

The Human Right to Peace, Security and Prosperity: The Buddhist Perspective

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ABSTRACT

An important aspect omitted, though implied, when Fundamental Human Rights were identified for universal acceptance half a century ago is the basic Human Right to Peace, Security and Prosperity. Even as violence gains ground and terrorism ascends to be the most daunting danger facing humanity, the importance of transforming the prevailing culture of armed conflict and multiple forms of violence to a culture of peace, tolerance and understanding becomes patent.

This paper commences with a brief overview of mechanisms in force and efforts made in different quarters to ensure peace, security and prosperity to every human being. It then proceeds to look for inspiration, insights and guidance, which the teachings of the Buddha and twenty-six centuries of Buddhist history can give us.

The Buddha's most eloquently and comprehensively expressed views are examined along with his active interventions in conflict prevention and resolution. The Buddha's absolute path to peace is undoubtedly his unequivocal soteriological or salvific message of self-cultivation and mental perfection leading to the ultimate goal of peace and happiness in Nibbana – the end of suffering. But the Buddha was also conscious of the need of humanity for peace, security and prosperity here and now in this world.

How the traditional Buddhist ideals, wisdom and values continue to apply to this modern age is further illustrated with copious quotes from Grand Master Hsing Yun's insights on peace and equality.

The conclusion of this analysis is that the Buddhist perspective so expressed is not only relevant but also most urgently needed as a corrective to current international and national efforts to ensure peace, security and prosperity through socioeconomic, educational, spiritual, moral and cultural regeneration of humanity.

Introduction

Peace and security have eluded the human race at all stages of its development. It is indeed a sad commentary on the sheer failure of the humankind to optimize its gifts of intelligence and creativity. What makes the situation ever more disappointing is the increase of violence in intensity and complexity with every stage of human development. Early humans needed and therefore invented weapons and trapping devices for hunting animals for food and for defense against wild predators. But the progressive development of weapons of offence and defense against fellow humans has characterized a major venture of all civilizations.

Devoid of nature-given devices like horns, tusks, fangs, claws, sting and venom, humans evolved their weapons of combat in a continuous search for more effective and efficient ways of killing enemies and opponents. Stones, sticks, clubs and axes of the primitive humans were replaced with weapons of hand to hand or close combat like knives, daggers, swords and spears. The bow and arrow allowed killing

and maiming from a distance. The catapult and ramming devices were designed as weapons to be used by organized teams. The mechanically enhanced crossbow, when invented, was denounced as the most heinous of weapons of mass destruction. But gunpowder, first used in China for fireworks in celebration, dominated the next phase in weapon making with guns, perfected from flintlock muskets to automatic rifles, machine guns and artillery of ever-increasing magnitude. Explosives followed suit with mines, bombs, torpedoes and hand-grenades. Weapons of mass destruction – nuclear, chemical and biological – mark the current age with intercontinental ballistic missiles as the most dreaded.

An estimated half a million scientists of the highest caliber in the world are engaged in further development of weapon systems. The competition is not restricted to richer nations, because strategically located poorer countries, too, aspire to be nuclear powers. Armament accounts for a major portion of all national budgets. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is justified on grounds of deterrence against aggression. Aims and objectives of weapon-designers are clearly based on the destruction of human life, for still heard among them is the idea of developing devices which would kill humans (including of course, other life forms) without destroying the buildings and infrastructure, which the winners in a war would use to their advantage!

Equally disconcerting is a survey of human efforts in defense against aggression. Fortresses with walls and moats were once optimal. But since wars left the battlefield and encompassed all territories and extended thence to sea and air and now space, defense systems have not only become sophisticated but also irrelevant and meaningless. The recent terrorist operations have left the humankind wondering whether there could be any defense especially against a human being who is determined to die in the process of killings others.

War and armed conflict, which had demanded and consumed the greatest part of all resources of the human race throughout its history, are not the only breaches of Peace and Security. Massive and devastating, as they have been, whenever and wherever they occur, the greater problem is the continuous, on-going violence in society in which weaker segments like women, children and the poor are victims. In sheer numerical terms, the loss of human life through intentional and callously negligent acts of violence, ranging from premeditated murder and terrorism to drunk driving and endangerment of children and seniors is said to exceed that of wars, armed conflict and terrorism.

International action taken over the last half century to grapple with the question of violence and insecurity at the global level is as diverse as it is impressive:

- (1) The **United Nations** was established in 1945 as a world body to
 - **save succeeding generations from the scourge of war**, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and
 - **reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person**, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and
 - establish conditions under which **justice and respect** for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained,

- promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,
 - **practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors,**
 - unite our strength **to maintain international peace and security,**
 - ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, **that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest,** and
 - employ international machinery for the promotion of the **economic and social advancement of all peoples.** (Emphasis mine)
- (2) **UNESCO** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and cultural Organization) was founded in 1946 on a set of principles which included the following:
- **That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed;**
 - That a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and that **the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.** (Emphasis mine)
- (3) The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, adopted by the United Nations in 1948, highlighted the following:
- **Article 3**
Everyone has **the right to life, liberty and security of person**
 - **Article 5**
No one shall be subjected to **torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.** (Emphasis mine)

Though no world war had taken place since 1945, the world has not been free of armed conflicts both between and within nations. Nor has there been any reduction of violence and insecurity within nations. Violence has continued from domestic abuse to international warfare. It has even been thought that human beings are naturally and genetically programmed to be violent. UNESCO had the issue examined by a representative body of scientists, jurists and theologians whose Seville Statement on Violence of 1986 was conclusive:

“Based on rigorous scientific evidence, the Seville Statement refutes the myth that human beings are predisposed to violence through five key propositions. **It is scientifically incorrect to say:**

- **that we have inherited a tendency to make war from our animal ancestors;**
- **that war or any other violent behavior is genetically programmed into our nature;**

- **that in the course of human evolution there has been a selection for aggressive behavior more than for other kinds of behavior;**
- **that humans have a violent brain. How we act is shaped by how we have been conditioned and socialized. There is nothing in our neurophysiology that compels us to react violently;**
- **that war is caused by instinct or any single motivation.**

The corollary to this statement is that violence then is a learned behavior.

As a part of UNESCO's Culture of Peace Program, a convention was being negotiated under the direction of the former Director General, Professor Federico Mayor, to declare **Peace as a Human Right**. Although the convention is yet to be concluded, the importance of its foundational thought cannot be overemphasized. There is so much violence and insecurity in the world; the eradication thereof is a global challenge and an ineluctable obligation of everyone. The recognition of Peace and Security and likewise Prosperity or freedom of poverty as a basic human right is an essential step in mobilizing universal involvement in a comprehensive approach to ensure peace in every dimension.

It is with the current world situation and international concerns and efforts as a backdrop that I seek to examine what contribution Buddhist insights and experience can make to rid humanity of its propensity for violence and insecurity.

Backdrop to Teachings of the Buddha

The Buddha was a scion of a ruling family of a principality in Southern Nepal and, as a Sakya, belonged to the Kṣatriya or warrior caste. The traditional vocation of the caste was to bear arms and wage war or conduct raids, as its name signified (< *kṣatra* = conquered or plundered land – Wijesekera 1994 pp. 341-353). The mainstream Indian polity maintained war to be an indispensable caste duty.

Long before the Bhagavadgita banalized killing of humans through a philosophical argument on the indestructibility of the soul and commended fighting in war without any hesitation as a caste obligation, Vedic religion had glorified war. Cattle raids (*gaviṣṭi*) were a favored pastime and victors were hailed in Vedic hymns. The word eventually applied not only to war but also to such heroic attributes like ardor for battle as well as for eagerness and fervor in general (Monier-Williams: Sanskrit Dictionary s.v). Indra, the most frequently invoked god of the Rgveda, was not only the general symbol of heroism but also, as *Purandara* (the destroyer of strongholds or cities), a veritable god of war. Specially designed Vedic sacrifices catered for royal ambition for victory in war and territorial aggrandizement: *Aśvamedha* or horse sacrifice and *Rājasūya* or royal consecration gave religious sanction to empire building and *Vājapeya*, in particular, celebrated victory. The great epics – the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyana* – are based on war with evil villains and victory of the good.

Brahmanical ritual of consecration of a monarch included such military elements as mock fights or cow-raids and symbolic conquest of the world or directions. The annexation of neighboring kingdoms, called *Digvijaya* (conquest of directions),

and keeping the army in physical fitness through hunting were recognized as royal duties.

Canakya, nicknamed Kauṭilya, must have recorded in the *Arthaśāstra* (XII, 1) a very ancient and widespread concept of war in the classification of conquerors as *Dharmavijayi* (who is satisfied with the obeisance of the conquered), *Lobhavijayi* (whose greed is satisfied by the surrender of territory and treasure), and *Asuravijayi* (who would be satisfied with surrender of not merely territory and treasure, but even the sons and wives of the conquered, and even taking away his life). (Guruge 1993-1 pp. 165-166).

Laws of Manu exemplify the prevalent approach to war with such exhortations to kings as the following:

Kings who try to kill one another in battle and fight to their utmost ability, never averting their faces, go to heaven (7, 89)

By means of his army [a king] should seek what he has not got; by careful attention he should guard what he has got (7, 101)

He should wage war when he thinks that all his subjects are in high spirits and that he himself has grown exceedingly mighty (7, 170)

He may also march to make war when he sees that victory is certain or when some disaster has befallen his enemy (7, 183)

It is in a society so inclined and geared to war and conquest that the Buddha was born. His part of the Indian subcontinent, called Prācyā in Vedic literature, is even recorded as the region where kings were anointed as *Samrāt* or *Ekarāt* – Emperor or Sole Ruler, terms with imperial connotations. (*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*- Guruge 1993-1 p.3) The concept of an idealized and righteous *Cakkavatti*, the wheel-wielding universal monarch, too, as the Buddhist literature shows, prevailed in this region. There can be no doubt that prince Siddhattha's early education preparing him to rulership did include training in martial arts and military strategy. The legendary biography of the Buddha elaborates the feats of military skill, which the Prince was required to perform before he could win Yasodhara as his bride. These feats are said to include riding and maneuvering horses and the skillful use of such weapons as sword, bow and arrow, spear and javelin.

It may not be purely poetical visualization when it is said that the Ascetic Prince compared his effort to gain enlightenment and end of suffering in military terms as a battle:

Your first **squadron** is Sense-desires,
Your second is called Boredom, then
Hunger and Thirst compose the third,
And Craving is the fourth in rank,
The Fifth is Sloth and acidity,
While Cowardice lines up as sixth,
Uncertainty is seven, the eighth
Is Malice paired with Obstinacy;
Gain, Honour and Renown, besides,
And ill-won Notoriety,
Self-praise and Denigrating Others –
These are your squadrons, Namuci; (i.e. god of death or Māra)
These are the Black One's fighting squadrons;

None but the brave will conquer them

To gain bliss by the victory
I fly the ribbon that denies
Retreat. Shame on life here, I say.

