# BUDDHIST PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE

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### ABSTRACT

Human society is a dynamic process and the psychological tendencies of human being have made a huge impact for the deterioration of our world. Each and every human being loves and likes to enjoy the peace. At present, many social organizations and other social activities are trying hard to ensure the peace in our world, but their effort still has not strong enough to dawn the peace on human society. Why is it difficult to establish peace in human society? As far as I consider, human beings have become tangled as part of three evil roots. As long as we become a part of three evil roots it is impossible to find the peace in our society. From Buddhist point of view, it is possible to say that there is not a path for the peace, but the peace is the path for peace.

Buddhism understands different mode of psychological factors which are incorporated in breaking of human relationship. The Mahānidāna Sutta of DN (II 55) illustrates different psychology causes which lead people to chaotic situation. At the end of discourse, the Buddha explains mass of suffering comes due to negative tendencies of mind. Moreover, in the eye of Buddhism, conflicts and destructive wars are always stemmed from individual's internal out-flows (āsava) or defilements (kilesa) that are predominantly psychological.

For example, the Madhupiṇḍika Sutta of MN (I 108) demonstrates how worldly people are entangled in unwholesome thoughts along with

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the entire course of conceptual proliferation (papañca) that jeopardize human life. From Buddhist point of view, in order to establish durable peace in our human realm, first of all we must understand nature of human beings and their psychological needs. From Buddhist sociological point of view, Buddhism suggests principles are good enough rather than personality-based leader or leadership because person would be deteriorated due to some situations. This research will be taken into account how Buddhist principles are strong enough to establish durable peace in our human world.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Buddhist analysis of sustainable peace differs from the modern understanding of sustainable peace. The notion of sustainable peace in Buddhist perspective is more psychological. On the other hand, modern understanding of sustainable peace is a dynamic process as it is centered on diversity in symbolic interaction that implies peace as a collective product incorporates a chain of changing and balancing conducts, and continuous dialogues between individual actions and social world. In this why though our society is benefited, the action to establish sustainable peace is not sufficient. At this point, to apprehend sustainable peace, it is important to understand a conflict fully. In the Pāli Buddhist texts such as the Sakkapañha Sutta of DN, conflict is understood as the opposite of peace that is the bonds of jealousy and avarice (issā-mcchariya-saññojanā) which lead people to live in hate, harming one another, hostile and enmity (saverā sadaņā sasapattā sabyāpajjā viharanti (DN II 276)). On the other hand, peace is understood as the opposite of conflict that is the absence of jealousy and avarice which lead people to live without hate, harming one another, hostile and enmity (DN II 277). To this connection, the Madhupindika Sutta of DN is referred as to demonstrate worldly individuals who are uninstructed in the Buddha's teaching, therefore, they are entangled in unwholesome thoughts of jealousy and avarice along the entire course of conceptual proliferation (papañca) which is connected with the process of sense-perception, whereas all self-destructive conflicts and hostilities in larger societies are always stemmed from internal out-flows (āsava) or defilements (kilesa) inside individuals' minds. Mainly from the perspective of Buddhist psychological

approach for sustainable peace, this paper discusses how Buddhist understanding of conflict and peace differs from modern understating. This paper proposes how various Buddhist principles and practices, with emphasis on the psychological roots, can be applied and stretched for self-development to the larger way of sustainable peace in a practical, non-partisan, and moderate manner.

# 2. MODERN UNDERSTANDING OF PEACE

In broader context, the main dimension of peace-building is to reflect communal stability among different cultures. Because waves of political and economic globalization seem to produce neither social harmony nor a peaceful federation. Criticism arises that this type of globalization is based on the values of universal capitalism, whereas conflict arises and dominates all over. Considering this circumstance, modern advocates of conflict such as David Delster (1994) classifies the notion of conflicts under a four-typology: (1) background causes - as the fundamental lines of conflicts at the political, social, and economic levels; (2) mobilization strategy - whereas the interest of political leaders are trying to fulfil their main agendas, (3) triggers - as the factors where the policy makers narrowing their objectives in a way that making peaceful approaches less, and conflict line of action more; and (4) catalysts – the factors that affect the power and duration of the conflict in a society.

