we must always bear in mind that they represent an attitude that it is a choice—our personal choice—to incarnate them. Therefore, their manifestations may vary depending on each incarnation, which, in turn, will depend on the capacity of every individual to interact with his or her own cultural and social realities; but the main traits of cultivating Anima will be the same: relationships, empathy, endurance, the ability to listen, empathic responsibility, a broader integration within social structures, an attentiveness towards nature in all its inner and outer manifestations and, above all, connectedness. There is, undoubtedly, a resonance with the values espoused by any human being committed to Gandhi's Ahimsa. Psychologically, there is no other category of thought like Anima that can give us a deeper insight into what it takes to nurture a nonviolent attitude; developing Anima seems inextricably linked to adopting Ahimsa.

It is of utmost importance to understand this link between Anima and Ahimsa while studying the traits of today's Networked Society. To begin with, by underlying its psychological connective and collective magnitude, Anima reinforces Ahimsa's global ethical-political discourse. While it is easy to speculate about utopian nonviolent policies, it is far more difficult to deny the factual implications of such a value when we realise that it can belong to every human hearth, under every sky; when we know that Ahimsa can become the attitude—and the tool in the hands—of every human being if each one of us were committed to cultivate his or her own Anima. It is a matter of exercising choices and not of mere dreaming, of working on our personalities and not of imposing a truth. It requires both vision and courage. Gandhi and Jung, even within the cultural limits of their times, had both. Notwithstanding the reigning paradigm of positivism and rationalism, and risking the accusation of sentimentalism and uselessness, both re-evaluated in their fields of

activity the role of feelings, of emotions. In this way, following their deepest intuitions, they greatly contributed to the establishment of a new role for the value of the feminine. Today, we may grasp even better the importance of their approaches since we are beginning to understand that all this is part of the so-called ‘progress of sentiment’, as explained by the pragmatist American philosopher, Richard Rorty (1998; also see Barreto, 2011). That path—leading to the implementation of a human rights culture (Rabossi, 1989, 323–44)—is based on the evolution of human qualities that appears to define the most relevant essence of contemporary societies.

‘ANIMA MUNDI’ AND NEW EXPRESSIONS OF AHIMSA

This vision leads us from the ethical level to a second, more social and politically biased, one. As recent developments in both Jungian and Gandhian worlds show, there are further affinities even more important in understanding why and how the relevance of the feminine in contemporary networked societies matters. Central in the first field is the work of American psychologist, James Hillman, in which Anima becomes the fundamental expression of the reality of the psyche, since its language made of myths—as in dreams, visions, hallucinations—is the texture of our inner lives. Furthermore, Hillman developed the concept—embryonic in Jung—of ‘Anima Mundi’. According to this tenet, the suffering of the individual cannot be separated any longer from the suffering of the world. Hillman understood how much of his patients’ distress was linked to the afflictions of the environment in which they lived, even if such a link was subconscious. It is a vision that brings Anima’s potentialities to the fore. To save yourself meant giving back its soul to the world, starting with changing one’s attitude towards it. As with Ahimsa for Gandhi, with Hillman Anima became a social programme as well.

Hillman’s effort is to rebuild a lost link between the human soul and the world outside. We simply must stop viewing the world as a dead reality, existing for our use and desires. Instead, we must see the world in a psychological light, as provided by ‘Anima Mundi’. Giving back Anima to the world is to understand that we depend on it, that we cannot anymore overcome our suffering without conceiving a new relationship with it. In Hillman’s vision, femininity is, of course, central to this attitude. Such a process of the expansion of the concept of Anima, from that of an inner catalyst with Jung

to Hillman's broad idea of 'Anima Mundi', speaks of yet another affinity with Eastern and, in particular, Indian historical thought. I am referring here to the philosophy of Tantrism. The importance of Shakti in Tantrism—the vision of energy as an expression of femininity—resounds in the absolutist value acquired by the concept Anima—and Anima Mundi—in Hillman's psychology (1998).

