

A WAY TO CREATE PEACEFUL WORLD ORDER

by Arvind Kumar Singh*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the present globalized world, '*Creating Peaceful World Order*' has been recognised as a distinct and significant field of research which comprehends all the elements of religious work for peace. Religion needs to proper autonomy of humanist ethics, the resource to thinking about the foundations of ethics in natural human desires, to prevent it from interpreting religious rules in ways that are dismissive of those who differ from oneself or repressive of basic human goods. But humanist ethics needs religion to give its moral principles a strongly motivating moral goal and a real hope of its realization. People's hearts will not be moved by considerations of a rather abstract universal rationality alone. They will be moved by a vision goodness which is empowering and realizable. Human have always prized and sought Peace. The conditioned believed to foster peace and the very conception of peace, however, have varied in different periods and cultures. Religions can help to further the growth of humanity's ethical consciousness in an age of global interdependence by applying the wisdom contained in their different traditions to the major problems of the time and by entering into interfaith dialogue in an endeavour to identify common concerns and values. Ethics basically involves leading life

*. Dr., Assistant Professor, School of Buddhist Studies & Civilization Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida, Gautam Budh Nagar, UP-201312, India.

in a right manner and making right decisions about moral issues. Buddhism considers behaviour ethical only if it does not cause harm to one self or other. It is also noteworthy that in Buddhism, ethical behaviour is necessary not only because it is based on right or wrong but also because it is the means to attain enlightenment. To conform to Buddhist ethics one need not have to be a 'Buddhist'; and it serves as a norm to measure the ethical standard of other teachings. But Buddhist ethics is only the threshold for those who wish to pursue the Buddha's path to Enlightenment and the end of all ills.

Buddhism has long been celebrated as a religion of peace and non-violence. With its increasing vitality in regions around the world, many people today turn to Buddhism for relief and guidance at the time when peace seems to be a deferred dream more than ever. In my view time has come to better time to re-examine the teachings of the Buddha on peace and violence in the hope that it can be accorded in the global efforts to create new sets of values regarding the ways people manage conflict and maintain peace via non-violent means to construct a *peaceful world order*. It requires change in existing social order with moral and cultural values adapted to a contemporary context where Buddhist ethics can take root in society as it did in the historical past in creating a peaceful atmosphere.

2. BUDDHIST ETHICS AND PEACE-BUILDING

Traditionally, Buddhism has been perceived as a 'religion of peace', and there are an increasing number of works in the area of Buddhism, Conflict Resolution and Peace-building to support to this presumption.¹ Having never developed a 'just war' theology² or openly advocated violence as a means through which to resolve conflict and dispute, it is relatively easy from a doctrinal and philosophical perspective to develop a premise for Buddhist engagement in peace-building and conflict transformation. Some brief examples: the mental states and conditions which lead to violence and killing were criticised in the early texts³. The Buddha

1. See for example Chappell 1999; Der-lan Yeh 2006; McConnell 1995; Morris 2000; Mun 2007; Sivaraksa 1192, 2005; Thich Naht Hanh 1991, 2008; amongst others.

2. See Frydenlund in Tikhonov & Brekke 2013: 102-3.

3. Bartholomeusz, Tessa. 2002. *In Defense of Dharma*. Routledge Curzon : 52.

himself has been used as an exemplar of pacifist non-violence in his dealings with Devadatta⁴; as a universal redeemer in his conversion of notorious killer Angulimala;⁵ and as a skilled mediator in preventing violence between Sakyas and Koliyas in disputes over the waters of the River Rohini.⁶ Often held up as a demonstration of Buddhists' commitment to peace are the Five Precepts (*pañcasīla*); and in particular the renunciation of the killing of all sentient being (*pānātipātā*). The concept of *sīla* has also been interpreted as compelling Buddhists to acquire merit by providing compassionate assistance to those in need.

The Buddha and his teachings demonstrate its commitment to non-violence and compassion, and as emblematic of an interpretation and understanding of which identifies personal salvation with that of all other sentient beings and the world around us. A socially aware, non-violent movement and practice, notable Buddhist teachers and activists such as Thich Nhat Hanh and Sulak Sivaraksa have used concepts such as dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) to underpin socially engaged forms of Buddhism. In fact there are a number of internationally recognized Buddhists who have deservedly received rich praise for their humanitarian and peacebuilding work; Maha Ghosananda of Cambodia; Buddhadasa Bhikkhu of Thailand; the Dalai Lama; Aung San Suu Kyi; Daisaku Ikeda to name a few. Increasing numbers of Buddhist organizations are involved in conflict transformation and peacebuilding work (the Buddhist Peace Network, Network of Engaged Buddhists, Tibetan Centre of Conflict Resolution, Sarvodaya, the Karuna Trust, SGI, etc.), and it has been argued that Buddhism possesses innate tools for preventing and transforming conflict; such as the practice of mindfulness to help recognise and interrupt the emotional and causal events which lead to violence⁷.