Better I die in battle now

Than choose to live on in defeat.
There are ascetics and divines
That have surrendered here, and they
Are seen no more: they do not know
The paths the pilgrim travels by.

**So, seeing Mara's squadrons now
Arrayed all round, with elephants,**

I sally forth to fight, that I

May not be driven from my post.

Your serried squadrons, which the world

With all its gods cannot defeat,

I shall now break with understanding,

As with a stone a crow a clay pot.

(Sn. III, 2 Tr. Venerable Ñāṇamoḷi)

When a bhikkhu reaches *nibbāna* thus through not clinging,

Then he will have no renewal of being;

Māra has been vanquished and the battle gained,

Since one such as he has outstripped all being.

(Ud. III, 10) (Emphasis mine)

Nor was it so when the final victory over temptation and the eventual enlightenment and the attainment of Buddhahood is depicted in literature and art as *Mārayuddha* – a War with Māra. (Guruge 1993-2 p. 166-186; 1997-1 p. 6-9) Continuing the metaphor to spiritual development an Arahant is called the winner of a war (*vijitasangāmo* – Itivuttaka IV, 3). *Brahmajālasutta* of Dīghanikāya (D. 1) calls the attainment of Nibbāna an incomparable victory in war (*anuttaro sangāma vijayo*). Warriors and war-elephants are used in similes to illustrate qualities, which a monastic should possess or develop. (A. V, 5, 76; A. IV, 114)

The contemporary society of the Buddha was replete with violence and war. Bimbisāra annexed neighboring Anga and commenced the military ascendancy of Magadha, which resulted within two hundred years in the Nanda and Mauryan Empires. Bimbisāra's son, Ajātasattu, tortured and killed his father to become his successor. Ajātasattu also fought against the Kosala king, Pasenadi and won a short-lived victory but was in turn defeated by the Kosala king. Ajātasattu fortified Pāṭaliputta with designs to annex the Vajjian republic. Pasenadi's son, Viḍūḍabha, not only deposed his father through rebellion but also waged war against the Sākyas and decimated the clan. There was even an impending war between the Buddha's own relatives over water. Social and domestic violence, too, finds frequent mention in Buddhist literature. Banditry and armed robbery affected even the Sangha. Devadatta is said to have engineered several conspiracies to kill the Buddha, as revealed by the episodes on sending archers, inciting the intoxicated elephant Nālāgiri, and rolling a boulder down a cliff. Angulimāla is portrayed as a serial killer -- responsible for 999 lives and even ready to kill the Buddha. Kuṇḍalakesi was a victim of domestic violence as were several women who recorded their experiences in *Therīgāthā*. Some

regions were even notorious as prone to violence as the episode of Puṇṇa records. (Malalsekera: DPPN s.v.)

War apparently was as glorified as it is now. Attributed to Buddha is the statement “*Sannaddho khattiyo tapati*” (a warrior shines in his armor – Dp. 387). “A king must remember when and where he won a war,” says A. III, 12. A competent soldier is described as “trained, skilled, expert, practiced, drilled, bold or of steady nerve, undismayed and incapable of running away. (S. III, 3, 4) Reference is made to those who yearn to annex countries (*rattham iccheyya* – Dp. 84) and conquer thousand times thousand people in war (*Yo sahasam sahasena sangāme mānuse jine* – Dp. 103). As possible aspirations of people are mentioned sole rulership over earth and domination of the whole world. (*Pathavyā ekarajjena ... sabbalokādhipaccena* –Dp. 178).

Smiles and parables of the Buddha reflect his knowledge of military pursuits, such as archery, siege, battle formations, and strategy. (Cf. Dp. 145, 156, 131, 132, 133). One of the most expressive is the parable of the wounded man where even the components of an arrow are described in detail (M. 63). He advocates that one’s mind be protected as a city under siege, which is protected from both within and without (Dp.314). The Buddha compares his ability to withstand insult and denigration to the ability of a war-elephant, which bears up all barbs and arrows shot at him in battle. His admonition to follow his path of purification is sometimes presented in military terms: “Fight with Māra with the weapons of wisdom (*vodetha māraṃ paññāvudhena* – Dp. 40);” “Defeat the flower-tripped arrow of Māra” (Dp. 46); “The wise rise above the world having defeated Māra along with his squadrons.” (Dp. 175) “The conqueror of one’s own self is the noblest winner of war (*Sangāmaj’uttamo* – Dp. 103);” “Conquering one’s own self is better than the conquest of all other people.” (Dp. 104). The end of suffering is compared to the removal of an arrow (Dp. 275). The attainment of Arahant hood by destroying craving and conceit, the wrong view of eternalism and nihilism, lust and twelve sense bases with the sword of wisdom is presented in such terms of violence as killing one’s father and mother, murdering two *Ksatriya* kings and conquering a kingdom with all its subjects. (Dp. 294-295). War and violence must have been so commonplace in his society that he found parallels and similes drawn from them to be expressive illustrations in his discourses. (See PTS Pali-English Dictionary, s.vv. *āvudho*, *avihiṃsā*, *aviheṭhaka*, *devāsurasangāma*, *jaya*, *jināti*, *sangāma*, *sangāmāvacara*, *sangameti*, *Yuddha*, *Yodha*)

How and where Buddhism Deals with Peace, Security and Prosperity

In dealing with the vast range of the Buddha’s teachings, as recorded in the Pali *Tripitaka* and the Sanskrit and Chinese *Āgamasūtras*, it is important to examine every admonition, concept and opinion in relation to three levels of instruction of the Buddha. The three levels, as I have observed, are the following:

1. At the first level, there is a **unique body of teachings based entirely on the Path of Deliverance**, which he presented as his strategy and process to end suffering. Soteriological in purpose and design, this body of teachings included the three marks or signata of existence, the four noble truths, the noble eightfold path, the twelve-link dependant origination, triple training of virtue, concentration and wisdom, techniques of

meditation ranging from mindfulness, tranquility and insight meditation to absorptions or *jhānas* of the material and non-material spheres, five impediments, ten fetters and defilements, four influxes or cankers, and finally *Nibbāna*. These teachings, which are also included in the list of 37 *Bodhi-pakkhiyadhammas* or requisites of enlightenment, are coherently and systematically presented and are not open to compromise. They constitute the Buddha's prescription for the solution to the problem of suffering in the cycle of birth and death and the attainment of the ultimate bliss of *Nibbāna*. Purification of the mind of root causes of greed, malice and stupidity and engaging the mind in eradication of ignorance dominated this process. These teachings are specifically relevant to serious seekers of liberation and, along with the Vinaya rules, are meant primarily for monastics.

2. At the second level is a **detailed moral code** addressed mainly to the laity for the purpose of directing them to a blemishless life of ethical rectitude and spiritual commitment. The goal of these teachings was directing people to a wholesome life here and now and an after-life in heaven (*sagga*) or a better rebirth as a human (*sugati*). This goal, as the Buddha stated, was not unique to Buddhism. A duty cast on all religious and spiritual leaders, according to *Sigālovādasutta*, was "showing their disciples the way to heaven." Thus the prescription to attain such a goal was a shared one with the prevailing religious and spiritual teachers of the day. Avoiding evil (*pāpa* or *akusala*) and doing good (*puñña* or *kusala*) was the fundamental position. Discourses such as *Mahāmangalasutta*, *Vasallasutta*, *Dhammikasutta*, *Vyagghapajjasutta*, *Uragasutta*, *Khaggavisāṇasutta*, *Mumi*, *Āmagandha*, *Brāhmaṇadhammika*, *Rāhulovādasuttas*, *Samanaparibbājanīyasutta*, *Vāseṭṭhasutta* and *Parābhavasutta* of the Pali Canon illustrate the Buddha's teachings at this level.
3. To the third level belong **opinions, observations and counsel** offered by the Buddha in response to questions, situations and incidents. These teachings reflect the practical wisdom, which the Buddha brought in to bear on issues presented to him by people of all walks of life. These teachings hardly had any direct bearing on the Buddha's soteriological or salvific mission or to the goal of a better after-life. On the contrary, the overarching emphasis was on leading a stress- and worry- free life of day-to-day benefit in harmony with family, community and society. Most of the Suttas in *Dīghanikāya* and many of *Majjhimanikāya* fall into this level. *Sigālovādasutta*, in particular, is a discourse where ingredients for an ethically perfect lay life and ideal interpersonal relations in society form the crux. Many of the verses of *Dhammapada*, *Udāna*, *Suttanipāta* and *Itivuttaka* present the Buddha's views in pithy, aphoristic, quotable sayings. There is hardly any subject of human interest that is absent in teachings falling into this level.

The teachings of the Buddha, pertaining to the first level, have seen further elaboration as a result of the scholastic activities of exegesis, analysis, synthesis and interpretation, which commenced during his lifetime. Starting with the *Abhidhamma*-

piṭaka in both Sarvāstivāda and Theravāda traditions, these literary ventures culminated in Śāstras and Sūtras, which increasingly came to reflect the concepts developed within the Mahāyāna tradition.

Taken together this enormous literary heritage of Buddhism, preserved in such Canonical languages as Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan and further supplemented by works in Asian national languages, represent the overall Buddhist view on end of suffering, enlightenment and liberation. There is an intrinsic unity of content and purpose despite flagrant variations in emphasis, practice and ritual. One thing is most significant as far as the theme of this paper is concerned. **As regards peace, security, nonviolence, compassion, loving kindness, tolerance, forbearance and open-mindedness, all Buddhist traditions speak clearly, loudly and eloquently in one voice.**

The Buddha's Absolute Path to Peace and Security

“The mind is the forerunner of all things; they have the mind as the foremost and are mind made,” say the opening two verses of the *Dhammapada*. So it is in the mind that the causes of war, crime and violence are to be sought. In a statement found in *Majjhimanikāya* (M. 13) and repeated elsewhere too, the Buddha's analysis of causes is presented as follows:

Truly, **due to sensuous craving, conditioned through sensuous craving, impelled by sensuous craving, entirely moved by sensuous craving**, kings fight with kings, princes with princes, priests with priests, citizens with citizens; the mother quarrels with the son, the son with the mother, the father with the son, the son with the father; brother quarrels with brother, brother with sister, sister with brother, friend with friend. Thus, given to dissension, quarrelling and fighting, they fall upon one another with fists, sticks, or weapons. And thereby they suffer death or deadly pain.

