



## RELIGION FOR JUSTICE: ANALYSIS OF THE CONFLICTS OF HUMANITY THROUGH *RESURRECTION* OF LEO TOLSTOY

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В статье анализируется идейное содержание романа Л.Н. Толстого «Воскресение», прежде всего проблематика справедливости и религии. Показано, что Толстой особое внимание уделяет месту женщины в обществе, сексуальному насилию, нравственной чистоте, физической и духовной любви. Кроме того, он резко критикует бедность, классовые различия и неравенство, рабство крестьян, жестокость помещиков, безработицу, перенаселенность городов и запустение деревни, а также коррупцию и лицемерие бюрократии, беспомощность современного законодательства и судебной системы, неприемлемые условия содержания преступников в тюрьмах. Причиной всех этих негативных явлений, согласно Толстому, прежде всего выступают неверие, утрата духовности, суеверные обряды православной церкви, слепота совести. Единственно возможное решение указанных проблем, обуславливающих экзистенциальный кризис человечества и перманентные социальные конфликты, Толстой видит в любви и в самосовершенствовании, что относится как к отдельным людям, так и к целым народам. Подлинное совершенствование, согласно Толстому, осуществляется через религию, развитие духовности и нравственное воспитание, следуя закону Божьему, а не человеческому. В статье предлагается новый взгляд на вышеупомянутые проблемы, которые все еще сохраняют свою актуальность в современном мире. Идеи Толстого рассматриваются и интерпретируются в контексте междисциплинарного, социокультурного и философского анализа. Делается вывод о том, что духовные поиски русского писателя и его проповедь любви особо важны в настоящее время, когда человечество переживает очередной религиозно-нравственный кризис.

**Ключевые слова:** Л.Н. Толстой, Россия XIX века, духовность, несправедливость, неравенство, права женщин.

In *Resurrection*, Leo Tolstoy philosophically discusses the two fundamental ideas: injustice and religion. On the basis of 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia, he critically examines various conflicts of humanity which are vital for all; he pays special attention to women's place in society, sexual abuse, purity, physical and spiritual love. Moreover, he harshly criticizes poverty, class differences, inequality between the rich and the poor, slavery of peasants, cruelty of landlords, unemployment, overcrowded cities and neglected countryside. However, he feels even more uncomfortable with the corruption and hypocrisy in bureaucracy and government institutions, uselessness of modern law and judicial system, unacceptable conditions of prisons and criminals. But most notably, he is deeply concerned with disbelief, loss of soul, impracticable rituals of the Orthodox Church, blindness of consciences and many other philosophical dilemmas which create a greater spiritual conflict for every individual in the world. Therefore, as the only possible solution to this existential crisis of mankind and these ongoing social problems, Tolstoy simply advises us to love, moreover, to reach our self-perfection, both as individuals and nations, through religion, spirituality and moral education, by following God's law, rather than man's. In this regard, this article brings a new understanding to some of the problems mentioned above, which still continue in our modern world today, with an interdisciplinary, sociocultural and philosophical analysis, and with references to Tolstoy's ideas and various scientific databases. Thus, the aim of this work is to give a different point of view to the innocent minds of next generations for their natural struggle throughout life. Tolstoy's spiritual quest is especially important nowadays, when humanity is experiencing another religious and moral crisis.

**Keywords:** Leo Tolstoy, 19th century Russia, spirituality, injustice, inequality, women rights.

Russia and Tolstoy were one.

*I. Berlin*

### *Introduction*

Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy was an extraordinary man whose soul was always in war and peace. One of the reasons why he is still remembered and loved all over the world today is his immense ability to think deeply for the sake of all humanity. This is what makes him one of the titans of the world literature, who influenced many others with his leading figure, like a lighthouse near a furious ocean in which many ships and sailors are lost and drown in darkness. Tolstoy was always trying to find honest and sincere answers to the problems of humanity, regardless of differences between nationalities, religions, cultures or languages. His mind, as well as his heart, had no boundaries or limits. Each of his ideas were universal and timeless. Therefore, his works are still considered to be among the greatest books of all times and have been crowned as classic or sublime. Tolstoy was exactly as portrayed by Mahatma Gandhi in a letter he once wrote: "Tolstoy is known to the entire world, but not as a soldier, though once he was reputed to be an expert soldier; not as a great writer, though indeed he enjoys a great reputation as a writer; nor as a nobleman, though he owned immense wealth. It was as a good man that the world knew him" [9].

