RELIGIONS AND NONVIOLENCE: SPIRITUALITY FOR FUEL

We've created a nonviolence group at the university. Today we met up for a beer. There were people from many different religions, as well as agnostic people and people who didn't believe in God. A few members of our group came up with today's discussion topic: "Considering the fact that religion is used to make war, could it also serve for nonviolence?"

"The fact of the matter is that religions have been used for everything. But what helps me is the internal work and values that they inspire (compassion, fraternity, forgiveness, transcendence...): even beyond the specific religions, we are encouraged to look inward, to work on our inner worlds and our shared values. All religions structure people and communities around these values, which they receive through the belief in a higher "Someone" or "Something". Can we find nonviolence among those religious values?"

In India, Hinduism and Jainism share the principle of *Ahimsa*, which feels and responds to all forms of life with goodness; and Buddhism, which encapsulates *compassion* and the *Direct Paths* to Nirvana as nonviolent principles. In China, Taoism promotes the tenet of *Wu Wei* as flowing resistance, and Confucianism presents the concept of *Wen* as peaceful expansion. Judaism revolves around the concepts of *Shalom* as all-encompassing peace and *Tzedakah*, as the social and ethical justice of goodness. Christianity teaches the tenets of *loving our enemies* and *unlimited forgiveness*; and in Islam the main quality of Allah is *Rahman*, which is defined as being *Merciful*.

The essences of the religions not only commit to peace, but they also prohibit aggression. Why have religions been used to justify wars? Would you dare to delve into spirituality and nonviolence to transform violence into PEACE?