And further, **due to sensuous craving, conditioned through sensuous craving, impelled by sensuous craving, entirely moved by sensuous craving**, people break into houses, rob, plunder, pillage whole houses, commit highway robbery, and seduce the wives of others. Then the rulers have such people caught, and inflict on them various forms of punishment. And thereby they incur death or deadly pain. Now, this is the misery of sensuous craving, the heaping up of suffering in this present life, **due to sensuous craving, conditioned through sensuous craving, impelled by sensuous craving, entirely moved by sensuous craving.**

The psychological foundations of conflict, war, crime and violence were further analyzed. Craving, the Cause of Suffering, as embodied in the Second Noble Truth, is portrayed as the underlying cause of all ills affecting humanity. But other psychological conditions, too, had a significant contribution. Hatred, malice, aversion, and ill-will, as represented by such terms as *vera* (hatred), *vyāpāda* (malice), *dosa* (aversion), *paṭigha* and *kodha* (anger) and *himsā* (injury), are identified as causes of dissension and conflict, leading to crime and violence. (Dp. 3, 4, 5, 197, 291, 221, 222, 223, 357, 390, 400). There is no spark like hatred [to kindle dispute], says Dp. 251. “Mankind is polluted by hatred,” says Dp. 357. In these verses of the *Dhammapada*, the remedy urged by the Buddha is to subdue anger, hatred and malice by positive mental qualities of love (*avera*, *akkodha*), patience (*khanti* –Dp. 184) and nonviolence

(*ahiṃsā*). He presented as an eternal truth the position that hatred is not appeased by hatred and that only non-hatred or love appeased hatred. (Dp. 5) Anger likewise is to be suppressed with non-anger or compassion (Dp. 221-223). One who takes pleasure by causing suffering to others and is entangled and engulfed in hatred will never be free of hatred. (Dp. 291)

A person of forbearance, non-hatred and nonviolence (*khemī averī abhayo* – Dp. 258) is called a wise person (*Paṇḍita*); “One is rightly called an elder (*thera*) when one practices non-injury (*ahiṃsā*), restraint and self-control” – Dp. 261. One is called “noble” when one refrains from injuring all living creatures. (*Ahiṃsā sabbapāṇānaṃ* – Dp. 261). “Sages who do not yield to anger and who do no injury to anyone will attain the world of gods and grieve no more,” say Dp. 224-225. The disciples of the Buddha are described as having their minds suffused with non-injury (*ahiṃsāya rato mano* – Dp. 300). Not insulting and not harming anyone (*anūpavādo anūpaghāto*) are listed as the first two of six qualities enjoined by all Buddhas (Dp. 185). A bhikkhu or a recluse is praised for “leaving aside the stick in case of all beings (*sabbesu bhūtesu nidhāya daṇḍaṃ* – Dp. 142 – 405) meaning that he injures no living creature. The highest praise is also reserved for one who is tolerant among the intolerant and mild among the violent. (*aviruddhaṃ viruddhesu, attaḍaṇdesu nibbutā* – Dp. 406). So is hailed a person who with the power of forbearance (*khantibala*), endures reproach, torture and bondage (*vadhabāndhana*) without ill-will (Dp. 399).

In keeping with the Śramana tradition, as also reflected in the Jain standards of moral conduct, non-injury (*ahiṃsā*) to all life forms and non-stealing (*asteya*) constitute in Buddhism the first two elements of *Pañcasīla*, *Aṭṭhaṅgasīla* and *Dasasīla* (in popular parlance the five, eight and ten precepts). The Buddhist formulation underscores each of them as a discipline of abstaining from “depriving a living being of its life” (*pāṇātipāta*) and “taking what is not giving” (*adattādāna* or *adinnādāna*).

His repeated injunction was specific: may one not kill and may one not let or get others kill (*na haneyya na ghātaye* – Dp. 129, 130). Two reasons were given: (1) To every one life is precious (*sabbesaṃ jivitaṃ piyaṃ* – Dp. 130) and (2) All fear death (*sabbe bhāyanti maccuno* – Dp. 129). The injunction is reinforced with the statement that one should take one’s own love of life and fear of death as applicable to all living beings (*attānaṃ upamaṃ katvā*). King Pasenadi Kosala is told to refrain from killing because to everyone there is none dearer than oneself. (Ud. V, 1) It was also pointed out that in the operation of the moral law of Kamma, a killer will be killed in turn and a conqueror conquered. (S. I, 85) An equally forceful argument is presented in another verse of the *Dhammapada*: “Others do not know that here we all die (literally, goes to the realm of Yama or death). With those who know it here, conflicts are resolved thus (*tato sammanti medhagā* – Dp. 6)

Thus highlighting the mind and its defects, deficiencies and defilements as the ultimate causes of all forms of violence, the Buddha presented his path of purification and salvation as the ultimate solution. Once sensual craving is eradicated, the fundamental cause of conflict, war and violence ceases. One attains the state of peace (*santaṃ padaṃ* – Dp. 381). Such a person is peaceful (*santa*) in body, speech and mind. (Dp. 378). This is the Buddha’s absolute Path to Peace, as embodied in the first level teachings.

It is this aspect of Buddhist teachings that was dealt with by K. N. Jayatilleke who is among the pioneering Buddhist scholars to deal with the topic “Buddhism and Peace.” His presentation on April 8, 1961 at a Seminar organized by the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, held at All Souls College, Oxford University, UK was on the theme of “Religion and Peace with Special Reference to the Concepts of Truth, Justice, Freedom, and Love.” In it, he takes peace (*santi*) to be the central concept of Buddhism as characterized by inward peace (*ajjhatta-santi* – Sn. 837 and equates it to Nirvāṇa or the Transcendent Reality (Jayatilleke 1962 p.2). He stresses that the Buddha’s concept of *samacariya* (harmonious or peaceful living = *dhammacariyā*) sought for the first time in the known history of mankind to spread over the entire earth” the kingdom of righteousness (*dhammacakkaṃ*, literally rule of righteousness). (Ibid. pp 2-3). From this point of view, he analyzes the concept of *Mettā* (translated by him as Compassionate Love). He established this concept from two quotes: “None of the good works employed to acquire religious merit is worth a fraction of the value of loving kindness” (*Itivuttaka* 19-21) and “One is cleansed with an internal bathing in the waters of Love and Compassion for one’s own fellow beings.” (*Majjhimanikāya* I, 39)

The passage from “finite self-centered existence to Nirvāṇa,” he says, “is pictured as one from Bondage to Freedom (*vimutti*) and Power (*vasī*), from Imperfection to Perfection (*parisuddhi*, *paramakusala*), from Unhappiness to Perfect Happiness (*parama-sukha*), from Ignorance to Knowledge (*vijjā*, *ñāṇa*), from Finite Consciousness to Infinite Transcendent Consciousness (*ananta-viññāṇa*), from the Impermanent to the Permanent (*nicca*), from the Unstable to the Stable (*dhuva*), from Fear and Anxiety to Perfect Security (*abhaya*), from the Evanescent to the Ineffable (*amosadhamma*), from a state of Mental Illness to a state of perfect Mental Health, etc. It is a peace that passes understanding for it is the result of what is paradoxically described both as the extinction of one’s self-centred desires and the attainment of an ultimate reality.” (Ibid p.10)

In spite of the indisputable validity of this Path to Absolute Peace, which is the core and the hallmark of the teachings of the Buddha, it is neither open to all nor applicable as an immediate solution to all problems of war, violence, crime and insecurity in the real world here and now. If all could have been led to *Nibbāṇa* and thus saved for ever from the ills of existence once and for all, a Buddha of the past or the historical Buddha would have attempted and achieved it.

Path to Peace, Security and Prosperity in the World Here and Now

Much of what the Buddha taught for the inner cleansing of the mind by removing the root causes of evil, impediments, fetters and defilements do apply to day-to-day practice of a virtuous life. Particularly significant are the practices he enjoined as the four Sublime States (*Brahmavihāra*) of *Mettā* (Loving Kindness,) *Karuṇā* (Compassion or Pity), *Muditā* (Sympathetic Joy or Felicitation) and *Upekkhā* (Equanimity and Equality) as they establish harmonious and peaceful co-existence and cooperation with others. The development of a pure mind devoid of hatred, malice, aversion, and ill-will (*vera*, *kodha*, *vyāpāda*, *paṭigha*, *dosa* etc.) is as much relevant to life in society as to attaining the ultimate goal of *Nibbāṇa*.

It is, nevertheless, in the teachings of the Buddha falling in the second and the third levels, as discussed above, that we find practical guidance applicable to affairs of nations, communities and individuals. In these two levels, the Buddha's analysis of the causes of conflict, crime and violence is in the sociological domain.

In *Kūṭadantasutta* of *Dīghanikāya*, the Buddha narrates a story to Brahman Kūṭadanata on how a perfect sacrificial rite was conducted by a king of the past and his chaplain. As a prelude to the sacrifice, the country had to be freed from crime, banditry and violence. Here the cause of violence and insecurity is directly related to poverty. It is said,

Thereupon the Brahman who was chaplain said to the king: "The king's country, Sire, is harassed and harried. **There are dacoits abroad who pillage the villages and townships, and who make the roads unsafe. Were the king, so long as that is so, to levy a fresh tax, verily his majesty would be acting wrongly. But perchance his majesty might think: 'I'll soon put a stop to these scoundrels' game by degradation and banishment, and fines and bonds and death!' but their licence cannot be satisfactorily put a stop to so.** The remnant left unpunished would still go on harassing the realm. Now there is one method to adopt to put a thorough end to this disorder. Whosoever there be in the king's realm who devote themselves to keeping cattle and the farm, **to them let his majesty the king give food and seed-corn.** Whosoever there be in the king's realm who devote themselves to trade, **to them let his majesty the king give capital.** Whosoever there be in the king's realm who devote themselves to government service, **to them let his majesty the king give wages and food.** Then those men, following each his own business, will no longer harass the realm; the king's revenue will go up; **the country will be quiet and at peace;** and the populace, pleased one with another and happy, dancing their children in their arms will dwell with open doors."

'Then King Wide-realm, accepted the word of his chaplain, and did as he had said. And **those men, following each his business, harassed the realm no more. And the king's revenue went up. And the country became quiet and at peace.** And the populace, pleased one with another and happy, dancing their children in their arms, dwelt with open doors. (D. 5 Tr. T.W. and C.A.F. Rhys Davids)

What is important to note in this analysis is that the solutions offered were not law-enforcement or punishment but economic incentives to raise the living standards of the people.

In the *Aggaññasutta* of *Dīghanikāya*, which is an allegorical rather than a historical or sociological view of "the moral fall of man," the section dealing with the rise of crime and violence and the steps taken to curb them through kingship and government presents an equally informative viewpoint:

Now some being of greedy disposition, watching over his own plot, stole another plot and made use of it. They took him and holding him fast, said: Truly, good being, thou hast wrought evil in that, while watching thine own plot, thou hast stolen another plot and made use of it. See, good being, that thou do not such a thing again! Ay, sirs, he replied. And a second time he did so. And yet a third. And again they took him and admonished him. **Some smote him with the hand, some with clods, some with sticks. With such a beginning, did stealing appear, and censure and lying and punishment became known.**

Now those beings gathered themselves together, and bewailed these things, saying: From our evil deeds, sirs, becoming manifest, inasmuch as stealing, censure, lying, punishment have become known, what if we were to select a certain being, who should be wrathful when indignation is right, who should censure that which should rightly be censured and should banish him who deserves to be banished? But we will give him in return a portion of the rice.

Then those beings went to the being among them who was the handsomest, the best favored, the most attractive, the most capable and said to him: **Come now, good being, be indignant at that whereat one should rightly be indignant, censure that which should rightly be censured, banish him who deserves to be banished.** And we will contribute to thee a portion of our rice. (D. 27 Tr. T.W. and C.A.F. Rhys Davids)

Here the solution to disorder was the institution of good government.