Since the existential problems of human life do not really change through time, even though the centuries pass and the technology evolves, the ideas of Leo Tolstoy are still relevant to every human being today. Tolstoy's philosophy and worldview are embracing all men and women. And he sees every human being with an equal eye without considering their age or class, since for him, there are only good or bad people, nothing more. His philosophical teachings are equally targeted both for the rich and poor, for noble and peasant, without any separation. In his endless spiritual struggle, he was always after the satisfying, the rational and the beloved truth. "The hero of my tale, whom I love with all the strength of my soul, whom I have tried to set forth in all his beauty, and who has always been, is, and always will be most beautiful, is – the truth" [22, p. 60]. That is why Tolstoy studied all the big religions in the world, starting from Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam, as well as the ancient philosophers and his contemporaries, not because he was lost or confused, but because he simply wanted to understand all the possible answers to the problems of humanity. "In Russia he belonged to neither of the great ideological streams which divided educated opinion in that country during his youth. He was not a radical intellectual, with his eyes turned to the west; nor a Slavophil, that is to say, a believer in a Christian and nationalist monarchy" [6, p. 239]. Tolstoy was all alone and the only thing he wanted was to find the remedy, the medicine, the final cure to all spiritual, philosophical and physical sufferings and despairs of people in the world.

Indeed, Tolstoy was never a prophet but he was surely following the footsteps of prophets on earth. He "was constantly occupied by the question

of how best to live in this world” [20, p. 462]. In his studies, which included religion, spirituality, philosophy, morality, science, politics, history, psychology, art, and literature, for numerous times, he compared and contrasted every information, either new or ancient, which he found necessary. And he only selected the essential and practical ones between them for people in order to reach wisdom and peace in the world. “He had taken upon himself the most serious responsibility conceivable: to reform the world” [11, p. 98]. Yet, all of the questions he once asked and all of the answers he once gave, as a part of a serious plan of his genius mind, to understand the core of human nature and solve the secret meaning of life between good and evil, unfortunately are seemed to be long forgotten or never understood at all. Because, all over the world, people always “liked his novels, but were bored by his sermons” [11, p. 98].

Therefore, this article, while bringing a clearer understanding of what has changed or better yet what has not changed in Russia and in the world today, sheds light on some of the main ongoing problems of our so called “modern” and “civilized” society and their possible answers according to Tolstoy’s perceptive, with a detailed interdisciplinary, sociocultural and philosophical analysis of his latest work *Resurrection* (Воскресение), which was published in 1899, eleven years before his death, and fifteen years before the First World War.

#### *Resurrection, Nekhlyudov and Maslova*

Tolstoy’s *Resurrection* is a spiritual journey, a transformation of two different souls in 19th century Russia. Within the struggle of the consciences of the characters, Tolstoy philosophically examines the individuals and the problems of the society of his time all at once. Between Moscow and Saint Petersburg, and later in Siberia, there is no hope anywhere in the country where everything is “Disgraceful and disgusting, disgusting and disgraceful...” [22, p. 127] until the spiritual awakening of Nekhlyudov and Maslova. After they open their eyes and begin to see the reality, then there comes the first rays of hope and a true sense of meaning in their life. After their painful resurrection, neither time nor place matters for them anymore, even their bodies become insignificant, as well as the physical world which surrounds them. Thus, for the suffering souls, as well as the peaceful ones, the palaces and the prisons of Russia are the same. “The kingdom of God is not in time, or in place, of any kind. It is like lightning, seen here, there, and everywhere. And it has neither time nor place, because the kingdom of God, the one which I preach, is within you” [17, p. 62].

In *Resurrection*, Tolstoy is fairly summing up all the wisdom which he has collected during his long life in one narrative. It is his will, his final message, his last words. In the beginning of this semi-autobiographical novel – which is partially based on a true story at the same time – we meet Prince Dimitri Nekhlyudov, Tolstoy’s twin in many aspects who devoted “himself not only hopefully but in complete confidence to attaining the perfection he dreams of” [20, p. 65]. Unexperienced, excited, shining gem of

youth, a strong and complex masculine character, a young man who inherited immense wealth from his parents in early ages, “notre cher philosophe” [20, p. 70] who enjoys the richness and the fame of bohemian life style of Russian aristocracy, later a professional soldier in the war between Ottoman and Russian empires, a gambler, Zeus-like womanizer, always arrogant and always confident in himself, of course, until he starts hearing the voice of his heart.

What Galatea is to Pygmalion [10, p. 143], Katyusha is to Tolstoy. Maslova is a classic angelic woman figure of Tolstoy’s creative imagination. Yet, her character was originally inspired from Rozalia Oni who “was a prostitute of Finnish origin. Convicted of having robbed a client of 100 roubles, she had been sentenced to four months’ confinement” [11, p. 96]. And later who “caught the typhus endemic in Russian prisons and died” [11, p. 96]. In the beginning, she was only an innocent, charming young girl, always happy, and a pure creature, full of hope and energy, a flower in a simple life who has not been yet disturbed by any earthly pleasures. Yet, Tolstoy knew that “Women are not roses...” [13]. Later, she is the victim of the patriarchal society. She is the former lover of Prince Nekhlyudov, after being used by him, she becomes a desperate young mother who loses her child at birth, then with the oppression of the society she lives in, a professional prostitute in the hands of her tragic fate and finally, because of a simple misunderstanding in court, a prisoner who is sentenced to exile in Siberia for some years of hard labour.