Besides, in our modern societies, social networking media equally contribute to various conflicts occuring. It has challenged the way we think about personal interaction, created new ways of establishing movements and businesses, and allowed people to tailor their consumption of media like never before. Though positive side of using social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have helped us to effectively integrate our minds with the online world, the misuse of social networking sites has also the power to negatively impact social interaction. Much like the drone strike which can kill hundreds of people with a single push of a button thousands of miles away and dulls the instinctive revulsion of killing another human being, how much easier on social media is it to do things we would never think of doing to someone's face: insulting them or delighting in their misfortune, or lying to gain some advantage over them? Therefore, social media have a doublesided sword that it can damage peace among people at the same time and create conflict in our societies. For example, in September 2012, a simple photo said to show a burnt holy Koran was tagged on Buddhist boy Uttam Barua's social network site Facebook that allegedly insulted Islam triggered a rippling fury that led to the brutal destructions of Buddhist temples and houses at Ramu in south-eastern part of Bangladesh. Thousands of Muslim extremists burnt down and looted more than twenty Buddhist temples and more than fifty houses what is considered to be the worst attack on the Buddhist community since Bangladesh's independence in 1971. The tragedy was turned to other places in Chittagong districts with vandalism inflicted to both Buddhist and also Hindu temples (BBC, 2012).

It was argued by Persch that Facebook can trigger jealousy and distrust in human relationships (Persch, 2009). Similarly, dialectic philosopher Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) pondered that the role of technology would play in human emancipation. Because it was developed within a certain ideological structure and culture, technology itself could be an oppressive form of ideology that contributes to domination more than freedom. Marcuse specifically identified the American culture of his age as one of domination, violence, and consumption as people's compensation for alienation as cogs in the capitalist machine (Kurtul, and Mete, 2016).

The above scholars' words resonate strongly in our contemporary age, with social media unquestionably the defining mode of technological communication. In this regard, Delster's four typologies adopted by Dan Smith for the conflict resolution, as:

It is particularly the first two categories – the background causes and the mobilisation strategies - that must be addressed in any attempt to prevent violent conflict escalation. The last category - catalysts - may be equally important when considering how to bring violence to an end (Smith, 2004).

However, under any of the above no psychological factor was mentioned that how our mental tendencies, such as greed, hate, jealousy, stinginess, play the vital role in occurring conflict and how absence of these tendencies brings sustainable peace. In this understanding, one could say Buddhist analysis of conflict differs from the modern understanding of conflict. Modern understanding of conflict mostly identifies a multiplicity of potential causes of armed conflict that Delster understood from background causes and mobilization strategies to triggers and catalysts. At this point, my argument turns to the Buddhist analysis of conflict that how our mind which is obsessed by greed, hatred, and delusion creates conflict within us.

# 3. PSYCHOLOGICAL ROOT AS THE CONTRIBUTING FACTOR FOR CONFLICTS

In terms of the Buddhist's interpretation for conflict, we have identified jealousy and avarice as contributing factors for the self-insecurity which effect the balance of peace in society. These jealousy and avarice are the roots of dispute arose in individual's factors of personality and interpersonal relationship. With regard to the Buddhist theory of dependent co-arising (paticca-samuppāda), jealousy conditions conflicts, particularly in mental properties. They are the mental state in which an individual is dissatisfied with other's well-being better than himself, and jealousy is a resentment towards another person, needed for one to reject it. In this regard, we understand, conflict in the eyes of Buddhism is predominantly psychological and arises through physical, verbal, and mental acts, which are known as the three doors. In the Mahānidāna Sutta of DN, the nature of conflict is discussed through the theory of dependent co-arising, as:

Feeling conditions craving, craving conditions seeking, seeking conditions acquisition, acquisition conditions decision-making, decision-making conditions lust and desire, lust and desire conditions attachment, attachment conditions possessiveness, possessiveness conditions avarice, avarice conditions defensiveness, and because of defensiveness there arise the taking up sticks and swords, quarrels, conflicts, quarrels, disputes, abuse, lying and various evil unskilled states (DN II 58 – 59).(1)

<sup>1.</sup> vedanam pațicca tanhā, tanham pațicca pariyesanā, pariyesanam pațicca lābho, lābham paṭicca vinicchayo, vinicchayam paṭiccachandarāgo, chandarāgam pațicca ajjhosānam, ajjhosānam pațicca pariggaho, pariggaham pațicca macchariyam, macchariyam paticca ārakkho, ārakkhādhikaranam paticca dandādāna satthādānakalahaviggahavivādatuvamtuvam pesuññamusāvādā aneke pāpakā akusalā