However, this argument will provide a survey of the Buddhist

4. Nikkyo Niwano. 1982. *A Buddhist Approach to Peace*. Kosei Publishing: 14-18.

5. See the Angulimala Sutta in the Majjhima Nikaya.

6. The commentaries of the Anguttara Nikaya and the Samyutta Nikaya recount these instances.

7. McConnell, John. 1995. *Mindful Meditation: A Handbook for Buddhist Peacemakers*. Buddhist Research Institute.

vision of peace in the light of peace-building. According to the Buddha teaching of Dependent Origination (*paticcasamuppada*), everything, including the psychophysical compound, that we call individual, exist only in relation to other beings and things and undergoes constant changes responding and reacting to them.⁸ Believing that the root of violence is located within the mind, Buddhism has placed a greater urgency upon inner reflection. Will be replaced by loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). On the behavioural one practices peace daily by observing the five precepts (*pañca-sīla*).⁹ To prevent in group disputes, the Buddha teaches the six principles of cordiality in any community (*sāraṇīyadhamma*).¹⁰ As for inter-group or international affairs, Buddhist scriptures are rife with stories that teach nonviolent (*ahiṃsā*) intervention.

3. BUDDHIST ETHICAL EDUCATION AND PEACE

The fundamental goal of Buddhism is peace, and it also not only means peace for human beings, but peace for all living beings. The Buddha teaches that the first step on the path to peace understands the causality of peace. According to the Buddha, peaceful mind leads to peaceful actions. Among these teachings are bringing about the peace in Buddhist societies for a long time. The concept of peace in Buddhism has both negative and positive meanings. In its negative sense, peace is an absence not only of war and conflict but also of 'structure violence' such as social injustice, social inequality, the violation of human rights, the destruction of ecological balance, etc. In its positive sense, peace means to presence of unity, harmony, freedom and justice. Thus, the concept of peace encompasses within itself the absence of conflict as well as the presence of harmony.¹¹ However, the word today lives in constant fear, suspicion, and tension. Science has produced weapons, which are capable of unimaginable destruction. Brandishing these new instruments of

8. Strong, John S, " *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations*", Second edition, London, Toronto, Belmont and Albert Complex: Wadsworth, Thomson Learning, 2002: 101.

9. See *Aṅguttarānikāya*.III.203, 275; *Dīghanikāya*.III.235.

10. See *Dīghanikāya*.III.245.

11. Thepsopon, Phra (Prayoon Merak)," *A Buddhist World View*", Fifth Impression, Bangkok: Mahachula Buddhist University Press, 2001:88.

death, great powers threaten and challenge one another. Human beings in fear of the situation they have themselves created want to find a way out, and seek some kind of solution. There is none except that the held out by the Buddha, his message of nonviolence and peace, of love and compassion, of tolerance and understanding, of truth and wisdom, of respect and regard for all life, of freedom from selfishness, hatred and violence.¹²

In fact, society can remain fully peaceful only if its members fully have peace of mind. Unless there is peace within, there will be no peace without. This truth is revealed in the preamble of UNESCO ‘... since wars being in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.’¹³ The Buddha teaches his disciple to meet anger with love and not with anger, and to conquer evil with good and not with evil. He said: ‘Conquer anger with love. Conquer evil with good. Conquer the miser with generosity and conquer the liar with truth.’¹⁴ The Buddha encouraged his disciples to propagate Buddhism in a peaceful way.¹⁵ The main message that the Buddha has sent to the world through missionary monks is peace (*santi*). Peace is the goal of the good life in Buddhism. As the Buddha said, there is no higher bliss than peace (*natthi santi param sukham*).¹⁶

Sunderland has pointed out, “*Buddhism has taught peace more strongly among its followers, more effectively, during all its history, than has any other great religious faith to the world*”.¹⁷ If Buddhist thoroughly followed the Dhamma preached by the Buddha, then there would be peaceful coexistence not only among human beings, but also among human beings, animals and natural environment. We all realise that the world today is facing an environmental crisis arising from environmental pollution and over-exploitation of natural

12. Rahula, Walpola, “*What the Buddha Taught*”, Reprinted, Taipei, Taiwan: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2002:86.

13. Paitoon, Sinlarat (ed.), *Higher Education and the Promotion of Peace*, Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University: 17.

14. Dh. 223.

15. The Buddha encouraged his disciples to have the virtue of tolerance and a peaceful way to propagate his Dhamma, see *Majjhimanikāya*.III.268-9.