Before all this, with the pure innocence of joyful youth, Nekhlyudov and Maslova fall in love with each other, so naturally, while they play in the garden like children, and comes a first, unforgettable kiss between them. “...for everything to become more appealing, delightful and full of meaning; life itself became more of a joy” [21, p. 53]. But, later the dark side of their hearts takes over their bodies suddenly, both of them forget about their creator, and that is the end of their purity and the start of all their sorrows. “What is the meaning of it all? Is it a great joy, or a great misfortune, that has befallen me?” [18, p. 69].

When Nekhlyudov visits Maslova in prison, he is really trying to save himself from his conscience, he wants to clear his soul from his sins, to be pure and innocent again, in the eyes of God. Because he feels that “the mighty hand of the Master” [20, p. 104] will never let him go. Even though, later, Nekhlyudov will be able to love “her, not selfishly, but for her own sake and for God’s” [20, p. 364]. In that moment, freedom of Maslova is not actually his main concern. He finds himself guilty and he is “wanting to reform” [20, p. 376] himself, not Maslova. So, he begs her to forgive him. He proposes to marry her in order to make everything correct after so many years, similarly, to the young man who “wanted to marry the woman [Rozalia]” [11, p. 96]. But everything is in vain. Maslova has already accepted her poor fate and her answer to Nekhlyudov is one of the most valuable lessons in the novel: “What has God got to do with it? You’re talking nonsense. God? What God? You ought to have thought of God when you” [20, p. 203] were committing this

crime, bringing me this shame, stealing my innocence and youth? There is truly nothing to say to Nekhlyudov, just as there was nothing to say to young Tolstoy, even though he later confessed “that in his university days at Kazan, while living in the house of his aunt Pelageia Iushkova, he had seduced a maid in the household who had later come to a bad end” [11, p. 97]. Nothing can ease their hearts anymore but divine justice.

Now, in the eyes of all humanity, Maslova has only become one of the other thousands of shameful criminals in the forgotten prisons of Russia. But since she is certain of her innocence, her soul is forever free like a bird. Yet, unlike her, Nekhlyudov’s shame is heavier to carry for any awakened human being who once felt the embracing love of God. Because he is definitely sure of his guilt. He knows that he hunted once more but this time he is unable to “kill a wounded bird” [18, p. 74] like before. Therefore, in the presence of God, he is eternally imprisoned by his soul and crushed under his sins. At that moment, somehow, there might be a simple relief for Maslova in prison. The prison might even turn out to be a better place for her, in which she can easily live as if in heaven, rather than living under the humiliating judgements of society. But for Nekhlyudov, neither to ignore his imprisonment nor to escape from it is ever possible, since his conscience will never let him go. Despite all his immense wealth, he has no relief, no home to go, nowhere to shelter on earth among mankind. Therefore, the salvation of Nekhlyudov is completely in the hands of Maslova and this is how their painful journey begins, both physically and spiritually.

### *Women, Family, Love and Sex*

On the one hand, with the characters of Nekhlyudov and Maslova, Tolstoy discusses the unending problems between men and women, while on the other hand, he criticizes immoral acts of individuals against God’s laws. “Like Rousseau, he rejected the doctrine of original sin, and believed that man was born innocent, and had been ruined by his own bad institutions; especially by what passed for education among civilized men” [6, p. 240].

Once Anna Akhmatova said “...he wrote *The Kreutzer Sonata* and forbade sex altogether” [7, p. 77]. But what Tolstoy actually did was never to forbid anything. *Resurrection* is a proof that Tolstoy only wanted to express the destructive, animal side of sex, as well as it being a sin before marriage, leaving many children without fathers and many young women alone without anyone to support them. Because surely, women’s place in 19th century Russia was nothing like in today’s world. Today, even though not completely, women are finally freer and they can work anywhere as they wish and dream. But then, women could not work freely as they want, therefore a single woman and mother could not easily afford food or shelter without a man’s support, especially if she was not from nobility. Moreover, in most parts of the world, women were far from being equal to any men in society. “...now the meaning of woman, any woman... was clearly defined: woman was one of the finest instruments for the provision of enjoyment” [21,

p. 55]. And this situation was one of the great injustices and inequalities of the time, as it is still the case today.

Since “the sexual guilt and revulsion that had been tormenting him all his life” [11, p. 97], Tolstoy, alongside understanding and mastering his own time very well, he clearly foresaw the psychological and social behaviours of the new generations of our times, in which many young girls, especially from poor families or low educational background, easily fall into the trap of prostitution, as a second job to earn extra money, like Maslova, or to have a stable status in the society among men, like some other female characters in *Resurrection*. Although, this situation does not really differ between well-educated and less-educated countries between East and West, after the collapse of Soviet Union, which was “far worse both in numbers and in cruelty than the tsarist hell described by Tolstoy” [11, p. 110], especially some countries became more popular than others with prostitution in the world.

First of all, one must accept that there is no other country in the world whose women have sacrificed more from themselves for the salvation of their country. If Russia stands today, after the World Wars, it is thanks to the Russian women who gave birth to those young soldiers and who also gave away their lives just like a present for their beloved land. Yet, unfortunately, Russia is one of those countries which are famous with its prostitution. Today, the Russian state is naturally, and most righteously, supporting Russian media organizations to destroy this wrong image of their country, by expressing the hardly known though beautiful cultural values of Russia to the world. Yet, it is not enough and this is still a very dangerous social problem, caused mostly by economic reasons, and a shameful stereotype as well as being a serious moral issue.