A far more dramatic sequence of circumstances is narrated in the **Cakkavattisīhanādasutta** of *Dīghanikāya*, where the “fall of man” and his subsequent rise is presented in economic and moral terms:

- (1) Inequitable distribution of goods in society and the consequent deprivation of the destitute cause poverty;
- (2) **Poverty increases stealing; from the prevalence of stealing grows violence and destruction of life;** and from the frequency of murder span of life and physical beauty of humans wane;
- (3) **Through inequitable distribution of goods and the deprivation of the destitute, poverty spreads; from poverty arises stealing, violence, murder, falsehood, evil speech, adultery, abusive and frivolous talk, covetousness, ill-will, false views, incest and perverted lust until finally filial and religious piety and respect for leadership disappear.**
- (4) The depth of moral degeneration, so set in motion, is marked by the disappearance of the ten wholesome conduct (i.e. non-killing, non-stealing etc. constituting the ten *kusalakammas*) and there would not be even a word in human vocabulary for morality. Society would praise persons who have neither filial and religious piety nor respect for elders.
- (5) Humans at this stage would be so debased as to be promiscuous like goats, sheep, fowl, swine, dogs and jackals and **mutual enmity, ill-will, animosity and murderous thought would make humans kill parents, siblings and children with insensitivity of a hunter to animals.**
- (6) **Looking upon each other like wild beasts, humans would engage in a war of mass destruction with dangerous weapons and only a few who seek refuge in mountain fastnesses and the like would survive the war.**

The *sutta* continues to portray what would happen after this cataclysmic war:

- (1) Those who survive would be happy to find others who had similarly survived and would embrace and comfort one another expressing sheer joy that they were alive.

- (2) The recognition that evil ways had led them to the destruction of their kith and kin, would make humans abstain from taking life. As a result their life span and physical beauty would increase.
- (3) The realization of the good results of changing their ways, humans would abstain from stealing, adultery, evil, abusive and idle talk, covetousness, ill-will, false views and perverted desires. They would also respect parents, holy persons and elders.
- (4) Humans would morally progress and there would be only three kinds of diseases – desire, hunger and old age.

The Utopian result of moral regeneration of humans is described in this Sutta as follows:

The world will be powerful and prosperous. Villages, towns and royal cities would be so close that a cock would fly from housetop to housetop. (D.26)

The overall message of these three Suttas is that the Path to Peace, Security and Prosperity in the world here and now is twofold:

- (1) **Eradication of poverty through such measures as ensuring equitable distribution of goods (i.e. wealth and services), subsidizing agriculture, providing capital to businesses and paying living salaries to public employees; and**
- (2) **Introduction moral values based on sanctity of life and property, sexual purity, right speech, respect to parents, elders and holy persons and the practice of loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity.**

The Buddha and War

The Buddha, as a prominent opinion-maker of his times, did have observations to make on the current state of war and peace. It is with regard to the conflict between king Pasenadi of Kosala and king Ajātasattu of Magadha that the Buddha said,

Victory breeds hatred (*jayam veram pasavati*).

The defeated lives unhappily.

The peaceful (*upasanto*) sleeps happily

Abandoning both victory and defeat (*hītvā jayaparājayam*) (Dp. 201)

To the Buddha, there was no happiness beyond Peace (*natthi santiparam sukham*) – a statement which is equally applicable to the spiritual goal of Nibbāna and to the worldly objective of freedom from conflict, war, violence and insecurity.

The Buddha saw war, too, like all other forms of violence, as a product of sense-pleasure or sensuous craving. In *Mahādukkhakkhandha-sutta* of *Majjhimanikāya* (M. 13), his familiarity with the details of an armed conflict in operation is indicative of warring times:

“having taken sword and shield, having girded on bow and quiver, both sides mass for battle and arrows are hurled and knives are hurled and swords are flashing. These who wound with arrows and wound with knives and decapitate with their swords, these suffer dying then and pain like unto dying.”

“having taken sword and shield, having girded on bow and quiver, they leap on to the newly daubed ramparts, and arrows are hurled and knives are hurled and swords are flashing. Those who wound with arrows and wound with knives and pour boiling cow-dung over them and crush them with the (falling) portcullis and decapitate them with their swords, these suffer dying then and pain like unto dying.(Tr. I. B. Horner)

Apparently, war, too, like quarrels and disunity was caused on account of slander and calumny. *Brahmajālasutta* of Dīghanikāya (D. 1) speaks of a person who avoids these forms of speech a **peacemaker** and lover of peace:

“Putting away slander, he holds himself aloof from calumny. What he hears here he repeats not elsewhere to raise a quarrel against the people here; what he hears elsewhere he repeats not here to raise a quarrel against the people there. **Thus does he live as a binder together of those who are divided, an encourager of those who are friends, a peacemaker, a lover of peace, impassioned for peace, a speaker of words that make for peace.**” (Tr. Rhys Davids)

Thus, the Buddha’s answer to war is moral transformation according to Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood, figuratively presented as “conquest of self.” It was in such a context that occupations like military service, and sale of humans, poisonous materials and weapons were declared undesirable forms of livelihood. But the Buddha was a realist. He knew that social change on a wider frame than spiritual development subscribed to Peace and Security. The following incident testifies to the Buddha’s wider vision:

As king Ajātasattu was fortifying the capital city of Pāṭaliputta with the intension of annexing the Vajjian Confederacy to the expanding Magadhan empire, he sent his Brahman chief minister, Vassakāra to the Buddha to find out indirectly whether, in the Buddha’s opinion, the Vajjians could be defeated in battle. The Buddha had taught the Vajjian leaders, the Licchavis, at Sāranda Cetiya seven principles for avoiding decline (*sattāparihāṇīyadhamma*):

1. Meet frequently in harmony, discuss in harmony and disperse in harmony. (That is, *participate fully in public life and affairs, observe the democratic principles of consensus, and preserve harmony in spite of differences*);
2. Introduce no revolutionary laws, do not break the established law, and abide by the old-time norm (That is, *to make a balance between the tradition and the modern, and make changes slowly and cautiously and not drastically*);
3. Honor, reverence, esteem and worship the elders and deem them worthy of listening to. (That is, *recognize the value and relevance of trans-generational wisdom*);
4. Safeguard the women-folk from force, abduction and harassment. (That is, *recognize the importance of women and their need for protection*);
5. Honor, revere, esteem and worship both inner and outer shrines. (That is, *protect the cultural and spiritual heritage*);
6. Perform without neglecting the customary offerings. (That is, *safeguard the practice of religion*); and

7. So assure that saints have access to one's territory and having entered dwell there pleasantly. (That is, *be open to all religions and spiritual influences in a spirit of tolerance*). (D. 16 - Guruge 2002, p.84: In italics is my interpretation of the seven principles in modern terms)

The Buddha's position was that if the Licchavis followed these seven principles they would be invincible. But as *Dighanikāya* (III, 96) and *Anguttaranikaya* (I, 228 and III, 239) record they had not done so. The young men were said to be fond of archery and went hunting with hounds. One of the elders complained to the Buddha, "The Licchavi youth are quick tempered, rough and greedy fellows; such presents as are sent by the members of their tribe – sugar-cane, jujubes, sweet cakes, sweetmeats etc. – they loot and eat; they slap the women and girls of their tribe on the back." (Malalasekera: DPPN p. 780). Apparently due to this laxity, Vassakāra could undertake a covert campaign of bringing disunity among Licchavis so that they would not respond to summons for meetings. King Ajātasattu was then successful in battle and the Vajjian Confederacy was conquered. How the Buddha reacted to their defeat is not recorded. The repetition of this account in several different parts of the Pali Canon, however, gives the impression that their defeat was due to their neglect of the seven principles, which spell out the Buddha's formula for Peace, Security and Prosperity of a nation. (D II, 73 f; A. IV, 15).

As regards the massacre of Sākyas by Viḍūḍhabha, the son of king Pasenadi Kosala, the Buddhist tradition records that the Buddha dissuaded Viḍūḍhabha twice by sitting under a tree with little shade and telling him, "The shade of my kinsmen keeps me cool." On the third march against the Sākyas, the Buddha had not been there, and hence Viḍūḍhabha killed most of the Sākyas. The Buddha's non-intervention on the third occasion is explained in the *Dhammapada* and *Udāna* commentaries as resulting from their past evil action of poisoning a river, which could not be averted. The same literature, however, claims that Viḍūḍhabha's victory was short-lived as on his return he and his army met death in a flash flood. (Malalasekera: DPPN pp. 876-877)

As opposed to these two incidents in which the Buddha had not actively intervened to secure Peace, he played a decisive role in the war between his paternal and maternal relatives, the Sākyas and the Koliyas. A war was imminent on the issue of war of river Rohiṇi. The Buddha, according to the preamble to *Kuṇāla Jātaka* and the commentaries, arrived between the two armies and asked them the question: "Which is of more priceless value – water or Kṣatriya chiefs?" He preached to them and convinced them of the folly of war and violence. Contents of his discourse on the occasion are recorded as the *Attadaṇḍasutta* of *Suttanipāta* and a number of Jātakas, which deal with the themes of the dangers of revenge, resolution of conflict and self-control (Malalasekera: DPPN p. 971).

Many *Jātakas* deal with the virtue of forbearance, tolerance, forgiving and nonviolence. Among them, one of the longest Jātakas, namely *Mahā-ummaggajātaka* is a remarkable work on statecraft, in general, and mechanics of war and empire building, court intrigue, role of diplomacy and strategy, and establishing lasting peace through negotiated conflict resolution, in particular. The vizier whose ingenuity helped to save his own king and kingdom and brought about the final resolution of the dispute is held out as a paragon of wisdom. (*Jātaka* No. 546)

In later Buddhist literature in Pali occurs frequently a list of ten traditional duties of a ruler (Dasa-rāja-dhamma). They are

- i. Giving alms,
- ii. Virtuous life or morality,
- iii. Liberality or more specifically self-sacrifice,
- iv. Straightness or honesty,
- v. Gentleness,
- vi. Self-control (lit. asceticism or abstemious lifestyle),
- vii. Non-anger or pleasant temperament,
- viii. Nonviolence,
- ix. Forbearance,
- x. Non-opposition (Jātaka, I, 260, 399; II, 400).

The Buddhist list is significant when compared with the lists of qualities required of kings in Brahmanical and Hindu statements, for, as Wijesekera points out, *Ahimsā* or nonviolence is conspicuous by its absence in them (Wijesekera: *Ibid.*).