From the above passage it is understood that when people are in conflict, they take up weapons, they fight, quarrel, dispute, insult, slander and lie. The conflict then turns into violence in which people exhibit evil, cruel, unkind, dishonest, unrighteous and undisciplined behavior. In this connection, when conflict is in peak an individual is in full of hate obsessed by body, speech, and mind, he then thinks "I am powerful, and I want power" ("balavamhi balattho iti'pi" (AN I 201)). Here it is to be comprehended that the three doors - body, speech, and mind - are profoundly engrained and mutually-assisting unwholesome roots (akusala-mūla) of three poisons - greed (lobha), hatred (dosa), and delusion (moha) which are situated inside each individual's passionate and cognitive propensities that drive them to implement unfavorable volitional actions (kamma). Under greed, we keep on grasping our imperialistic ambitions externally through aggressive and threatening proposals like scrambling for scare natural resources and expanding towards fragile emerging regions. Fraud and corruption with shamelessness are pervasive when we perform any activities to satisfy our unlimited material wants. Due to our hatred, we generate and support discriminatory violence. And due to delusion, we always conform to the conventional and unenlightened comprehension of peacekeeping. Therefore, under divergence viewpoints, we ill-directed mind with inappropriate attention (ayoniso-manasikāra) that leads us to devote considerable energy in justifying and rationalizing our personal prejudice as individual 'truths'. They regard all conflicts as necessary means for enhancing our dogmatic view overlooking under our rhetoric and misconceptions. Thus, the discourse of the Buddha known as the Alagaddupama Sutta of MN teaches about the danger in clinging to ideology, as:

Monks! Here some foolish men who study the Dhamma [teaching] - discourses, stanzas, expositions, verses, exclamations, sayings, birth stories, marvellous, and answers to questions; having studied the Dhamma, they do not wisely examine the meaning of those teachings with discernment. Not wisely examining the meaning of those teachings with discernment, they do not come an agreement through pondering. Instead, they study the Dhamma only to use for criticizing others and for refuting others in debate, and they do not experience the good for the use of which they study the Dhamma. To them, these teachings are wrongly grasped, bring to their harm and suffering for a long time. Why is that? Because of the wrong grasp of those teachings (MN I 134). (2)

The above passage is applicable for all individuals who are bearing a latent tendency (anusaya) in mind through sticking to dogmatic views determinedly that would simply regard everything, other than their self-extolled perspectives, among all its dogmatic counterparts as inferior. Therefore, from Buddhist perspective, it is comprehended that when people live in conflict they are in mired in grudges, hostility, rudeness, jealousy, stinginess, deceit, dishonesty, malice, and wrong views. In this regard, conflict is fundamentally psychological due to greed, hatred, and delusion, the Three Poisons. Therefore, we must take initiatives to pursue peace by applying the principles of fraternity, mutual respect, and harmony, and by cultivating our mind and promoting the skilful activities.

### 4. MUTUALLY-SUPPORTIVE EXISTENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE

From Buddhist point of view, conflict exists among uninstructed worldly people regardless of status and social position. Uninstructed worldly people have always perceive and conceive in and from the rigid figures of personal wealth, they then regard them as eternal, independent, and substantial parts of 'I' or for 'self' (atta) within themselves. This "I" subsequently drives them to acquire sensual

<sup>2.</sup> idha bhikkhave ekacce moghapurisā dhammam pariyāpuṇanti: suttaṃ geyyaṃ veyyākaranam gātham udānam itivuttakam jātakam abbhutadhammam vedallam. Te tam dhammam pariyāpunitvā tesam dhammānam paññāya attham na upaparikkhanti. Tesam te dhammā paññāya attham anupaparikkhatam na nijjhānam khamanti. Te upārambhānisamsā ceva dhammam pariyāpuņanti itivādappamokkhānisamsā ca. Yassa catthāya1 dhammam pariyāpuṇanti tañcassa attham nānubhonti. Tesam te dhammā duggahītā dīgharattam ahitāya dukkhāya samvattanti. Tam kissa hetu: duggahītattā bhikkhave dhammānam.

gratification in them like fame and fortune as segments of their imputed 'self'. With this human ignorance (avijjā), worldly people's afflictive mental states compel them to regard every single chance for political expansion and development as a realistic yet ceaseless approach to desire for self-protection. Regrettably, all these things with imperfect and limited nature cannot bring us with genuine senses of peace and happiness but endless bondage of suffering rooted in their transitory phenomena and insecure existence. Nevertheless, within this worldly existence how do we collectively maintain sustainable peace? Let us now discuss with some supportive Pāli textual sources.