Such an affinity draws us towards an examination of the contemporary development of Gandhi's ideas. Within this framework, the philosophy of the ecologist Vandana Shiva is particularly fitting. She developed what she significantly calls 'eco-feminism' and 'living democracy' (Jahanbegloo, 2013). In her opinion, the environmental issue implies a total shift of attitude towards nature and our responsibilities towards it; the same political agenda must include the rights of all living creatures. As in the case of Hillman, what is important to grasp in Shiva's position, even before her ecological views, which also present a few critical aspects, is the relationship between the principles of nonviolence and those of femininity. According to Shiva, femininity is not merely linked to the feminist question; it means 'nothing less than the universal creative energy of Shakti' (ibid.). And significantly for us, the heart of her thought lies in the idea that such energy must be created rather than discovered in ourselves. Shiva's purpose thus becomes finding all the possible ways of 'mapping the feminine principle to Gandhi's various principles.... For him, compassion at the everyday level was symbolised by the recovery of the feminine principle' (ibid.). In Shiva's quest for the autonomy of femininity and in her interpretation of Gandhi's message we can detect deep affinities with Hillman's 'Anima Mundi', as both are visions of shaping anthropologically, culturally and socially, a new relationship with nature and the world. In both cases, we are entering a dimension where the values of femininity emerge as a force, psychological as well as ethical, belonging to any human being, regardless of biological sex.

Such a vision can lead us to a third, structural level—to understand the relevance of the feminine in today's world. 'Deep' would be the appropriate word to use here, since such affinities find their bases at a very profound stage. However, that is not to say that all Jungian psychology, including Hillman's variation, is imbued with Indian influences. Here I refer to the most complex Jungian concepts

of archetype and collective unconscious. While Freud maintained that the unconscious is only personal, Jung discovered, in great measure due to the study of Eastern philosophies, that unconscious manifestations—fantasies, dreams, etc.—revealed patterns of universal significance, although they were specifically activated according to the personal equation (cultural and geographical) of each patient. Such manifestations of the psyche use mythology as their usual vehicle of expression. We already know how, for Jung and Hillman, the psyche is real, i.e., it bears a meaningful significance in our lives. And this is the main manifestation of Anima, since it is the link with the unconscious. But we can also say that such a vision strictly adheres to a most important aspect of the Indian mind: its psychological ‘concretism’. As emphasised by Sudhir Kakar (Jahanbegloo, 2009), myths still play a fundamental role in modern India. They are a millenary source of wisdom that even today is a helpful tool to interpret the present and, in a way, a sub-layer of common feeling. The same extraordinary adventure of the Mahatma can also be read in the light of his ability to bring alive his reinterpretation and reincarnation of Ahimsa owing to the continuous references to his country’s myths, and his ability to identify himself with those myths and, therefore, to speak to any Indian’s soul. Again, this attitude of giving due importance to the inner–outer relationship, to be able to listen to our deepest inner realities while understanding that they connect us to the outside world as well, is related in psychological terms to the work of Anima. This aspect is today becoming more and more central, since the world is part of a process of globalisation and interconnection that was unthinkable a century ago. Today, postmodern Jungian studies underline how such an inner connectedness exists, as does an outer one, and therefore speak of the Web as the site of the unveiling of the collective unconscious (*Spring Journal*, 2008).

INTERNET AND FEMINITY

There is undoubtedly a broader connection of structural importance between the values of femininity implied in the notions of Ahimsa and Anima that have been analysed so far, and the rise of the network society. It is a structural connection that begs the reinterpretation of the birth of the Internet in the light of the role played by the concept of Ahimsa. If it is a well-known fact

that scientific and military–industrial reasons are at the root of the rise of the network society, then there is a third factor that is usually mentioned (Castells, 2009) but, at the same time, generally overlooked. This factor is the spirit of freedom infusing Western societies, beginning with university campuses mainly in California. It is the so-called American countercultural movement which, starting from the mid-'50s, but basically between the '60s and the '70s, contributed towards shaping the intellectual framework of many of the people involved in the creation of the Net (Turner, 2006). Even if it is not possible here to elaborate the entire history of those years (Petri, 2012), it is important to understand that the countercultural movement contributed greatly to the development of the nonviolent message of connectedness in Western consciousness. Here I refer more to an attitude than to political positions. Besides the nonviolent political discourse of leaders such as Martin Luther King, there has been, in fact, a broader general shift toward the parameters of nonviolence—inspired by Gandhi's message and the general interest towards Eastern doctrines—that paved the way for a different vision of the relation between the individual and the collective. The counterculture movement, and mainly the hippy period, was inspired and driven by a pacifistic vision, using 'flower power' as a symbol of passive resistance and nonviolent ideology.