A further list of three things to be avoided by a ruler consists of falsehood, anger and derisive laughter (*Jātaka* V, 120). In the autocratic monarchies, war and punishment were entirely in the hands of kings. In both they could be harsh and violent. In *Mahādukkhakkhandasutta* (M 13), how robbers were punished is described as follows:

Kings, having arrested such a robber, deal out various punishments: they lash him with whips and they lash him with canes and they lash him with (birch) rods, and they cut off his hand ... his foot ... his hand and foot ... his ear ... his nose and they cut off his ear and nose, and they give him the 'gruel-pot' punishment ... the 'shell-tonsure' punishment ... 'Rāhu's mouth,' ... the 'fire-garland' ... the 'flaming hand' ... the 'hay-twist' ... the 'bark-dress' ... the 'antelope' ... 'flesh-hooking' ... the 'disc-slice' ... the 'pickling process' ... 'circling the pin,' and they give him the 'straw mattress,' and they spray him with boiling oil, give him as food to the dogs, impale him alive on stakes and decapitate him with a sword.

The very fact that gruesome forms of torture had names to identify them testifies to their prevalence. In South Asian tradition and folklore are mentioned as many as thirty-two forms of torture including burying a person up to the neck and getting an elephant to trample the head, rolling down a mountain in a barrel lined inside with spikes, and drowning. These were the penalties imposed by kings to offenders.

Hence later Buddhist literature continued to highlight desirable qualities of kings over and beyond the ten traditional duties and the three things to be avoided. Analyzing the Mahāyāna texts of India along with their Chinese translations, Hajime Nakamura observes:

Buddhist political and economic theories are ordered and amplified by Mahāyāna Buddhism which acted in a political situation in which various major or minor kingdoms existed. In those days subjects could dethrone bad kings. Kings should carry on their rule based on the ideal of dharma. **The principal virtue of the king should be clemency, towards both men and other living beings. Kings should be compassionate with their subjects.** His duties are to assure the peace of the country against enemies by military force, to increase

national production, to assure social peace, and to spread education. Various political, economical and social policies are set forth. Aryadeva asserted that the prestige and authority of the king was nothing but fictional Poverty should be driven away. Not all vocations were admitted as proper, as in early Buddhism. Cattle-raising and dealing of slaves and wine were forbidden.

With regard to political economy, early Buddhism occupied itself little with the problem of production, whereas, in Mahāyāna, the king was very broadly ordered to increase production, and take care of the necessities of the country in case of calamity. The king should distribute his treasures to those who need them in order to make his subjects happy. This could increase the income of the king. In this way, a concept of redistributive finance was introduced.

Buddhism affronts the problem of using civil force. Its goal is to protect the needy and to maintain tranquility in the country. **But to do this one must punish the guilty. How can this use of violence be justified? What is the goal of penalties? It is to correct the guilty one and put him on the right way. For this reason there should be clemency in the application of penalty. Punishment should be lenient. Death penalty was forbidden, as were other penalties, which hurt the limbs of the condemned.**

The highest ideal is still that of peace. But the king has the duty of protecting his subjects, and if attacked, he should throw back invaders; war is always a sin, but defensive war was more than permitted although a pacifistic attitude should be maintained insofar as it is possible.

The king should be most diligent in administering the state; his private life, too, must be a mirror of virtue, and, above all, he was advised to stay away from sensual enjoyments with women. He should also be assisted by good functionaries chosen and promoted according to merit. Buddhist political thought was ideologically conservative. The Buddhist ideal of the state was characterized by an ideological conservatism so strong that one could even state that what is ancient is good. But it was virtually progressive, based upon the idealistic attitude of their religion.

The goal of the state is to conduct its subjects to salvation. If the king administers the state according to divine law, he will draw down on it the divine benediction, and the state will flourish. Thus he will bring about his happiness and that of his subjects, and after his death, he will enter heaven. (Hajime Nakamura, 1980/87 p. 291 ff. Emphasis mine).

The Mahāyāna text, the *Suvarṇaprabhāṣottamasūtra*, dated by William Theodore de Bary in the third or fourth century CE, has the following as the Buddha's injunction to the four world-protecting gods:

Protect all those royal families, cities, lands, and provinces, save them, cherish them, guard them, ward off invasion from them, **give them peace and prosperity.** Keep them free from all fear, calamity, and evil portent. Turn back the troops of their enemies and **create in all the earthly kings of India a desire to avoid fighting, attacking, quarreling, or disputing with their neighbors ...** When the eighty-four thousand kings of the eighty-four thousand cities of India are **contented with their own territories and with their own kingly state and their own hoards of treasure, they will not attack one another or raise mutual strife.** They will gain their thrones by the due accumulation of the merit of former deeds; **they will be satisfied with their own kingly state, and will not**

destroy one another, nor show their mettle by laying waste whole provinces. When all the eighty-four thousand kings of the eighty-four thousand capital cities of India think of their mutual welfare and feel mutual affection and joy ... contented in their own domains ... **India will be prosperous, well-fed, pleasant, and populous.** The earth will be fertile, and the months and seasons and years will all occur at the proper time. Planets and stars, moon and sun, will duly bring on the days and nights. **Rain will fall upon earth at the proper time. And all living beings in India will be rich with all manner of riches and corn, very prosperous but not greedy.** (de Bary 1972 pp. 105-106. Emphasis mine).

The same text elaborates the ideas in the last paragraph into a substantial poem on how righteousness or otherwise of a king affects his kingdom and the people thereof. It is, however, not attributed to the Buddha but to Mahābrahmā of the Hindu Trinity. The ideal king, according to it, is a *Devaputra* – the Son of Gods, a designation, which was applied to kings of the Kushan Dynasty who were promoters of Mahāyana Buddhism. The following quotes are meant to highlight its basic line of thought expressed in this sutra.

How does a king, who is born of men, come to be called divine?
Why is a king called the Son of the Gods?
If a king is born in this world of mortals,
How can it be that a god rules over men?
I will tell you of the origin of kings, who are born in the world of mortals,

.....
First he is ordained by the gods – only then does he find an embryo.

.....
The ruler of men is created as son of all the gods,
To put a stop to unrighteousness, to prevent evil deeds,
To establish all beings in well-doing, and to show them the way to heaven.
Whether man, or god, or fairy, or demon,
Or outcaste, he is a true king who prevents evil deeds.
Such a king is mother and father to those who do good.

.....
But when a king disregards the evil done in his kingdom,
And does not inflict just punishment on the criminal,
From his neglect or evil, unrighteousness grows apace,
And fraud and strife increase in the land.

The thirty-three great gods grow angry in their palaces
When the king disregards the evil done in his kingdom.

Then the land is afflicted with fierce and terrible crime,
And it perishes and falls into the power of the enemy.
Then property, families, and hoarded wealth all vanish,
And with varied deeds of deceit men ruin one another.

Whatever his reasons, if a king does not do his duty
He ruins his kingdom, as a great elephant a bed of lotuses.

Harsh winds blow, and rain falls out of season,
Planets and stars are unpropitious, as are the moon and sun,
Corn, flowers, and fruit and seed do not ripen properly,
And there is famine, when the king is negligent . . .

Then all the kings of the gods say one to another,
“This king is unrighteous, he has taken the side of unrighteousness!”

Such a king will not for long anger the gods;
From the wrath of the gods his kingdom will perish

He will be bereft of all that he values, whether by brother or son,
He will be parted from his beloved wife, his daughter will die.
Fire will fall from heaven, and mock-suns also.
Fear of the enemy and hunger will grow apace.
His beloved counselor will die, and his favorite elephant;
His favorite horses will die one by one, and his camels . . .

**There will be strife and violence and fraud in all the provinces;
Calamity will afflict the land, and terrible plague.**

The brāhmins will then be unrighteous,
The ministers and the judges unrighteous.

The unrighteous will be revered,
And the righteous man will be chastised
Where the wicked are honored and the good are scorned
There will be famine, thunderbolts, and death . . .
All living beings will be ugly, having little vigor, very weak;
They will eat much, but they will not be filled.
They will have no strength, and no virility –
All beings in the land will be lacking in vigor

Many ills such as these befall the land
Whose king is partial [in justice] and disregards evil deeds

**But he who distinguishes good deeds from evil,
Who shows the results of karma – he is called a king.
Ordained by the host of gods, the gods delight in him
For the sake of himself or others, to preserve the righteousness of his land,
And to put down the rogues and criminals in his domains,
Such a king would give up [if need be] his life and his kingdom. . . .**

**Therefore a king should abandon his own precious life,
But not the jewel of Righteousness, whereby the world is gladdened.**
(de Bary, 1972 pp. 106-108)

The impact of these ideas on current Buddhist concepts of rulership and government is evident in the graphic portrayal of what happens to a nation when the ruler is unjust and unrighteous in the Thai work, *Tribhūmikathā* (Reynolds and Mai, 1982) and the usual benediction in Southern Buddhism, uttered practically at every religious and even social ceremony: “May it rain in time causing plentiful harvest. May the people be prosperous and the ruler righteous (**rājā hotu dhammiko**).

Aśoka the Righteous as the Buddhist Role Model of Kingship

The life and career of the third emperor of the Mauryan Dynasty, Aśoka the Righteous (circa 269-228 BCE), had served as a model of ideal kingship and is frequently invoked even in current times as an example to be emulated by leaders and governments. Aśoka was a typical warrior king of the Indian tradition. When his father died, he wrested the throne from the rightful heir, his elder brother, and waged a four-year war of succession. In it he had killed as many as ninety-nine of his half-brothers, according to Southern Buddhist sources, and a vast horde of enemies, according to

Mahāyana sources. He was known for his violence as Aśoka the Wicked (*Caṇḍāsoka*). With his consecration he assumed the royal obligation of tending to Brahmans and all recluses without exception. Eventually he came in contact with the Buddhist Sangha and embraced Buddhism as his personal religion. Southern Buddhist sources date his conversion in the fourth regnal year. Yet, it did not prevent him from exercising the traditional royal duty of annexing an unconquered frontier region in Kālinga during the ninth regnal year. But, as all Asokan scholars now agree, his exposure to Buddhism fashioned his reaction to the havoc of war. He says in Rock Edict XIII,

By King Devānampriya Priyadarśi who was consecrated for eight years, Kālinga was conquered. One hundred and fifty thousand in number were deported from there. About a hundred thousand were slain there. Many times that number perished. Hereafter, now that Kālinga was annexed, Devānampriya's observance of Dharma, love of Dharma and propagation of Dharma became ardent. There is this remorse in Devānampriya that he conquered Kālinga.

When an unconquered region is being conquered, the killings, the deaths and the deportations which it entails to the people are now gravely regarded by Devānampriya and considered excessively painful.

This, too, is further a graver concern of Devānampriya: that is, there live Brahmans or recluses or the laity of other religious persuasions, who are well-established in

obedience to superiors;
obedience to mother and father;
obedience to elders; and
good conduct and firm devotion to friends, acquaintances, companions,
relatives, slaves and servants;

and injury, or slaughter or deportation of loved ones occurs to them. Even if they are well-placed, when their friends, acquaintances or relatives, for whom their love is unceasing, encounter misfortune, that, too, is an injury to themselves. This is the fate of all men and it is a grave concern of Devānampriya

There is really none who is not devoted to a religion. Therefore, today, one hundredth or one thousandth of the slaughtered, the dead and the deported in Kālinga would be a grave concern of Devānampriya. (Guruge 1993-1 p. 567-568)

It is this remorse, which impelled him to change his military policy of conquest by weapons to conquest by righteousness. The term he coined for this policy was "*Dharmavijaya*."