In the mutually-supportive existential world, common people are guided by leaders, both in government and outside of it. Buddhist texts have long been concerned with leadership because leaders always exist in the context of community. The sangha (community) was therefore preoccupied, from its earliest days, with the various kinds of leadership that Buddhism touches: from the sangha, to households and villages, and obviously at the governmental level. Instructions or pronouncements on society, politics, and economics are found in some of the early Buddhist scriptures, including the Mahāhaṃsa Jātaka (534). According to the Mahāhaṃsa Jātaka, a leader should be responsible, honest, and willing to make sacrifices as needed. These qualities are further described as tenfold virtue, also known as "tenfold royal virtue" (dasa-rājadhamma): generosity, morality, self-sacrifice, honesty, gentleness, self-control; non-anger, non-violence, forbearance, and uprightness (dānam sīlam pariccāgam, ajjavam maddavam tapam, akkodham avihimsañca, khantiñca avirodhanam (The Mahāhamsa Jātaka, 176)).

Good governance channels people's talents and ambitions to achieve national goals, sustainable development, and social justice. One aspect of good governance is considered to be the proper management of a country's economic and social resources for development. A leader who possesses moral character is also an example to the people, who can see how emulating their character can make a difference in their own daily lives. In the Cakkavatti Sihanāda Sutta of DN, the Buddha is said to have taught about the economic inequalities that divide the world into rich and poor. The *sutta* identifies the basic problem of a state as food supply, which needs to be solved first before all subsequent problems can be addressed. There is a story about a thief who was caught and brought before the king. The thief explained that he simply stole the wealth of others because he was poor. So the king gave him some money and asked him to start a business. Then other people decided to steal something to receive similar treatment from the king. However, this time the king ordered the thieves executed. The leader must therefore be able to discern the difference between intentions and the possible results of such intentions. The Buddha explained the moral of this story:

Thus, monks! from not giving of property to the needy, poverty became extensive, from the growth of poverty, the taking of what was not given increased, from the increase of theft, the use of weapons increased, from the increased use of weapons, the taking of life increased, and from the increase in the taking of life, people's life expectancy decreased and their beauty decreased (DN III 68).(3)

Politics around the world is being shaken up and destabilized by forces beyond the control of national leaders. The tenfold royal virtues could act as a decisive factor in all fields of people interest. As the head of a community or a country, his or her inspiring ideals should guide people to live happily and healthily. Therefore, the sustainable peace of a nation depends heavily on actions taken by its leader, and the leader must rely on virtue. Country's movement also needs to ensure the people's basic needs for food, shelter, and clothing. The Kutadanta Sutta of DN mentions a king, Mahāvijita, who wanted to organize a large-scale sacrifice to ensure his personal comfort and welfare. However, his chief minister advised king against it saying that if there were tax in kingdom, that would be the wrong thing to do. Rather, chief minister offered a solution that in the kingdom who are engaged in cultivating crops and raising cattle, it would be better to distribute grain and fodder, in trade,

iti kho bhikkhave adhanānam dhane ananuppadīyamāne dāļiddiyam vepullamagamāsi. Dāļiddiye vepullam gate adinnādānam vepullamagamāsi, adinnādāne vepullam gate sattham vepullamagamāsi. Satthe vepullam gate pānātipāto vepullamagamāsi. Pāṇātipāte vepullam gate tesam sattānam āyu pi parihāyi, vaṇṇo pi parihāyi.

give capital, in government service assign proper living wages. The king followed these three instructions and gave what was necessary and relevant to the people. As a result, everyone was happy and dwelt with joy in their hearts (DN I 135-36). In this sutta, the Buddha recognized the major economic problems of state and he recommended immediate measures. According to the *sutta*, the root of all problems in any country is the issue of food production and distribution. The state should first provide food to people through organizing cultivation, then provide capital to traders and a reasonable salary to government servants. Therefore, we can say that the economic concepts discussed in the Buddha's teachings are neither of a capitalist market economy, nor a fully socialist economy. Instead, the Buddha provides for a developmental approach to the solution to human poverty. In the context of today, when global inequality is once again on the rise, the teachings of the Buddha remain highly pertinent for sustainable peace.

Given that our experienced mental states are also partially the result of our extensive social needs, it is improper to challenge the Buddhist tradition as neglecting the social problems and encouraging withdrawal rather than enhancement, especially those ills existing among these two layers are mutually dependent as stressed in socially engaged Buddhism. Moreover, although the ultimate objective of Buddhism is always liberating from saṃsāra (birth-cycle), one should never exclude the endeavours of Buddhists to make their samsāra less bleak and address practical social issues. Since the Buddha emphasises that oneself is always own refuge (attā hi attano nātho (The Dhammapada, 380), self-reliance is the best spiritual solution for resolving all human problems.