16. Dh. 202.

17. Quoted in Sri Dhammananda. K, *Great Personalities on Buddhism*, Malaysia: B.M.S. Publication, 1965: 77.

resources. This crisis has aroused the concern of every human being. If we allow the crisis to continue unchecked, not only will the beauty of the environment be gradually destroyed, but also its capacity to sustain life will be seriously threatened and human being will be in danger of losing their humanity. In short, the concept of peace in Buddhism, here has both negative and positive meanings. In its negative sense, peace is an absence not only of war and conflict but also of 'structure violence' such as social injustice, social inequality, the violation of human rights, the destruction of ecological balance, etc. In its positive sense, peace means encompasses within itself the absence of conflict as well as the presence of harmony.¹⁸

The Buddha's teaching though encompassing a wide range of complex belief systems, started with the Buddha's first preaching which is conventionally equated with the essence of his teaching - the Four Noble Truths (*cattāri ariyasaccāni*). The first two truths discern the Causes of violence and conflict and the suffering caused thereby: first, life inevitably involves suffering or dissatisfaction (*dukkha sacca*); and second, suffering or dissatisfaction originates in desires (*samudaya-sacca*). The third and the fourth prescribe a cure for this unpleasant way of living. That is, how to promote a peaceful way of living and ultimately live in peace: third, suffering or dissatisfaction will cease if all desire ceases (*nirodha-sacca*); and fourth, this state can be realized by engaging in the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya aṭṭaṅgika magga*).¹⁹

In fact, the entire Buddhist practices that developed in accordance with the Four Noble Truths; that is, they are designed to enable people to alleviate suffering to realize a peaceful state of existence at all levels. Thich Nhat Hanh proceeds to clarify the Buddhist point of view which is as under:

'In the practice of awareness, which Buddhists call mindfulness, we nurture the ability to see deeply into the nature of things and of human being. The fruit of this practice is insight and understanding, and out of this comes love. Without understanding how we can love is the intention

18. Theosophon, Phra (Prayoon Mererk), *Op. Cit*, 88.

19. Coomaraswamy, Ananda K, *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, Third Indian Edition, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2003:81-82.

and capacity to bring joy to others, and to remove and transform the pain that is in them'.²⁰

The Buddhism analysis of the causes of violence and conflict is arrayed along three domains: the external, the internal, and the root. Buddhism look at the external causes of violence or conflict as consequences derived from a general orientation common to all living beings: avoiding harm and obtaining happiness. Anything contrary to this would result in disturbing one's peace and lead to violence or conflict. If people want to live an ultimately happy life with no harms toward them at all, Buddhism teaches, they should start with avoiding causing harm to others, physically and verbally at the personal level.²¹ Since people are afraid of physical violence and resent harsh words; and the physical and verbal, harm we inflict upon other, usually leads to hate and conflict that, in turn, would bring harm to us and our happiness. If one can become friendly to all the beings of the world, hatred will disappear from the world.²² According to Buddhist teachings, all fear death, none in unafraid of stick and knives. Seeing yourself in others, do not kill do not harm,²³ bad words blaming others, arrogant words humiliating others, from these behaviours, come hatred and resentment... Hence violence or conflicts arise, rendering in people malicious thoughts.²⁴ And these malicious thoughts would, in due term, result in harm upon us since none really exempt from the influences of all others, including the people we harmed. Recognizing the material needs for sustaining human living, Buddhism postulates the principle of the Middle Way (*Majjhimā paṭipadā*) as a criterion in making decisions on all levels of activities and encourages frugality as a positive virtue. The relentless pursuit of economic development and personal property regardless of environmental or moral consequences is considered not in accordance with the Middle Way since it destroys the balance between consumption and resources, as well as material gain and spiritual growth.

20. Hanh, Thich Nhat, "We are the beaters; we are the beaten", Los Angeles Times, 15 April 1991, Quoted in Runzo, Josef and Martin, Nancy M (eds.), *Op.Cit*, 222.

21. Yeh, Teresa Der-lan, "The way to peace: a Buddhist perspective", *International Journal of Peace Studies*, Vol.11, Spring/Summer, 2006:95.