Every day, humanity witnesses or experiences more sexual abuse, crimes and violation against women in the world which is an ongoing and serious global problem. And sadly, nothing really changes through time and everything seems to be getting worse than ever. This means that our educational systems and laws are simply still not enough to protect our women and help them to have equal rights and complete economic and social freedom. According to the reports of World Health Organization, “across their lifetime, 1 in 3 women, around 736 million, are subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence from a non-partner – a number that has remained largely unchanged over the past decade” [5]. And most unfortunately “younger women [are] among those most at risk” [5] which proves that the new generations are not any better than the previous ones, and the number of emotionally and spiritually broken individuals are rising up every day in the society, just like Tolstoy predicted before in 19th century Russia. Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who is the Director-General of *WHO*, says: “We can only fight [the violence against women] with deep-rooted and sustained efforts – by governments, communities and individuals – to change harmful attitudes, improve access to opportunities and services for women and girls, and foster healthy and mutually respect-

ful relationships” [5] similarly, to Tolstoy’s argument on the subject. He knew that this is a real danger and must be solved for a better future in the world. “This task was obviously far more important than writing novels” [11, p. 98]. So, he gave us some clues to understand the core of this problem. All we need to do is to continuously ask the right questions like: Are women happy today? or What can we do more?

Tolstoy depicts sex before marriage not only as an illegal act but also as a destructive effect for the rights and honour of both women and men and for the future of the society. In a society where the majority of men regard women only as an ordinary and “familiar means of enjoyment” [20, p. 69] for physical pleasure, whether a princess or a peasant girl, and where the majority of women approach men only as the possible way to reach a better social and economic status in life, one cannot create a strong and a peaceful atmosphere for the future of the country. Tolstoy surely knew this danger. The danger is that a society without healthy individuals, healthy family ties, healthy relationships between sexes cannot healthily survive very long, and even if it survives through time, it will always be sick and be doomed to perish one day.

Because the first element of a nation is the human, then the family – which is naturally supposed to be the first place where human beings learn to love and be loved – and finally the society itself. And all the elements of the society must protect and support one another to continue their existence in life. Tolstoy always believed in the utmost necessity of a close family life, therefore, even though he had some problems in his own family, which was by the way very natural at the time, he idealized the idea of the family life. “I want to live. I want a family, children of my own. I want to live like other men” [20, p. 507]. That’s why in *Resurrection*, he repeatedly emphasizes the misery of Russian women under the cruelty of society, in which there is no sense of equality and justice for them.

Even though, the past life of Tolstoy is full of contradictory examples to this, and even though when he sometimes could not accept it himself during his youth, Tolstoy knew the value and the power of women, he truly believed that the core of society, the main element which makes a society, is the woman figure, the mother, the wife, daughter and sister. “I must say frankly that though I myself was once a very different sort of man, I have come to loathe this kind of attitude to women” [20, p. 451]. That’s why Tolstoy always dreamed of creating a new and stronger society, by healing the relationship between man and woman, especially in modern times. Hence, the expression of Maslova’s enlightenment in *Resurrection* is one of the proofs of Tolstoy’s philosophical understanding of this problem:

“Wet through, dirty and exhausted, she went back to the house, and that day marked the spiritual turning point after which she had become what she now was. After that ghastly night she stopped believing in goodness. Previously she had believed in goodness and other people’s belief in it, but after that night she was convinced that nobody had any such belief, and that everything that was said about God and goodness was all to do with

pulling the wool over people's eyes. He, the man she had loved and who had loved her – she knew that – had cast her aside, having taken his pleasure with her and played of person fast and loose with her feelings. And he was the best all the people she knew. All the others were even worse. And everything that then happened to her confirmed this every step. His aunts, even though they were God-fearing old ladies, had sent her packing once she couldn't work for them of the way as she had done before. All the people she came into contact with – the women used her to try and get money, and the men, from the old police-officer to the prison warders, looked on her as an object of pleasure. And there wasn't anything else in the world for anyone, apart from pleasure, that particular pleasure. This was confirmed most of all by the old writer she had taken up with during her second year of independent living. He made no bones about it: this (what he called poetry and aesthetics) was the whole secret of happiness. All people lived for themselves, for their own pleasure, and all that talk about God and goodness was a sham. And if ever questions arose about why the world was set up so badly that people hurt one another and everybody suffers, it was best not to think about it. If things get you down, just have a smoke or a drink, or, best of all, make love to some man, and the moment will pass" [21, p. 151–152].

### *Injustice and Inequality*

Tolstoy "was convinced that men were born equal and were made unequal by the way in which they were brought up" [6, p. 266]. One of the other great injustices and inequalities in 19th century Russia, as well as in today's world, was poverty, the enormous gap between rich and poor in society. In Russia, there has never been a middle class, and the peasantry and proletariat were eternally forgotten by the nobility and elite. The recklessness and blindness of Russian upper-classes were incurable, since their consciences were blackened and rotten, as well as their souls. Poor and weak people believed that there is no hope, there is no way to save themselves from the eternal cruelty of the rich and powerful people. All of their sufferings and sorrows were unheard.