Asoka evolved his own Dharma which he propagated through the entire administrative machinery of state as well as through messengers or *dūtas*. These *dūtas* are said to have gone as far as Greece, Syria and Egypt to a distance of nearly four thousand miles from the imperial capital. His Dharma was a simple code of ethics, which was multi-sectarian in character. As far as the theme under discussion in this paper was concerned, it consisted of such aspects as

- Non-injury of all living beings and show of mercy to them (Minor Rock Edicts I, II, IV, Rock Edict I, XIII);
- Protection fully and partially of endangered species (Pillar Edict V);

- Interfaith tolerance, understanding, appreciation and cooperation (Rock Edict XII);
- Impartiality in the administration of justice (Rock Edict XV, XVI);
- Abolition of war by turning war drums to the sound of Dharma (Rock Edict IV);
- Decree to sons and their descendants to avoid of wars with weapons in favor of Conquest by Righteousness (Rock Edict XIII)
- Order in the same decree that in the event of being unable to avoid a war with weapons to be forgiving toward the enemy and to resort only to light punishment (*daṇḍalahutā*) (Rock Edict XIII).

In spite of such a policy, Aśoka had not abolished capital punishment: he warned the rebels in frontier regions in Rock Edict XIII to submit to authority to escape execution (Guruge 1997-2 pp. 258-275) and allowed a respite of three days to prisoners, who were given the death sentence, to appeal, to repent or to seek spiritual solace (Rock Edicts XV and XVI). There is also no evidence that the army was disbanded. The Sanskrit Avādanas and their Chinese translations and adaptations record four instances of Aśoka's violent behavior – two before he became a Buddhist and two after. These are not found in South Buddhist sources. Two attributed to him after his embracing Buddhism need comment: One is that his second queen was burned to death as punishment for blinding his son who is said to have spurned her sexual advances. The other is an ultra-fanatical step of having put a price on the heads of all Jaina monks on ground that one of them had desecrated a Buddha image. While the possibility did exist that a criminal was sentenced to death, the entire episode is too fanciful to be accepted as reliable history. Tisyarakṣitā or Tissarakkhā was Asoka's queen during the last four years of his life and the only offence of hers on which all sources agree is the destruction or attempted destruction of the Bodhi-tree. As regards the massacre of Jaina monks, such fanatical action is totally at variance with Asoka's declared policy of interfaith amity of Rock Edict XII and neither the Buddha image nor the currency call Dīnar was even known to exist at the time of Aśoka.

Aśoka's Conquest by Righteousness (*Dharmavijaya*) was evaluated by him in his twenty-eighth regnal year in Pillar Edict VII and he was very pleased with its results. It had to be so as he ruled over the largest empire ever to exist in the Indian subcontinent until his natural death in the regnal year thirty-eight – that is a reign of twenty-nine years without war.

Aśoka was a role model for kings of South and Southeast Asia, where he was widely remembered and spoken of. But that was more on account of his patronage to Buddhism than on his achievements as regards Peace and Nonviolence. In Myanmar, king Dhammazedi (1476-1496) took Asoka as his exemplar in virtuous conduct. In Sri Lanka, Aśoka's influence has lasted twenty-three centuries and as late as the seventeenth century, a ruler bolstered his claim to power on grounds of being a descendant of Aśoka's kinsmen. In China, too, where Aśoka was a particularly admired patron of Buddhism during the hey day of Buddhism in the fifth century CE, Emperor Liang Wu-di (502-549) claimed to emulate him. Since more is known of Aśoka – especially through the decipherment, the translation and the publication of his inscriptions - he is held up not only by Buddhists but others, too, as a man of Peace, who is worthy of emulation. (Guruge 1993-1 pp. 513ff.)

War and Violence in Traditionally Buddhist Countries

Buddhism, as a religion, has a unique reputation among world religions. It had not resorted to violence for its propagation; nor in its defense when persecuted. Proselytization through force or coercion has played no part in the spread of Buddhism. On the contrary, with special attention to the Buddha's own precept and example, Buddhism has allowed the spiritual and religious beliefs and practices – e.g. worship of Hindu Gods in South and South-east Asia, spirits like Nats in Myanmar, Phi in Thailand, “devils” and demons and exorcisms in Sri Lanka, Kamis and Shintoism of Japan, Shamanism in Tibet and Mongolia, Daoism and Confucianism in China, Bon religion in Tibet – not only to survive but also continue to be an integral part of religious practice to this day. In Asia, when Islam was persecuted by the Portuguese and the Spanish, and the Dutch in turn persecuted Islam and Roman Catholicism, the Buddhist rulers had offered sanctuary to the oppressed parties and enabled them to practice their religions in Peace and Security. It is thus that traditionally Buddhist countries, in general, have a substantial representation of at least Christianity and Islam, which, nevertheless, have been actively engaged in proselytization.

There have been no wars in the name of Buddhism, designed and executed with a policy of expanding political or social power-base or a religious establishment. It was never a handmaid of imperialistic colonization. No war or violence has been in any way connected with the rise and development of Buddhist traditions, schools and sects. In spite of Peter Harvey's statement that Buddhist sects sometimes have fought each other (Harvey 1990/91 p. 202), his chapter 7 furnishes little evidence of such conflicts other than some instances from Japan like the hostile attitude which Nichiren took against traditional schools of Buddhism which existed at the time and the so-called “military monasteries” of Tendai and Shin schools during the Shogunate. (Ibid. 166-168) One often adduces as further evidence of violence within Buddhist circles some of the unproven or exaggerated statements of East Asian martial arts enthusiasts who claim, *inter alia*, that Bodhidharma transmitted Indian (?Buddhist) martial arts to China, that monastics of Shaolin monastery preserved and promoted them in defense of person and property, that Bodhisattavas could be characterized as warriors or that Zen meditation techniques formed the basis of the military training of Samurai. Santucci, apparently, had the same examples and perhaps also the aggressive *Shakubuku* approach to conversion adopted by a Japanese lay movement in recent years, when he says, “Not all Buddhists hold to the teaching of nonviolence.” (Hubbard et al: 1997 p.12).

As far as it can be gleaned from history, Buddhism has not been used as an excuse for violence other than in a single isolated case. It is recorded in the Sri Lankan Chronicle, *Mahāvamsa* of the sixth century CE pertaining to king Duṭṭhagāmiṇi of the second century BCE. It is said that the king explained his military operation to oust Eḷāra, a South Indian invader, from the throne in following terms, “This effort of mine is not for the joy of sovereignty; it is for the establishment of the Faith of the Buddha for ever.” (MV XXV, 16-18 Guruge 1989). Duṭṭhagāmiṇi killed the invader in single combat. The Chronicle presents the king as not only giving the dead adversary a fitting funeral but also ordaining that the tomb be treated with customary respect: e.g. processions to stop music and those riding vehicles to walk on foot while passing the tomb. Further the king is said to have been inconsolable in his remorse that he caused the death of myriads in battle. It is here that the Chronicle records an incredibly

discordant note to the effect that some monks justified the killings on the ground that only one person was observing the five precepts and only one other person had taken refuge in the Triple Gem in addition and the rest were heretical and evil and no better than animals (Ibid 109-111). This apocryphal statement has been received with shock and disbelief by those who see its flagrant inconsistency with the fundamental doctrine of loving kindness, which Buddhism upholds. I have rejected it as a misinterpretation of Buddhism by a misguided person. (Guruge 1982/1991 p 73; Paranavitana: UCHC p. 162). Interestingly, the Chapter of the *Mahāvamsa*, where this account occurs, ends with the following concluding verse, which correctly reflects the Buddhist reaction to violence:

**If one were here to think of and bear in mind well the many
myriads of human beings murdered for greed and the evil consequences
thereof** and also bear in mind very carefully that impermanence is the murderer of all, one will before long attain thus the liberation from suffering or else an auspicious existence. (Ibid 116).

What this verse shows is that the author of the Chronicle discounted the story of monks justifying killing and highlighted that greed is more the motive and it has evil consequences. This view has apparently prevailed and nowhere else in the vast Buddhist literature of Sri Lanka is war explained, glorified or justified on grounds of religion.

The *Mahāvamsa* records a more likely event when a war was actually averted. The destruction of the Great Monastery of Anuradhapura by king Mahasena in the third century CE was resisted by the people. The king's own minister, Meghavaṇṇābhaya declared war on the king and the armies were arrayed for battle next morning. The dinner served to the minister had a dish, which was the king's favorite. So, in spite of possible danger to himself, the minister took his dinner hamper, crossed the battlefield and shared the dinner with the king. Here they discussed the reasons for war and the discussion led to the end of hostilities. The king proceeded on a program of restitution. (Ibid. XXXVII 17-45)

While no wars have been fought in the name of Buddhism or motivated by Buddhist interest and neither violence nor coercion has been used in the spread and promotion of Buddhism, the traditionally Buddhist countries of Asia have had their share of war and violence. The Sri Lankan Chronicles record wars of defense against South Indian invasions, many internecine wars of succession (most of them employing *Velaikkaras* – or South Indian mercenary soldiers), and a few wars of aggression in South India and even Myanmar. The Chroniclers did not fail to record violent political incidents with massacre and torture while denouncing them on ethical considerations and even assessing the reigns of invaders objectively as righteous and just. In Southeast Asia, rulers professing to be Buddhists have fought many wars for territorial expansion and economic reasons. Myanmar-Thai border wars lasted several generations until a Crown Prince of Thailand settled the problem by engaging the king of Burma in one-to-one combat and disposed of him. Histories of Thailand, Cambodia and Laos similarly had many wars of both defense and aggression with their neighbors. So full of wars and rebellion is the history of East Asian countries where, too, Buddhism flourished. But none of them was religious in nature and nor was Buddhism a reason for war even remotely.

Where a Chinese ruler is said to have waged war with another ruler with the idea of getting Kumārajīva to his court, the reason was not that Kumārajīva was the Buddhist translator *par excellence* but the belligerent ruler was under the belief that Kumārajīva had supernatural magic powers. Even when Buddhism had gone through periods of persecution, Buddhist retaliation through armed opposition has been very rare such as in Korea in 1592 when “a leading Buddhist monk raised an army of 5000 to withstand a Japanese invasion.” (Harvey 1990/91, p. 202) Though Buddhism *per se* had not been the cause or promoter of war, a major question does present itself. Why didn't or couldn't Buddhism prevent these incidents of war and violence?