22. Jatava. D.R, *Buddhism in Modern World*, Jaipur, Rajasthan: ABD Publishers, 2007: 9.

23. Dh. 18.

24. Dh. 8.

Albeit any sort of wrongdoings and social injustice causes conflicts and violence and Buddhism contends that these behaviours and structures originate all from the state of human's mind.²⁵ Since the violence and injustice are responses toward external, stimuli are produced by people's inner mind operation. For example, confronted with the threat of physical and verbal harm, it is natural for use to feel fear, dislike, resentment, anger or hate. In other words, physical and structural violence are the product of human mental status such as fear, anger, and hate, which are considered in Buddhism to be the internal causes to violence and conflict.²⁶ Even when no threat of personal safety or collective interest is perfect, conflict may occur, from the Buddhist perspective, as a result of our two major mental attachments to, first, subjective views, opinions and, second, the desire for materials, relationships. The stronger the attachment is, the more obsessive one would be, the more external behaviours one would engage, and the more severe the conflict world become.²⁷ Behind the mental, behavioral and structural causes of violence and conflict, Buddhism goes even further to the ultimate fundamental cause leading to all the suffering inflicted by violence and conflict. The Buddha attributes all our attachments. The resulting harming behaviours and the suffering hence caused, to the human ignorance (*avijjā*), that is, we cannot see the world as it is and see our self as such. We are ignorant to the cosmic reality that everything in the world is inter-related, interdependent.²⁸ This ignorance is what Buddhism identifies as the very root cause of violence, conflict, and war, which prevents human being to live a peaceful life.

25. One famous early Buddhist text describes the mind as naturally radiant but defiled by adventitious defilements, or 'visitor', described as literally coming from outside to disturb it. The powerful 'roots' of greed, hatred and ignorance are created many external problem of the world today. Shaw, Sarah, *Introduction to Buddhist Meditation*, London and New York, 2009:41, and see also Dh.1.

26. Payutto, Bhikkhu P.A, *A Buddhist Solution for the Twent-First Century*, Twentieth Impression, Bangkok: Pimsuay Printing, 2003: 5.

27. Yeh, Teresa Der-Lan, *Op.Cit*, 96.

28. Punyanubhap, Sujip, "Buddhism aand the World Peace", in Kamdee Duan (ed.), *Graduate School Journal Mahamukut Buddhist University*, Special edition, April 2004: 134.

4. BUDDHIST ETHICS AND REALIZATION PEACEFUL WORLD ORDER

The fundamental goal of Buddhism is peace, not only peace for human beings but peace for all living beings. The Buddha taught that the first step on the path to peace is in understanding the causality of peace. The Buddha was of the view that peaceful minds lead to peaceful speech and peaceful actions. Of all the teachings of the Buddha, one can say that *Bodhicitta* is the forerunner of peace. How to establish peaceful society is the most burning issue in the present world scenario. In this dispensation, Buddhism can play a decisive role for providing sustaining and preserving the world peace. The foundation of peace and security can be strengthened within the framework of Buddhism, which is quintessentially tolerant, cosmopolitan and portable. The duty of religion is to guide humanity to uphold certain noble principles in order to lead a peaceful life and to maintain human dignity.

The Buddha introduced a righteous way of life for human beings to follow after having himself experienced the weakness and strength of human mentality. Buddhism is essentially a practical doctrine, dedicated primarily to the negation of suffering and only secondarily to the elucidation of philosophical issues. But of course, the two realms – the practical and the philosophical are not connected. The thought (*Pariyatti*) and the practice (*Paṭipatti*) are to move together side by side, just like the two wheels of chariot for righteous and smooth way-faring for human life. It is the system of only one problem and one solution with a path existing between the two. The only problem is the suffering of human beings (*Dukkha*) and the solution is the attainment of eternal peace (*Nibbāna*) and the path to attain this is Eight Fold Path (*Aṭṭhāṅgika Magga*), which is a dynamic principle gradually leading towards amelioration and complete harmony in the universal social order, non-violent in character and saturated with peace and tranquility.

To inculcate the sense of maintaining peace, tranquility and serenity in the world, one must follow the middle path, which has eight gradual steps (*Ayameva āriyo atthāṅgiko maggo*). As a whole, the Eight Fold Path has three steps, namely, *Sila* (Comprising Right Speech or *Samma-vāca*, Right Action or *Samma-kammānto* and Right Livelihood or *Samma-ājivo*), *Samādhi* (comprising Right

Effort or *Samma-vayāmo*, Right Mindfulness or *Samma-sati* and Right Concentration or *Samma-samādhi*) and *Paññā* (comprising Right View or *Samma-ditthi* and Right Resolve or *Samma-sankappo*). The fundamental goal of Buddhism is peace, not only peace for human beings but peace for all living beings. The Buddha taught that the first step on the path to peace is understanding the causality of peace. The Buddha was of the view that peaceful minds lead to peaceful speech and peaceful actions. Of all the teachings of the Buddha, one can say that *Bodhicitta* is the forerunner of peace. The Buddha exhorts: “*Cetanā ahaṃ bhikkhave, kammaṃ vadāmi* (O monks, volition is the action).