On the one hand, people, aristocrats and noblemen, who were eternally "damned because they have all but lost the most precious of all human possessions, the capacity with which all men are born-to see the truth, the immutable, eternal truth..." [6, p. 240], were living in palaces and villas, eating the most delicious food and drinking the most exclusive champagnes, attending endless concerts, ballets, operas, dances, parties, having the most extreme and strange relationships and collaborations together, talking and making the most absurd or most dangerous decisions and orders about the things which they have never really experienced or even cared for in their lives. While on the other hand, the backbone of the Russian society, the people who make Russia, the peasants, folks, lower-classes, working-classes, were in a desperate situation, always crying, forcing the limits of their physical and mental powers like slaves, becoming almost unhuman, even sometimes by becoming criminals, prostitutes, thieves and rebels, just in

order to find their daily food or anything which might bring ease to their suffering in life.

Indeed, it is undeniable that Russia, as one of the biggest military powers in history, has always been a respectable game-maker around her territory and around the world. Yet, today, there are still very serious social, political and economic problems to be solved. The gap between the rich and poor is unstoppably getting wider and wider. “While general poverty levels have fallen (chronic poverty is now at 7% (3)), relatively high vulnerability to poverty remains a concern. Poverty rates in the poorest regions are 45 times those in the richest” [1, p. 15]. And according to researches of *World Inequality Data Base*, “the rapid income polarization that accompanied the transformation process of the 1990s still shapes inequality in Russia today. While top incomes have soared, the 90% of the population with the lowest incomes have seen their share of national income decrease” [12, p. 4]. Just like, by the help of his close experiences of all the cruelty and oppression of the powerful – during his intimate experiences with people from every classes, especially during the hardship of the Crimean War and later in the literary and aristocratic life of Saint Petersburg and Moscow – Tolstoy foresaw and warned us that such economical and moral problems and dilemmas of his country, as greater dangers for future, will keep continuing in our days.

“The people perish, they are accustomed to the process of perishing... the way children are allowed to die and women made to overwork, and the widespread undernourishment, especially of the aged. And this state of affairs has come about so gradually that the peasants themselves do not see the full horror of it, and do not raise their voices in complaint. For this reason, we, too, regard the situation as natural and proper” [20, p. 267].

### *Rebirth*

In Tolstoy, just like his character Nekhlyudov, “as in all of us, there were two men” [20, p. 75]. One is the spiritual being and the other is the animal. After his painful transformation, in Tolstoy, “the free spiritual being, which alone is true, alone powerful, alone eternal, had already awakened” [20, p. 130] and he finally denied and hated his past animalistic life style. He was reborn from his ashes and was completely able to hear the silent cries of other people in need which he secretly witnesses and felt since his childhood. The discovery of his own soul brought a new perspective of life to Tolstoy. “Yes, this is quite another – a new, a different world” [20, p. 422]. Now he could easily empathize with every being around him. Similarly, to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Tolstoy found the Russian countryside more peaceful and fit for the human nature instead of the luxury and comfort in the cities. He saw the peasants as more noble and honourable creatures than the aristocrats. “His particular aim was to ally himself with, work for, educate, and uplift the peasantry, which still constituted the vast majority of the Russian population” [11, p. 98].

In Tolstoy’s philosophy, “the land is not any body’s, it belongs to God” [20, p. 280]. Therefore, in *Resurrection* he asks: “Am I mad, that I see what

others do not see, or are they mad who are responsible for all that I see?" [20, p. 483]. Tolstoy clearly knew that in a nation where the rich eternally ignores the poor, as if they do not exist in the same land, and where the poor eternally hates the rich, as if there are no merciful human beings among them, naturally, one can never build a politically and economically strong society. First of all, the hate between these two opposite classes of society must end or at least should be minimalized by equality and justice. Their mentality must be changed through education and most importantly their living conditions must be straightened by new social and economic reforms. "Tolstoy's utopia was a simpler world of universal subsistence agriculture, where all would raise their own food, and there would be no exploitation and no class divisions" [11, p. 106].

Therefore, education, by all means, is the only possible way of saving the world from injustice and inequality. Since the "animal nature of man is abominable" [20, p. 359], Tolstoy believed that, it is basically not possible to change society without changing the behaviours of individuals. And the most productive transformation of the behaviours of individuals is only possible by changing their mentality, the way human beings look at life. Thus, the best way for this process is educating the soul. Because without a proper education of the individuals, the system, how the country is ruled, does not really matter. There is no difference between monarchy, democracy, communism, and even dictatorship, in a place where the souls are corrupt. Because "political opinions cannot unite people, for there may be innumerable political opinions" [15, p. 242–245].