Nevertheless, what is interesting is the connection of the revolutions of the 1960s with the emerging technology revolution. It is a well-known fact that 'the openness of the internet is a product of the peculiar way in which it developed, not something inherent in the technology' (Streeter, 2011). Technologies in which the individual is increasingly empowered—for instance, personal computers—are at the same time modulated, and therefore 'created' to fit a networked necessity (ibid.), due in no small measure to the emerging and Eastern-inspired new vision of connectedness. We know that such a vision means values of Ahimsa and Anima: values of femininity. The oeuvre of writers and poets of those years, such as Allen Ginsberg (the voice of the Beat Generation), Ken Kesey (author of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*), Gary Snyder (Poetry Pulitzer Prize winner and founder with the philosopher, Arne Naess, of the depth ecology inspired by Gandhi's thought), is relevant, as is their personal attitude imbued with integrity and

coherent messages. They inspired entire generations and the climax of that period, creating specific subcultures even in the computer-engineers' community in the US that 'helped set the conditions for the rise of the modern, internet-connected, graphically capable computers' that were part of a 'computer counterculture' (ibid.). It is now increasingly clear that all these visions and attitude—incarnated, for instance, at the beginning by the hackers that played an important function in the creation of the network (Castells, 2001)—were crucial to help shape technologies for collective and communitarian use.

But what is the historical relevance today of such visions and attitudes based on nonviolence? To answer this question it is essential to study the work of philosopher Karl Popper and his concept of 'Open Society' (1945). Popper proposes that new steps towards more open societies can be taken only when human beings are capable of redefining the relationship between individuality and altruism. A classic example of this—and also the very start of the overall process toward the open society—is Socrates and his period of Ancient Greek philosophy. Other periods followed. Deeply influenced by Eastern concepts, the West in the 1960s, along with American counterculture, started one of these new historical phases with the Internet incarnating new ways of interaction between individuality and altruism. And if it is true that the individualistic aspect, also under the thrust of the capitalistic system, seems to prevail—as for example the 'i' in all Apple products—the importance of the altruistic aspect cannot be underestimated (Petri, 2012), not only for moral reasons, but because it is the same essence of the Internet and to do without it would undermine its strength and, above all, its future. Studies of the new social media movements recently published by several sociologists, of which Castell's (2012) is one, seem to validate this idea. They revolve around the anti-hierarchical approach, nonviolence, the values of empathy and identification; and here the role of women is equally important. As a consequence, the surfacing of Jungian values of Anima, and Hillman's Anima Mundi, in the new social media movements is quite obvious, as is its proximity to the Mahatma's advocacy of nonviolence along with its most recent incarnations.

CONCLUSIONS

To assess nonviolence in the light of analytical psychology would mean providing a contribution in terms of mutual understanding and enhancing a new general vision in the relationship with the other and nature. Its ethical implications are enormous and by now an inescapable fact in the new context of the Network Society. Quoting Guy Sorman (2001), a French thinker, and following Rorty's concept of the progress of sentiment, it can be called the 'feminisation' of the world. Understanding how such a vision is implied in the emergence of the Network Society is of paramount importance because it hints to the way ahead as well. Today, we are becoming increasingly aware that our responsibility towards our own personal evolution—our inner life—is an essential factor in a broad framework of global political and social dynamics. Uniting Ahimsa and Anima and placing both nonviolent vision and attitude, as well as personal psychological growth as foundational civic values, would be the true duty of today's human beings and human societies. It is a duty to be implemented but removed from any geopolitical position, since the new global networked context requires a common path uniting Western and Eastern sensitivities in a shared vision of open society.



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