The Buddha further states in the *Dhammapada* as under: *Sabba Pāpassa akaranāni, Kuśalassa upasampadā; Sacitta pariyodapānaṃ, Etam Buddhana Sāsanam* which means ‘abstaining from all sorts of sin, doing good to all living beings and making one’s mind pure is the *Buddhadhamma*’. So when *Bodhicitta* is attained, peace is established and violence and hatred are annihilated. In this regard, the Kalinga war of King Aśoka may be cited. According to the 13th Rock Edict, King Aśoka adopted, “*Dhammaghosh*” i.e. the sound of Righteousness instead of “*Bherighosa*” i.e. the word of trumpet after having seen the mass instruction of life and materials during the war.

Buddhism analyzed the problem of social conflict found that craving (*tañhā*) is the nature of human beings, are the principle factors of social disharmony. *Lōbha* (greed), *Dosa* (hatredness) and *Moha* (ignorance) is the main factors of craving. Opposite to these three factors, the *Anguttara-Nikāya* enlists five factors of mind bringing forth balance and harmony in the life of an individual, as well as to the sociality. There are (i) no greed (*Alōbha*), (ii) absence from malevolence (*adosa*), (iii) right understanding (*amoha*), (iv) have a thorough attention to the cause (*yonisomanasikara*) and (v) well directed mind (*Sammahito-citta*). In this connection we may also quote the *Abitta-pariyaya Sutta*. Thus culturing the mind is more essential for social harmony.

According to P.A. Payutto, there are four levels of freedom based on the Buddhist ethical point of view, the achievement of which is indispensable for the realization of peace and happiness and those four levels of freedoms are:

- i. *Physical freedom means freedom in relation to the material world or physical environment, natural or technological.* This covers freedom from the shortage of the basic needs of life, the requisites of food, clothing shelter and health-care, freedom consisting in safety from life-threatening calamities and unfavourable natural conditions, i.e. to have, among other things, a beneficial natural environment. The use of natural sources, the requisites of life and technology in such a way that they serve man to enhance his quality of life and do not subject him to themselves for his good or evil, happiness or sorrow.²⁹
- ii. *Social freedom means freedom in relation to other people, the community, society or social environment.* This is represented by freedom from oppression, persecution, exploitation, injustice, and crimes. The violation of human rights, discrimination, violence, terrorism, conflict, fighting and war; the non-violence of the Five precepts;³⁰ or, in positive terms, a good and friendly relationship with neighbours, social welfare and such values as equality, liberty, fraternity, discipline, respect for law, tolerance and cooperation.
- iii. *Emotional freedom means freedom of the heart.* At the ideal level, this refers to the state of freedom from all traces of mental defilements and suffering, the state of mind that is unshaken by worldly vicissitudes, purified, sorrow-free, secure, and profoundly happy and peaceful, i.e. *Nibbāna*. It includes freedom from all kinds of mental illness, stress and strain, anxiety, boredom, fear, depression, greed, jealousy, hatred, ill will, sloth, restlessness, remorse and uncertainty. The positive terms being the state of being endowed with such beneficial mental qualities as love

29. Payutto, Phra Prayudh, *Buddhadhamma: Natural Laws and Values for Life*, Grant A. Olson, (tr.), New York: State University of New York Press, 1996: 27.

30. Jatava pointed out that, the set of Buddhism values-the Four Noble Truths, the Five Precepts and the Ten of Perfections are derived from the affirmation of the human condition, are the norms of action that encourage and lead towards individual purity of mind and body, social and communal harmony, even peaceful coexistence of nations in the world. See D.R. Jetava, *Op. Cit.*, 49-50.

(*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), equanimity (*upekkhā*), confidence (*saddhā*), mindfulness (*sati*), conscience (*sampajañña*), forbearance (*khanti*), generosity (*dāna* or *paricāga*), tranquillity (*sañña*), concentration (*samādhi*), mental strength and firmness and perfect mental health, consisting of mental health, consisting of mental clarity and purity, peacefulness and happiness.

- iv. *Intellectual freedom means freedom of and through knowledge and wisdom.* Belonging to this class of freedom are the processes of perceiving and learning that is clear of and free from distortion by any bias or ulterior motives; freedom of thinking and judgment and the free exercise of knowledge and wisdom that are just, honest, sincere and accurate not influenced by prejudices, self-interest, greed hatred or any selfish motives, And the knowledge of all things as they really are, or the insight into the true nature of all things, together with the emotional freedom as its corollary and the life-view and worldview that are based on that knowledge.³¹

The four (or three) levels of freedom are interrelated and interdependent. Without a minimum of physical freedom, the road to the other three levels of freedom is blocked. Without intellectual and emotional freedom, the wise use of resources as physical freedom is rendered impossible. Looking the freedom of knowledge and wisdom, the mind cannot be set free. In the absence of the freedom of the heart, social freedom is only a dream. Except for social freedom, physical freedom cannot come in true. With this fourfold freedom, peace and happiness are secured and they are real peace and real happiness, found both within and without, that is, peace and happiness that are deep-rooted in the mind of the individual and prevalent outside in society.³²

Buddhist doctrine is based on human ethical values and excellent code of morals, which are universal in nature and encourage the social harmony. These moral codes of Buddhism are as follows:

31. Payutto, Phra Prayudh, *Op.Cit*, 29.

32. *Ibid*: 30.