The question can be posed more emphatically today, too. The recent decades have been marred by war and violence in the traditionally Buddhist countries of Asia. Apart from World War II in which Japan was deeply involved both as an aggressor and as a victim of severe reprisals, the occurrence of violence and armed conflict has been widespread. Ideological conflicts led to internal strife in China, including the problem in Tibet, and in Indochinese nations of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. Vietnam War with US involvement was a similar catastrophe. Thailand had to curb its Communist insurgents and Sri Lanka has become engulfed in a civil war initiated by separatist groups, armed, trained and planted by neighboring India during an earlier regime. A resulting ethnic disturbance of 1983 had prompted Harvey to say, “Buddhists are not immune from letting communalism make them forget some of their principles.” (Ibid. p. 202) Myanmar had seen no peace ever since its independence and has to succumb to rule by a military junta; a democratically elected head of state awaits an uncertain future. Even the Buddhist minority of Bangladesh hill tracts is currently facing violence. Why haven't the Buddhist wisdom and values been successful in preventing violence and restoring Peace? Is Buddhism capable of guaranteeing Nonviolence and Peace to any appreciable degree?

One may answer this last question in the affirmative. When compared with the rest of the world (and especially Europe), the number of victims of war and violence of Asia where over two thirds of humanity lives has been relatively small. This is in spite of the fact that major upheavals of recent times were created and nurtured by an ideological force, which denigrated religion as opium of the masses and promoted irreligion. Particularly important to note is the impact of religion on the so-called civil war of Sri Lanka. Although the journalistic shorthand of the Western news media often portrays it as a conflict between Buddhists and Hindus, it is not a war motivated by religion on either side. It is, however, true that the terrorist forces did try to make it a religious war by a series of dastardly acts: the massacre of Buddhist nuns and devotees meditating at the sacred Bodhi tree; the murder of a busload of novices (*sāmaneras*) on their way for higher ordination; and the bomb explosion at the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic in Kandy. The Buddhists of Sri Lanka have reacted with patience and left the situation to be set right by the government as a matter of law and order and due process. It is equally an evidence of the impact of Buddhist tolerance and compassion that the majority of the Tamil population lives and works peacefully in the Buddhist majority areas despite the struggle of separatists. People of diverse ethnic and religious groups co-exist amicably with the fullest freedom of worship in Buddhist communities of Asia.

In all traditionally Buddhist countries emerging from serious breaches of peace and onslaught of violence, one hears heartening anecdotes of individual

Buddhists who have imperiled themselves at times of civil disturbance to save their neighbors from danger without discrimination of creed or ethnicity. It is the prevalence of such incidents, which gives one the confidence to seek in Buddhism solutions for Peace, Security and Prosperity for humanity.

Buddhist Approach to Securing Peace

When Professor Gunapala Malalasekera founded the World Fellowship of Buddhists in 1950, one of its objectives was stated as working **“for securing peace and harmony among men and happiness for all beings and to collaborate with organizations working for the same ends.”** At the very first session of the Fellowship in Sri Lanka, a resolution was adopted as follows:

“That in order to secure perpetual peace in the world, this Conference urges upon all nations of the world the strict observance of the following principles:

- 1. To do unto others as you would wish others to do unto you;**
- 2. To remove unjust cravings;**
- 3. To practice *mettā, karunā, muditā, and upekkhā* [loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity]**
- 4. To observe *hiri-ottappa* [moral shame and moral dread].”**

In December 1988, in my keynote address at Hsi Lai Temple at Hacienda Heights, California, USA, on the subject of “Buddhist Unity and World Peace: the Role of the World Fellowship of Buddhists,” I reviewed the action taken to implement this and other related resolutions. My comments then were as follows:

One might call it naive to expect that a resolution of this nature could ensure perpetual world peace. But we were in 1950, when a world war had just ended, foreign domination and colonialism were on the decline, and brave new nations were entering into an era of optimism and hope. Being amply convinced of the efficacy of the serene teachings of the Buddha in transforming human behavior, we were confident that we had in the Buddha Dhamma a panacea against all ills in the world.

Even today, one may not dispute the statement that a commitment by all nations to the letter and spirit of this resolution could secure lasting peace for humanity. But one might ask how such a commitment could be ensured and what the WFB had designed as concrete measures to urge all nations to observe strictly the lofty principles enunciated in the resolution.

The last two decades, in particular, presented us with many opportunities to enter into active campaigns for the promotion of peace and security. War with all its attendant catastrophes began to visit once-peaceful countries where Buddhism had for centuries been a living spiritual force. War and violence in traditionally Buddhist countries could give us ample opportunities to appraise what had gone wrong with Buddhism as preached and practiced in different communities. But once again, our notion that we were a Fellowship and not an organization for international action seems to have come in the way of effective action.

The WFB has eschewed controversy and steered clear of hard choices. We have yet to raise our voice in condemnation of aggressors *per se* even if our position is clear on aggression. I am, however, not aware of any firm steps which

we have taken to denounce the arms race and favor disarmament in the world arenas other than a reference in the preamble of Resolution No. 44/19 GC 3/2479 to “the fearful condition prevalent in the world today of obnoxious tendencies for the perfection of instruments of destruction.” Equally conspicuous by its absence is a WFB position on the most disturbing phenomenon of the interaction between arms sales and drug abuse. It may also be asked whether we are actively working in collaboration with international organizations dedicated to peace issues.

Our resolutions have been few and far apart and smack of pious hopes. We did make a long and stirring declaration in Resolution No. 5/1/GC/2/2495 in 1952; but our main recommendation was that (a) adherence to Buddhist principles guarantees “peace for eternity and for the universe” and (b) peace and harmony are to be realized through cultural efforts of free individuals. Later in Resolution No. 76/11/GC5/2501, we urged the promotion of meditation on the premise that “peace can originate only in minds that are pure.” In 1969, Resolution No. 135/5/GC9/2512, on more or less the same lines as Resolution No. 96/11/GC6/2504, appealed “to all governments and United Nations to exert themselves more effectively to facilitate the peaceful solution of disputes between nations.” Moving though inconclusively to some action, the thirteenth General Conference in 1980, in Resolution No. 213/10GC13/2523, “desiring to eliminate war, reduce conflict and further the cause of world peace” urged Regional Centres to (a) improve their contacts with peace-loving religious and non-religious bodies: (b) undertake exchange of cultural groups, and (c) send monks as teachers to communities where monks were in short supply. The nagging question has always been: **Is this all that the premier international forum of Buddhists can do to promote peace in the world?** (Guruge 1993-2 pp. 99/101)

My question was not one of criticism but an appeal for the exploration of a wider role. The World Fellowship of Buddhists continued to pursue its objective of securing peace by appealing to good sense and active pursuit of virtue. It went further by offering to serve as an active mediator in conflict resolution. It offered its services to traditionally Buddhist countries in negotiating for peace. But, as far as I am aware, the services, which the Fellowship offered, had not been availed of. At every session of the Fellowship, concern is expressed on the situation of crime, armed conflict and violence in the world. The standing committees and regional centers develop their plans of activities with this issue as a major concern.

Other global, regional, and national Buddhist organizations pursue similar objectives. Among them are the World Sangha Council, World Fellowship of Buddhist Youth, World Fellowship of Buddhist Women, European Buddhist Union and pan-world Buddhist congregations like the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Order, Linh-Son Buddhist Congregation, and national Buddhist organizations throughout the world like the Japanese Buddhist Federation.

His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama has become a rallying point for activists for world peace through Buddhist principles. International parleys are frequently convened and increasingly the Buddhist involvement in interfaith activities in favor of Peace and Nonviolence has enhanced the appreciation of the Buddhist contribution to Peace. I have had the opportunity to speak on many such occasions in various parts of the world. (Guruge 1996, 2000-1, 2000-2). Books have been published to highlight the Buddhist contribution to world peace (Weerasinghe 1992; Nichidatsu Fujii 1980 Walpola Rahula, Joanna Macy and Dalai Lama in Gottlieb et al

2003). Yet, much needs to be done and the Buddhist communities and organizations have to be continually conscious of their responsibility to play a more active role in both conflict prevention and resolution.

The following is, however, proof of the more readily accepted view that Buddhism is a religion of peace, nonviolence, tolerance, loving kindness and compassion: whenever a professed Buddhist (whether monastic or lay) anywhere in the world even vaguely suggests any solution to armed conflict other than through negotiated peace, on such grounds as territorial and national rights and communal interests, such statements are received by the wider Buddhist community with shock and disbelief and justifiable condemnation.

Buddhist organizations as well as individual scholars and activists have found an effective and useful role in interfaith peace initiatives. The Buddhist attitude to other religions is noted with interest especially as it is in no competition with others either for converts or for recognition as the only path to salvation. It has been possible, therefore, for Buddhist participants in interfaith dialogue and cooperation to urge for the separation of strictly religious issues from economic, political and social problems, which for the most part contribute to conflict in today's world. Increasing international involvement of Buddhists in interfaith activities for peace is an indication of the validity of the Buddhist position.

Humanistic Buddhism on Equality and Peace

Adding his voice to the world-wide Buddhist campaign for Peace, Security and Prosperity, Venerable Grand Master Hsing Yun addressed the Fifth Annual Conference of BLIA (Buddha's Light International Association), held in Paris, France on August 4, 1996. He began his analysis of the current situation with the following statement:

Lasting peace has been the dream of civilizations throughout human history. In this violent and troubled century with so much war and fear, the dream of forging a lasting peace in the world has grown even more desperate. Our tragedy has been that those of us who are alive today continue to "use war to stop war". War does not stop war. It only brings more violence and pain into the world.

For his theme, he chose "Equality and Peace," because "protest arises out of unfair treatment." In recognition of the importance of the views expressed especially from the standpoint of Humanistic Buddhism, I reproduce the salient points of his presentation under two headings:

A. From Equality to Peace

1. Equality among people completely depends on their mutual respect for on another.

- A fundamental Buddhist principle is that we all should respect and treat one another equally, regardless of their nationalities, races, social classes, genders, and ages. Two thousand five hundred years ago in India, the Buddha said, "When rivers run into the sea, they lose their

separate names; when the four castes enter into Buddhism, they lose all distinctions among them”.

- Therefore all of us should once and for all abandon our judgmental illusions of human difference; then we would all be able to live together in an atmosphere of peace and equality.
- We should look upon the sufferings of others with the greatest concern and compassion, and we should embrace the ideals of equality and respect whenever we encounter differences. With this kind of thinking, we will really succeed in bringing a lasting peace into this world.

2. Equality among people depends on understanding other’s points of view

- When we are able to see social problems as part of ourselves, naturally we will not abandon or ignore any of them. Instead, we will be able to treat all problems with compassion and equality.
- There is a story about a burning house in the Lotus Sutra. By helping each other, a blind man and a crippled man were able to save themselves from the flames. In the same house, however, there was also a physically healthy snake. Because its tail was proud and would not cooperate with its head, the snake was burned to death in the fire.
- If we place ourselves in others’ positions and benefit others accordingly, then we can succeed in promoting the spirit of equality and help others as we help ourselves. If we cultivate this thought in a flash, our lives will be greatly changed because we will treat others with equality and respect at all times. Peace will certainly follow.