That is the reason why Tolstoy saw the salvation of humanity in the education of children, who have the purest souls and minds. "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" [20, p. 517]. Therefore, he simply dedicated all of his life to serve and educate others, as he preached for people to do the same. He used all of his intellectual and artistic skills, his social and political status and his economic power in order to stop the tyranny in Russian society by any means.

The only secret wisdom he had discovered then and kept in his hands until the end of his life against the injustice and inequality in the world was Love; The spiritual love which Tolstoy learnt from prophets and ancient philosophers, the love which he had for all human beings, the love of his country, the love of God which embraces everyone no matter what. Thus, the purpose of the education which he suggested was only to teach people how to Love. So, he invited humanity to join him in this unseen war of souls against hate and crime. But one can easily ask: What kind of education? Scientific or religious? Shall we leave science and go back to Medieval Ages? Shall we ignore Renaissance? Of course not. It is not what Tolstoy meant.

#### *Methodological Problem*

It's true that Tolstoy's philosophical understanding, as well as his worldview, is not theoretical and well-structured enough, unlike Jean-

Jacques Rousseau or Immanuel Kant for example, which naturally sometimes creates a methodological problem in the study of his ideas. And it is true again that sometimes his ideas are repetitive and overwhelming which makes the understanding his philosophy very complex and tiring for some people. Yet, nonetheless, understanding him is still a very crucial responsibility on the shoulders of humanity.

First, it must be underlined that Tolstoy is a man who had always wanted to give control of his mind and heart completely to his soul – in order to reach self-perfection both before and after life – to his spiritual being which is his only true existence, as it is in every man and woman in the world. Though sometimes Tolstoy's ideas were above philosophy, as said earlier above, he was never a prophet, but a normal man with emotions and feeling. He never called himself an ideal because he was continuously and harshly criticizing himself, tearing his mind and heart into a million pieces to reach purity in his soul. As a very famous but lonely man in Russia, he was tirelessly searching God and the proof of his existence everywhere and in everything around him, in every book, under every rock, and behind every mountain. And, in some rare moments, when he was able to come closer to God, by the help of his sincerity and the love of truth, he realized that God already surrounds everything and every place around him, therefore God was never lost to be found. So, most naturally, Tolstoy wanted to show the reality, which he had discovered, to enlighten others, the people who might hear him, all humanity.

“A man is never such an egotist as at moments of spiritual ecstasy. At such times it seems to him that there is nothing on earth more splendid and interesting than himself” [14, p. 5]. It is the moment when all the human words come to an end, and all structures or methods are meaningless, since, at such moments, one's soul is in extreme excitement and happiness that one can never describe the greatness of the creator, and love he feels in himself, which is limited to the comprehension of the weak human mind.

### *Existential Crisis*

In the 19th century – similarly to today's world – Tolstoy said that “what we now see in Russia is this conflict of those who, having lost the inner religious bond that united them, have also lost faith in the need of obeying the powers that be” [15, p. 242–245].

And today, it is true that there is neither spiritual nor national togetherness between Russian people anymore, unlike they used to have during Soviet times. “Following well-documented trends that trace the decline of Christianity in Western Europe, the share of Europeans who say that God plays an important role in life has declined since 1991” [4, p. 18]. (The Soviet Union lasted between 1945–1991).

Just like Tolstoy predicted, people of Russia and the people of post-Soviet states started to lose their belief once more in their own countries and in their “society where the suffering borne by millions of people in their efforts to ensure the convenience and comfort of a small minority was so

carefully concealed that those who benefited neither saw nor could see this suffering and the consequent cruelty and wickedness of their own lives" [20, p. 299].

One of the other most dangerous aspect of this phenomenon is that the majority of well-educated young generations plan to leave Russia and immigrate to Europe or America to find comfort mainly because of economic and social reasons. Moreover, some necessary emotions, like love, mercy, empathy, pity, shame, respect, kindness, modesty, etc., are also rapidly fading away in society, especially after the World Wars, and people are becoming completely materialistically oriented and they selfishly focus only on the protection of their own rights and benefits, rather than also minding the rights and benefits of their neighbours or even of their families.

Today, in Russia, as well as in every part of the world, most unfortunately, as Tolstoy argued, the law of God is long forgotten and the law of men are corrupt or not enough anymore. "...people accept as a law something which is not a law, and they do not acknowledge the eternal, immutable, pressing law that God Himself has written in man's heart" [20, p. 411]. Yet, although not everyone, but majority of human beings still expect everything only from their government or from God. Just like Tolstoy predicted, they most undoubtedly blame either the government or God for everything, especially for the condition of their lives. The essential question here is not who is right or who is wrong about this natural rebellious reaction which lies in the nature of all human beings. The question is: How can people have faith in God and in their governments again? And how can they understand that having faith in God and in government does not contradict accepting that the fate of society is actually in the hands of the individuals.