- i. *Pañcasīla* or five precepts: not killing, no stealing, not committing adultery, no to lie and not to take intoxicating liquors. *Pañcasīla* is the guiding principles in attaining moral perfection.
- ii. *Brahma-Vihara* or four sublime states: the four *Brahma Vihara* or sublime states namely *Metta* (loving Kindness), *Karuna* (compassion), *Muditā* (appreciative joy) and *Upekkha* (equanimity) occupy an important place in the social harmony.

These four sublime states are also known as *appamannaya* or illimitable as they lead on beyond all barriers which divide one man from another man, one community from another community and one nation from another nation. They are the pillars, so to say, of individual happiness, social amity and universal peace. Their cultivation would lead universal brotherhood and social harmony.³³

5. THE BUDDHA'S VISION OF PEACEFUL WORLD ORDER

The Buddha gave his message of liberation “for the wellbeing and happiness of the many-folk (*Bahujana*), out of compassion for the world” through his *Noble Eightfold Path* which is the only way to counter or eradicate human suffering in all its dimensions. It fully recognizes that every human being, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, caste or class has an unalienable right to the fullness of life, liberty and happiness. The Buddha described the human condition as a “sickness within and a sickness without.”³⁴ He thereby clearly recognized that personal and social suffering is mutually conditioning factors. The diseased human condition is a product of human action. To bring about a change in this situation, the people must overcome their ignorance (*avijja*) about the real causes of their suffering and become aware of the dehumanizing character of the conditions in which they live. The Buddha declared that in his New Society “there will be only one flavour, the flavour of freedom.”³⁵

33. Bahadur Singh, Shiv, *Buddhist Ethics and Social Harmony: An Essence of Social Development*, in Peoples Dion (ed.), “*Buddhism & Ethics*”, Symposium Volume, Thailand, Academic Papers Presented at the IABU Conference on Buddhist Ethics, 2008: 582.

34. *Sutta Nipata*: 130.

35. *Vinaya Piṭaka*: II: 239.

In the *Vaseṭṭha Sutta*³⁶, the Buddha demonstrated and declared that all human beings belong to one and the same species (*jāti*). Gender and social identities are not the product of biology but conceptualizations and reifications of repeated practices. In the *Aggañña Sutta*³⁷, beginning with simple and undifferentiated gatherer-hunter tribes, he elucidated that these divisions were the result of a gradual social evolution: transition from a mobile to a settled way of life with the invention of agriculture; the development of a complex division of labour; the breakdown of the collective ownership of the means of production by clans and the consolidation of private property and the hoarding of wealth in separate households. It is at this stage that the people decided to come together and by common consent appoint one from among them to maintain law and order. They gave the title of *Mahasammata* or the Great Consent or Elect, to this freely chosen ruler. The Buddha was the first thinker in human history to provide an ascending analysis of power and to trace the monarchy and the State to an originally social contract made by people. After tracing the emergence of each social stratum as well as of the monarchy, the Buddha repeatedly insisted:

‘Their origin was from among these same beings, like themselves, no different, and in accordance with the Dharma (conditioned co-genesis) and not contrary to Dharma. The principles formulated, by the Buddha in this discourse provides the basis for a preamble to a Charter on Human Rights. All men and women belong to the same species and share the same nature. All men and women are equal according to a Fundamental Law which is in accordance with actuality’.

The *Cakkavatti Sihanāda Sutta*³⁸ enunciates principles for righteous rule and suggests that the ruling elites are aware of their duties and responsibilities but consciously decide to rule according to their caprices and become despots.

Social and Economic Rights: In the *Kuṭadanta and Sigalovāda Suttas*, the Buddha formulates in greater detail how the above principles should be implemented. In the *Kuṭadanta Sutta*, the

36. *Majjhima Nikāya*: 98.

37. *Dīgha Nikāya*: 27.

38. *Ibid.*: 26.

Buddha outlines his views about political economy. The *Sutta* begins with conditions of anarchy in the kingdom of a despotic king: there is widespread crime and the countryside is bristling with rebellion. The king decides to unleash state terror in order to crush and eradicate the criminals. His Chaplain advises him to follow a saner plan. Instead of hoarding wealth in the state coffers, use it to stimulate the productivity of the people: Give land and seed to the peasants. Provide livestock breeders with grasslands to pasture their animals. Provide traders with capital. Ensure that wage labourers are paid a just wage. The king follows this plan and the country prospers and peace and security is restored. The people with joy in their hearts dwelt in unlocked homes dancing their children in their arms. In the Noble Eightfold Path, Right Livelihood is included as an indispensable feature of his Ethical Path. Implicitly he recognizes that everyone has a right to a livelihood. The Buddha advocates a Middle Path between absolute state control and ethically uninformed private enterprise.