3. Equality comes out of causes and conditions

- We are all mutually interdependent because all things in the universe have come into being only through their interconnection, and they continue to exist solely through their interconnection. The Buddhist concept of cause and effect and mutual interconnection is the truth, which explains humankind’s place in this universe.
- If we can comprehend the conditional interdependence of all things, then we will be able to understand the equality, which underlies all apparent differences; we will be able to find unity among contradictions. In the end we will be able to find the true nature, which lies behind all things.
- If we can find within us a deep sense of equality with all the things in this world, and if we can truly understand the significance of the seeds we are always planting, then how can peace in this world be far away?

4. The deepest significance of equality lies in the truth that there is no difference between one and many.

- One word, a single event, a single person, a single book, even a single thought are capable of changing the fate of a person. This is because one may have many contributing factors, and one may also be the cause of many consequences.
- Real equality must be based on the large respecting the small, the many respecting the few, the strong respecting the weak, and the rich respecting the poor. A sense of equality toward all things can become a natural habit for all of us if we try. Under the concept of equality, the world will certainly have peace.
- Today, because of great ideological differences, our world is scarred by the unequal distribution of wealth, separatist movements, terrorism, and vendettas born in histories, which long have passed.
- Equality and peace are two sides of the same profound truth. True equality is not based simply on appearances or words, nor can it be achieved solely by intimidation, arms control, or nuclear weapon ban measures. To achieve the goal of true peace, we must also emphasize the purification of our hearts and minds, the commonality of our thinking, and the reassessment of our conception.

B. From Peace to Equality

1. Compassion will help us create peace.

- The greatest force in the world is not to be found in guns and bullets; it is to be found in compassion and patience. Only through compassion and patience can we achieve true victory.
- The only way to achieve splendor and peace in the world is through equality with compassion.

2. We must rid ourselves of selfishness and self-grasping to truly promote peace in this world.

- The grasping self must learn to expand itself from the little self to the large self and from the selfish self to the selfless self. Near the end of the World War II, President Roosevelt asked Master T'ai Hsu, "How can we attain world Peace?" Master T'ai Hsu answered, "Through compassion and selflessness! " If we want peace, the best way to get it is to eradicate first the selfishness in our hearts. When selfishness is eradicated and we feel no attachment to things of the world, how can there ever be another war?

3. We must use broad-mindedness and tolerance to promote peace.

- Through tolerance, we will succeed in being in harmony with others, and therefore achieving peace.
- Some people say that wars start over bread, and others say that they start over land. The truth is that bread and land are just contingent manifestations of our inner selves. If we can purify our hearts and rid

them of selfishness, we will be fit to enjoy the endless expanses of the absolute.

- Today our world is full of disputes and deception because people's capacities to tolerate normal human differences have been shackled by the desire for wealth and fame. We need to take a broader view of time and a wider view of space, and we need to use these to enlarge our hearts. We need to learn to appreciate others' points of view and tolerate those who are different from ourselves.

4. We must increase our sense of community to bring peace into the world.

- We should be very grateful that this world has so many races and nations. These differences help teaching us to accept one another, and to form harmonious friendships. There are many religions in the world, including Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Taoism, among others. These various religions provide a home for the human spirit and a resting place for all manners of beliefs. Each part of the world has different resources, different plants, and different commodities. There are flavors and sentiments for everyone. This world provides us with all that we need in abundance and in immense variety. How can we not work together so that all of us can share in this vast gift and live contentedly and peacefully?
- In today's world we all want peace, but peace, too, must be supported by compassion, by a sense of equality among all of us, and by a strong sense of integration and co-existence. With all these fundamental conditions we can successfully create a peaceful and harmonious world for all of us.
- If we can overcome our greed and ignorance, we will be able to expand our hearts until they are filled with compassion and caring.
- The Six Harmonies advocated by the Buddha can help us in this effort. The Six Harmonies are as follows:
 - i. Harmony of Views: this means we try to be united in our thoughts and beliefs.
 - ii. The Harmony of Precepts: this means that we all should obey the law and that no one should have special privileges before it.
 - iii. The Harmony of Benefit: this means that wealthy people should actively seek to help those who are experiencing hardship and those who are socially powerful should look for opportunities to aid the powerless.
 - iv. The Harmony of Intention: this asks us to open our hearts.
 - v. The Harmony of Speech: this reminds us to be very careful with our speech.
 - vi. The Harmony of the Community: this reminds us to help one another through our actions. We must show respect for one another at all times.
- Many nations in the world today are actively implementing very productive policies on which a better future can be built. In the long

history of humanity, these efforts are just a beginning; we are just starting to step out of our narrow circles of self-interest into the much wider circles of compassion for all living beings. Nonetheless, we must persist in our efforts, and through determination promote compassion and tolerance through education.

- In dealing with others we should give up any lingering sense of self-righteousness, and cooperate with others instead. Let us learn from the universality of space and the breadth of time to create tolerance and universalism here in this world. If we can do that, we will succeed in making this world a place of equality and tolerance for all to live in peace! (Hsing Yun 1996)

The concept of equality finds expression in the literature of all three traditions of Buddhism in the list of four Sublime States or Immeasurables and four forms of treating others. *Upekkhā* or *Upekṣā* in the first list combines **equanimity** as regards one's rational acceptance of reality and circumstances and **equality** as regards one's attitude to self and others. *Samānattatā* or *Samānātmatā* of the other list is more specific as regards interpersonal relations in that it means treating others as one's equal. Its significance is further enhanced when the whole list is considered. The other three aspects are giving gifts (*dāna*), speaking pleasant words (*piyavacana*) and being benevolent and beneficial (*atthacariyā*),

From Deliberation to Action

Buddhist organizations have not restricted themselves to deliberation even though discussions of strategies and solutions to violence and armed conflict continue to dominate the scene. Peace activists have arisen in Buddhist communities and active organizations like Peace Foundations, Peace Research and Training Centers and Publishing houses on Peace-related themes have come into existence.

An international impact has been exerted by those like Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh with his initiatives in Socially Engaged Buddhism and Venerable Ghosananda of Cambodia with his role in bringing peace back to his motherland. Their response to war and violence has been direct in dealing with not only the causes of such disputes and violence but also with their perpetrators. The Vipassana Movement of S. N. Goenka seeks to prevent or minimize violence and lawlessness in a dynamic approach to rehabilitating prisoners through meditation. The approach to peace by Venerable Grand Master Hsing Yun is through education and the training of monastic leadership, based on his interpretation of Humanistic Buddhism. A more down to earth modality is adopted by Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne of the Sarvodaya Movement of Sri Lanka in that he seeks peace through the removal of social and economic causes of conflict. Another internationally active figure is Venerable Hsing Tao of Taiwan whose Museum of World Religions works for peace through interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

These are but a few examples, which demonstrate that Buddhist initiatives in favor of Peace, Security and Prosperity are backed by direct action in the removal of socioeconomic, communal and political causes. The teachings of the Buddha as discussed earlier not only provide the inspiration for their activities but also guide them to undertake a major effort to combat against the perennial causes of war, crime, violence and conflict such as poverty and economic exploitation, social inequality and

discrimination. Social well-being has thus emerged among them as the overall goal of their efforts.

Conclusions

Thus study leads us to the following conclusions.

- (i) The foremost among the fundamental human rights is the inalienable right, which every person has to a peaceful and fulfilling existence, free of violence and abject poverty and safe from all threats to security of person and property.
- (ii) The prevailing culture of violence and war, should, for the assurance of the above right, be replaced by a culture of peace with freedom and equality guaranteed to all.
- (iii) The Buddha coming from a background of the weapon-bearing (*kṣatriya*) military leadership in the governing elite knew and understood the evil of war of violence to the extent that the ideal he placed before humanity is a state where both victory and defeat had no relevance (*hitvā jayaparājayam*).
- (iv) Being conscious that quarrels, dissension, armed conflict and war began in one's mind as a result of craving for sensual pleasure and satisfaction, he sought and found the ultimate state of peace (*santapada*) and happiness (*paramam sukham*) in Nibbāna – the final cessation of suffering in spiritual purity and perfection. This was and remains his unequivocal absolute Path to Peace.
- (v) The Buddha was, nevertheless, a champion of peace, security and overall social well-being of the people. His teachings are replete with practical guidance, further reinforced by examples of direct intervention in preventing conflict, reforming criminals, taming the unruly and creating as the Sangha a society without discrimination, dedicated to moral transformation and peace.
- (vi) Asoka the Righteous, through his policies of *Dharmavijaya* (Conquest by Righteousness), spiritual progress of his subjects, interfaith understanding and cooperation, and impartiality in the administration of justice exemplified the Buddhist approach to peace, security and social well-being. Though he ruled the largest empire of the region for well nigh three decades without any military pursuits, he neither disbanded the army nor abolished capital punishment, thus indicating that the obligations of good government in maintaining law and order required the use of force. He even anticipated his sons and grandsons having to engage in wars with weapons and advised them to be forgiving and moderate in punishment. The Indian polity of dealing with one's enemies -- thorough the fourfold strategy of appeasement (*sāma*), restraint (*dāma*), sowing dissension among their allies (*bheda*) and finally as the last resort, punishment through military action (*danḍa*) -- must have been in force in Aśoka's region as well as in those of kings who emulated him.
- (vii) In the twenty-six century Buddhist history, no major wars, invasions, coercion or use of force had taken place in the name of Buddhism or on account of the rise of Buddhist traditions. Buddhism let all forms of

spiritual and religious practice, enabling even the less rational and ritualistic to co-exist with it in amity. Wars and violence, however, have certainly figured in the history of Buddhist countries but the causes have been territorial, economic, political and communal. In relative terms, the Asian continent, with two thirds of the world's population, has seen far less war victims and damage (e.g. in comparison with Europe) mostly on account of the pacifist influence of Buddhism. The civilizing impact of Buddhism as it spread to Central and East Asia has been especially noted.

- (viii) The recent and current conflicts in traditionally Buddhist countries are in no way connected with Buddhism even though Western media sometimes so misrepresent them. On the contrary, the restraint displayed by Buddhist communities at times of flagrant provocation (as on specific occasions described above) and inspiring examples of selfless assistance to victims of prejudice and violence are a commentary on the continuing impact of the Buddha's precept and practice.
- (ix) Buddhists are active internationally in peace-related activities and have developed their own organizations such as the World Fellowship of Buddhists and the World Sangha Council. Specially noted are the services of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Venerable Grand Master Hsing Yun, Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh, Mahopasaka S.N. Goenka, Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne and Venerable Hsin Tao. Venerable Grand Master Hsing Yun's analysis of Peace and Equality is presented as a sample of Buddhist thinking on achieving world peace.
- (x) The increasing participation of Buddhists in interfaith dialogue and peace-related initiatives has resulted in the recognition of the pacific role of the Buddha's teachings and example.

Abbreviations

A	Anguttaranikāya
D.	Dīghanikāya
Dp.	Dhammapada
DPPN	Dictionary of Pali Proper Names by G. P. Malalasekera
M.	Majjhimanikāya
MV	Māhavaṃsa
PTS	Pali Text Society of London
S.	Saṃyuttanikāya
Sn.	Suttanipāta
UCHC	University of Ceylon History of Ceylon

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