Indeed, equality and comfort are not cheap. It is also true that some governments in the world can make mistakes too. And consequently, the destiny of human beings is one of the greatest mysteries to solve as well. But one must understand that life naturally requires a lot of personal and social sacrifice and hard work, both physically and spiritually. Without the individual sacrifices of human beings from the earthly pleasures and sins, like pride, adultery, jealousy, selfishness, belittlement, hate and all the other evil actions and crimes, just like Tolstoy thought, humanity can never reach a peaceful unity in themselves and rule the world in justice with wealth and democracy for everyone. But if humanity can finally make the necessary sacrifices, only then, the individual decisions, one by one, can change the masses, and the whole world.

"The whole trouble is that people think there are circumstances when one may deal with human beings without love, but no such circumstances ever exist. Inanimate objects may be dealt with without love: we may fell trees, bake bricks, hammer iron without love. But human beings cannot be handled without love, any more than bees can be handled without care. That is the nature of bees. If you handle bees carelessly you will harm the bees and yourself as well. And so, it is with people" [20, p. 411].

### *Cultural Destruction*

Most crucially, many nations today are “in imitation of the Western nations” and claiming “their superiority to the wise and holy men of the past” [15, p. 242–245]. Once Tolstoy stated in a letter to his daughter Maria: “This European life is very clean materially but terribly dirty spiritually” [8, p. 180]. And this global adaption of the European life-style and European values, unlike some people say, has always had massive destructive role on the spiritual and cultural growth of Russian people, as well as on other nations in the world. Due to dominating and unescapable – both positive and negative – effects of westernization and modernization all over the world, which naturally grew in time, today, it is scientifically indicated that “while there are exceptions, Central and Eastern Europeans overall are more inclined to say their culture is superior” [3, p. 8] to others, just like Tolstoy predicted.

Today, even though, there is no more class-based societies in the world, scientifically, “those [aristocrats, nobility, upper-classes] with higher incomes [are] less likely to see belief in God as necessary” [3, p. 9] just like Tolstoy had philosophically discussed in all of his literary works. Because he knew that – from his personal experience – when one is blindly distracted with the earthly pleasures, one cannot find the true meaning of life, which is Love.

This is the pure reason why humanity still cannot find any solution to violence, injustice, and inequality, in the world today, alongside today’s very developed science and high technology. Because, as always, the ones who are wealthy and comfortable are still unable to understand and have empathy for the ones who are poorer and in need. And this only proves the worldview of Tolstoy about the differences between rich and poor, and powerful and weak.

In 19th century, Tolstoy already realized that, if people do not make any self-sacrifices to fight against this cultural and spiritual tyranny of western civilization on others, rather than praising its materialistic and capitalistic values with daily luxuries in life, first the people of his beloved country Russia and later everyone in the world will sadly get very far from their own unique cultures, by becoming more and more irreligious, day by day, and finally become the slaves of the west, both spiritually and materialistically in the end. And this is exactly one of the main problems – which still continue today – that Tolstoy was fighting against during all his life.

“What is now happening to the people of the East and West is like what happens to every individual when he passes from childhood to adolescence and from youth to manhood. He loses what had hitherto guided his life and lives without direction, not having found a new standard suitable to his age, and so he invents all sorts of occupations, cares, distractions, and stupefactions to divert his attention from the misery and senselessness of his life. Such a condition may last a long time” [19, Letter 6].

*Reason*

According to Tolstoy, the only reason behind all these ongoing problems of humanity is forgetting God: “The main reason why people do not do the thing that is most natural, essential and feasible is that people today are so accustomed, as a consequence of their irreligious lives, to establishing and securing their existence by force, bayonets, bullets, dungeons and gallows that they believe this sort of arrangement of life to be normal, and the only possible way” [16, p. 103]. Because when human beings forget their creator, they forget the true meaning of their existence on Earth, which results with endless catastrophes and wars, spiritual and mental breakdowns, between countries and people. “What is most terrible of all is the spiritual and mental disorder at the root of all these ills” [15, p. 242–245]. That’s why he also believed that disbelief and secularism has always been dangerous as well as the corruption in Church. “It did not occur to any one of those present that everything that was going on there was the greatest blasphemy” [20, p. 171].

What Tolstoy means, and what everybody forgot, is that human beings have souls: “Human beings are like rivers: the water is one and the same in all of them” [20, p. 238] and just like eating food and fulfilling our stomach, or just like taking a deep breath and flourishing our lungs with fresh air, human beings have the most natural necessity to satisfy their souls by belief. “Like Rousseau and Kant and the believers in natural law, Tolstoy was convinced that men have certain basic material and spiritual needs, in all places, at all times. If these needs are fulfilled, they lead harmonious lives, which is the goal of their nature. Moral, aesthetic, and other spiritual values are objective and eternal, and man’s inner harmony depends upon his correct relationship to these” [6, p. 247].

Tolstoy discovered that to change the fate of humanity, there must be a true faith in the hearts of people. Because without faith, all hopes are in vain. And when there is no hope in society, there will never be motivation and hard work to build a better social and economic atmosphere for everyone. Humanity needs to be courageous, to believe again, to pray, to hope, in order to live and survive through the hardship of life. People must suffer through spiritual crisis, self-education, by killing the ego, abandoning materialism, freeing themselves from all sorts of earthly pleasures and sins to find themselves first and then God. Humanity must always be willing to go through the hard way which is to suffer for the wellbeing of all. “To live is to suffer and the only solution of the problem of life is to suffer with courage” [10, p. 403]. Otherwise, unless humanity remembers God, it will never be able to solve the problems which we are facing now. Tolstoy believes that peace in the world cannot be achieved without peace in the soul through religious and moral education, which will only lead people to a better and more peaceful understanding of life, of course while avoiding all sorts of dangerous radicalism and manipulation.