In the society of the Buddha's Day, as indeed until very recently, in all societies world-wide the household was the corner stone of the economy. The Buddha's advice to the head of a household, in the *Sigalovāda Sutta*,³⁹ is in fact a social charter on workers' rights. The Buddha begins by formulating the antecedent duties of employers. The contemporary relevance of the following principles can be appreciated if one recognizes that they correspond to Articles 23 and 24 of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The head of the household as head of a productive, unit should allocate work according to the strength and abilities of his employees (*yathabalaṃ kammanata samvidhadena*), provide food and just wages to his workers (*bhatta-vetananuppadabena*), provide health care for his workers (*gilana upatthana*), cultivate close friendship with the workers (*acchariyanaṃ rasanāṃ samvibhgena*), not exploit their labour power, but recognize their right to periodic leisure and rest (*samaye vossaggena*).

6. NEW WORLD ORDER

By Buddhist Ethics, I mean the many different kinds of way

39. Ibid.: 31.

intended to benefit mankind. These range from simple individual acts of charity, teaching and training, organized kinds of service, “*Right Livelihood*” in and outside the helping professions, and through various kinds of community development as well as to political activity in working for a better society. The enormous literature of Buddhism is not a literature of revelation and authority. Instead, it uses ethics and meditation, philosophy and science, art and poetry to point a Way to counter social evils. Similarly, Buddhist writing on social action, unlike secular writings, makes finite proposals which must ultimately refer to this, but which also are arguable in terms of our common experience.

Walpola Rahula stated the situation, when he wrote that “*Buddhism arose in India as a spiritual force against social injustices, against degrading superstitious rites, ceremonies and sacrifices; it denounced the tyranny of the caste system and advocated the equality of all men; it emancipated woman and gave her complete spiritual freedom.*”⁴⁰ The Buddhist scriptures do indicate the general direction of Buddhist social thinking, and to that extent they are *suggestive* for our own times. Nevertheless it would be pedantic, and in some cases absurd, to apply directly to modern industrial society social prescriptions detailed to meet the needs of social order which flourished more than 2500 years ago. The social order to which Buddhist social action is ultimately directed must be one that minimizes non-volitionally caused suffering, whether in mind or body, and which also offers encouraging conditions for its citizens to see more clearly into their true nature and overcome their karmic inheritance. The Buddhist way is, with its compassion, its equanimity, its tolerance, its concern for self-reliance and individual responsibility, the most promising of all the models for the New Society which are an on offer which must be constituted of:

- i. Help people to overcome ego-centeredness
- ii. Offer to each a freedom and emphasis should be on the undogmatic acceptance of a diversity of tolerably compatible. There are no short cuts to utopia, whether by “social engineering” or theocracy.

40. See Rahul, Walpol, *What the Buddha Taught?*, 2nd ed., Gordon Fraser, 1967.

- iii. Concern itself primarily with the material and social conditions for personal growth.

It is noteworthy that the Dalai Lama saw “*nothing wrong with material progress provided man takes precedence over progress. In fact it has been my firm belief that in order to solve human problems in all their dimensions we must be able to combine and harmonize external material progress with inner mental development.*”⁴¹ Clearly, all the above must ultimately be conceived on a world scale. “*Today we have become so interdependent and so closely connected with each other that without a sense of universal responsibility, irrespective of different ideologies and faiths, our very existence or survival would be difficult.*”⁴² This statement underlines the importance of Buddhist internationalism and of social policy and social action conceived on a world scale. The above is not offered as some kind of blueprint for utopia. Progress would be as conflict-ridden as the spiritual path of the ordinary Buddhist and the world may never get there anyway. However, Buddhism is a very practical and pragmatic kind of idealism, and there is, as always, really no alternative but to try.

Therefore, Buddhism focuses attention on the need to promote the welfare of people in respect of the conditions of their material living. However, from the Buddhist point of view such a pursuit is not an end in itself. It is perhaps on that ground that Buddhism has introduced the concepts of two persons of great benefit to mankind. What may be concluded from the above discussion is that Buddhism can be credited with a much more comprehensive notion of social welfare than a narrow notion of social welfare that takes into account only the material aspects of human needs. It is this more comprehensive approach of Buddhism that attributes a greater value to spiritual welfare that is misconstrued as a life denying, asocial and salvation doctrine. Given that the key tenets and principles of Buddhism extol the virtues of reason, human freedom and moral responsibility, man in contemporary society, especially in a highly scientific and technological age, can profitably engage in a meaningful dialogue with Buddhist thought and practice

41. See Dalai Lama, *Universal Responsibility and the Good Heart*, Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan works, 1976: pp. 10, 14, 29.