People are always performing in a way that paves the way to conflicts although they all enjoy living in peace. However, they are never destined to remain in endless conflicts or suffering of the same root. Both individual salvation and worldly crises can be reconciled through cultivating appropriate insights and adopting positive strategies in Buddhism. At present, our most pressing need is not simply absence of wars and conflicts but more about creation of life-affirming and life-promoting personal values and social structures collectively. Political leaders can attain inner peace

when their minds are free from confusing thoughts and oppressive emotions as internal disarmament, which subsequently builds the foundation for further outer peace like community and the world. After all, it is constantly gradual and systematic self-development process for transforming an individual from his or her original to a series of character that matters.

### 5. CONCLUSION

To minimize the conflict, Buddhism cherishes loving-kindness (*metta*) which is constantly prominent when people are exhibiting endless consideration and impartial concern but not discriminatory and unhappy. Today, we witness that terrorists always bomb many countries with heavy losses, but the government should nonetheless refrain from brutal waging war despite their possessed capacity and capability. Similar to how the Buddha with forgiveness responded when he is constantly and severely attacked by Devadatta, a Buddhist monk and cousin of the Buddha, this avoids them from sustaining and perpetuating more destruction and violence inside an endless cycle of revenge, especially only love and resistance alone but never hatred can cease itself in the world.

Another connected feature is compassion (karuṇā) which is always displayed at times of unfortunateness or misery. All the leaders will need to learn to decentralise the national structure as reflected in the Kūtadanta Sutta. The valuable advice directed towards King Mahāvijita with abundant resources suggested by Brahman Kūṭadanta is that happiness among internal citizens can be attained through providing them with welfare like food for farmers and capital for traders as their basic needs, especially poverty is one of the major reasons of political conflicts. All ideological differences should put aside temporarily when national sovereignty and social stability should never be shields or excuses for turning a blind eye. This echoes with the emphasis of the Buddha on getting far beyond the spirit of brotherhood to universal friendliness. For the component of sympathetic joy (muditā), one should always share both the happiness instead of making unending envy towards endeavour, notorieties, reputations, and successes of others. It is common for authoritarian regime leaders to plot against

those popularly elected presidents in democracies as the former understands that their current status quos can only be maintained under a well-manipulated system. Instead of eliminating their effort and talents, they should always appreciate and even learn from their strengths.

Finally, the element of equanimity (upekkha) that is amazingly uncommon in the contemporary world. Although such character of neutrality is usually prevalent among Arahants who completely abandoned or eliminated all unwholesome factors, one can still apply to our conventional human behaviour as a direct opposite toward prejudice and discrimination. Instead of emphasising distinctive differences, leaders should draw on the similarities as kinship with due trust, respect and recognition, requiring them to becomes more inclined towards and connected to all universal factors permeated into all life. Building upon mutual relationship all human beings are in fact always being like unto themselves rather than not unlike, implying that all individuals are always granted with equal rights. Meanwhile, this reinforces the claims in both the Mahāpadāna Sutta and the Cakkavattisīhanāda Sutta when it is the essential responsibility of rules to uphold justice with care and protection towards all those underprivileged minorities. Given national leaders are always the representatives of general public, the Buddha offers a cattle-passing-waterway that the former moral responsibilities and commitments are influential towards the holistic directions and standards of their corresponding societies that undeniably include the latter. This indicates that ongoing leaders-citizens cooperate with mutually-catered interests is always prominent for sustainable peace maintenance. Here, I then highlight what Buddhist teachings can tell us about the sources of conflict:

Bad words blaming others, Arrogant words humiliating others. From these behaviors, Come hatred and resentment... Hence conflicts arise, Rendering in people malicious thoughts.

(The Dhammapada, T 4:210) (Quoted in Yeh, 2006).

And how the Buddha's teachings can help to extinguish such conflict:

The one who dwells in compassion would not have a conflictual volition; The one who dwells in loving-kindness would always act most appropriately.

(The Dhammapada, T 4:210) (Quoted in Yeh, 2006).

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# Abbreviations

DN Dīgha Nikāya MN Majjhima Nikāya AN Aṅguttara Nikāya **PTS** Pali Text Society

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