### *Solution*

Nowadays, we understand Tolstoy's spiritual invitation more clearly. The condition of the modern societies of today proves his philosophy of life, that human beings need strong moral and religious values once more. Because, even though we can continuously improve the quality of our technological devices, we still cannot improve the quality of our souls as human beings and express enough love. "Science answered thousands of very subtle and ingenuous questions touching criminal law, but certainly not the one he [Nekhlyudov] was trying to solve" [20, p. 370].

Today, humanity is not actually developing but going back-wards in time. No one is able to answer the questions: "What is morality?... What is society? What are its duties?" [20, p. 370]. People have already started to discuss about the possibility of new modern wars. The value of human life started to become very cheap. All kinds of sexual, racial and verbal assaults have become usual in the daily life of many people all over the world. Even murder has become a normal event like in mediaeval ages. The death of a person does not disturb the conscience of anyone anymore because people are not even aware of the masses who live around them in the same place. Within the illusions of the earthly pleasures, humanity is asleep and needs to be immediately awakened to the realities of life by Love.

"We live in the absurd conviction that we are masters of our lives, that life is given to us for our enjoyment. But this is obviously absurd. If we have been sent into this world, it must be by someone's will and for some purpose. Yet we have made up our minds that we live only for our own enjoyment, and of course things go ill with us, as they do with the husbandman who does not fulfil the will of his master" [20, p. 521].

According to the researches of *Pew Research Center*, "over the next four decades, Christians will remain the largest religious group, but Islam will grow faster than any other major religion. If current trends continue, by 2050... The number of Muslims will nearly equal the number of Christians around the world" [2, p. 5]. This means that, inevitably, very soon, Christian and Muslim communities will have to learn how to live with one another in societies where they must adapt themselves to have empathy and a common understanding and laws to exist peacefully together, avoiding all sorts of injustice and inequality.

Even though, it is undoubtful that one day the "law of requital, which surely punishes those who pervert the law of God" will be stirred up, and then the complete justice will be achieved in the world, today, in this "modern" world full of "guns with which [even] a little child can kill a hundred strong men" everything that humanity has achieved – if we have really achieved something until now – is in a great danger. And most importantly, today "*Thou shalt not kill* – a law acknowledged for thousands of years by all religions" is forgotten completely. And without the law of God, people are "guided only by their own personal and almost animal impulses" [15, p. 242–245].

Therefore, humanity should hear out what Tolstoy once wanted to tell us and then it will easily see that there are no big differences between the fundamental laws of the greatest religions of human history, and understand that “the command that every man should avoid all that might lead to murder, should not be angry with his neighbour, should forgive everything, should be reconciled to all men, and should have no enemies (Matt. 5:21-26)” [15, p. 242–245] has always been the same message, which has been repeated for thousands of years by Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam all together.

Humanity must look for the solution of the inner and outer problems of life in spirituality, morality and religion without doubting whether “can that be the whole answer” [20, p. 519] or not. We must leave our pride and prejudices behind and simply look for the true meaning of life, the reason of our existence on Earth. Just like Nekhlyudov, we must accept and “understand the Master’s purpose is beyond” [20, p. 276] us but to decide between right and wrong is definitely in our power. Humanity, starting from its smallest element, from human to family, from family to society, from society to nation, must learn how to feel “oneself not the master but a servant” [20, p. 276] of one another. Because the key to the salvation of humanity lies in the universal unity, in the acceptance and the embracement of one another, without considering our religious, racial, cultural or linguistic differences.

There can never be a universal peace, without an individual one. As Tolstoy advised us, “if you feel no love – leave people alone” [20, p. 411]. We shall not start wars anymore, nor take revenge or punish each other. We need to learn how to forgive one another “seventy times seven” [20, p. 518] like Jesus said. We must just try to imagine if humanity “would establish a completely new order of human society, in which the violence that filled Nekhlyudov with such indignation would not only cease of itself but the greatest blessing man can hope for – the kingdom of heaven on earth – would be attained” [20, p. 520].

Nevertheless, it will naturally be very difficult and might take such a long time, the rest of mankind must reach the spiritual maturity which men like Tolstoy had reached. They realized and believed that “man’s sole duty to fulfil these commandments, that in this lies the only reasonable meaning of life” [20, p. 521]. Just like Tolstoy, we must leave everything aside, and take our spiritual education as the first and foremost necessity of our lives. It must be our “life’s work” [20, p. 521].

Then, as humanity, we will see that the most unexpected developments will occur in our society, and we will start living in complete justice and equality for all. Then the *Kingdom of God* will surely blossom in our hearts, and the resurrection of humanity will be finally achieved.

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