42. Ibid.

to determine its relevance to one's individual and social needs.

The crux of a Buddhist social ethics lies on how one conceptualizes the concept of the individual and society, or the self and the other. Following Kalupahana, this may be through the concepts of 'self-interest' and 'mutual self-interest' to provide a conceptual bridge between individual and society or self and other. The basis of an 'engaged Buddhism' is firmly entrenched in a social ethic and a morality which integrates individual betterment or perfection with the good of others. As Walpola Rahula reminds us, Buddhism was a powerful 'spiritual force against social injustices, degrading superstitious rites... the tyranny of the caste system... (advocating) the equality of all men... (and emancipating) women'. This important and often ignored aspect of Buddhist thought has recently been highlighted in the path finding study of Kancha Ilaih while Omvedt makes the pointed observation that the Buddha, 'far from being a 'religious' thinker, was pre-eminently a social thinker. Above all, to achieve the desired end, all of us, especially Buddhists, have to practice the Buddha's words in their daily lives to counter the social evils that prevailed in the modern society which is reflected in one of the verse of the *Dhammapada*, "*Practice what you preach. Behave the way you want others to behave. One skillfully taming oneself thus tames others. How difficult is it to tame thyself.*"⁴³

7. CONCLUSION

The Buddhist worldview is surprisingly in accordance with the insights of peace in its process-oriented paradigm, its insistence on peace by peaceful means, and its holistic framework of peace, which would play a vital role in the efforts of bringing the culture of peace into existence around the world. To sum up, one can easily say that Buddhism is totally compatible with the congenial and peaceful global order. The texts, doctrines and philosophy of Buddhism are the best suited for inter-faith dialogue, harmony and universal peace. Even today, Buddhism can resurrect the universal brotherhood, peaceful co-existence and harmonious surroundings in the comity of nations.

43. *Dhammapada*, verse no. 159.

References

- Runzo, Josef and Martin, Nancy M (eds.), *Ethics in the World Religions*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2007.
- Strong, John S, *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations*, Second edition, London, Toronto, Belmont and Albert Complex: Wadsworth, Thomson Learning, 2002.
- Singh, Arvind Kumar, *Relevance of Buddhism in Attaining World Peace* in Le Manh That and Thich Nhat Tu (eds.), *War, Conflict and Healing: A Buddhist perspective*, HCM City, Vietnam Buddhist University, 2008.
- Mungekar, Bhalchandra and Rathore, Aakash Singh (eds.), *Buddhism and the Contemporary World: An Ambedkarian Perspective*, New Delhi: Book Well, 2007.
- Thepsopon, Phra (Prayoon Merek), *A Buddhist World View*, Fifth Impression, Bangkok: Mahachula Buddhist University Press, 2001.
- Rahula, Walpola, *What the Buddha Taught*, Reprinted, Taipei, Taiwan: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2002.
- Khemananda. B, *The Buddhist Concept of Peace*, Second Edition, Calcutta: Lazo Print, 1996.
- Paitoon, Sinlarat (ed.), *Higher Education and the Promotion of Peace*, Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University.
- Sri Dhammananda. K, *Great Personalities on Buddhism*, Malaysia: B.M.S. Publication, 1965.
- Coomaraswamy, Ananda K, *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, Third Indian Edition, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2003.
- Yeh, Teresa Der-lan, "The way to peace: a Buddhist perspective", *international Journal of PeaceStudies*, Vol.11, Spring/Summer, 2006.
- Jatava. D.R, *Buddhism in Modern World*, Jaipur, Rajasthan:ABD

Publishers, 2007.

Shaw, Sarah, *Introduction to Buddhist Meditation*, London and New York, 2009.

Payutto, Bhikkhu P.A., *A Buddhist Solution for the Twent-First Century*, Twentieth Impression, Bangkok: Pimsuay Printing, 2003.

Punyanubhap, Sujip, “*Buddhism aand the World Peace*”, in Kamdee Duan (ed.), *Graduate School Journal Mahamukut Buddhist University*, Special edition, April 2004.

Payutto, Phra Prayudh, *Buddhadhamma: Natural Laws and Values for Life*, Grant A, Olson, (tr.), New York: State University of New York Press, 1996.

Bahadur Singh, Shiv, *Buddhist Ethics and Social Harmony: An Essence of Social Development*, in Peoples Dion (ed.), “*Buddhism & Ethics*”, Symposium Volume, Thailand, Academic Papers Presented at the IABU Conference on Buddhist Ethics, 2008.