

# Buddhist Exploration of Peace and Justice

EDITED BY  
CHANJU MUN & RONALD S. GREEN





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Honolulu, USA**



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We wish to dedicate this humble book to Ven. Daewon Ki, with whose deep insight and ideas it originated. It is also being published to commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary (since 1975) of his propagation of Buddhism in his newly adopted nation, the United States of America.



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## Notes

1. The Pinyin system is used for Chinese terms, the Korean Government Romanization System revised in 2000 for Korean ones, and the Hepburn system for Japanese ones.
2. Diacritics are used on most of Sanskrit and Pali terms.
3. Foreign terms, those not included in the Webster English Dictionary, appear in italics.
4. Only where authors have romanized their names in ways contrary to East Asian Standard Romanization Systems have we adapted their spellings.
5. Where names have not previously been romanized, the editors have done so using East Asian Standard Romanization Systems.
6. Standard PTS abbreviations are used for Pali texts.
7. This book is edited based on the 15<sup>th</sup> edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
8. Each contributor's academic affiliation and title reflects their status as of the year 1991.



## Abbreviations

H	<i>Hanguk bulgyo jeonseo</i>
JIABS	<i>Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies</i>
PTS	The Pali Text Society
SBE	<i>Sacred Books of the East</i>
T	<i>Taishō shinshū daizōkyō</i>
YDJ	<i>Yongseong daejongsa jeonjip</i>
YSY	<i>Yonseong seonsa yeongu</i>







## **Preface**

This book originated completely from the initiative of Venerable Daewon Ki, founder of Korean Buddhist Dae Won Sa Temple of Hawaii, the largest Korean Buddhist Temple in North America, in the end of 1995 in Honolulu. My humble position as editor was facilitated by fortune of my personal and precious encounter with him as my spiritual guide and religious advisor. The following brief explanation of my relation with him might help readers understand how this book has been published.

In late 1995, I was able to come to the United States through the invitation of Ven. Daewon Ki and began to have a deep relation with him. Since then, he has remained a spiritual advisor and a major financial patron to me.

In mid-1995, I was discharged from the Korean Army as a Buddhist chaplain officer after serving around three and half a years. Afterwards, I traveled to several nations with deep connections with Buddhism, such as India, Nepal, China, Thailand and so on, for half a year. While in travel, I recognized how important English was as a communication medium in the international context.

In late 1995, Ven. Daewon Ki invited me to come to the United States where I naturally had the opportunity to learn English. I cannot forget how much he helped me become accustomed to the new world during my stay in Hawaii between December 1995 and August 1997. For instance, he took me to the Social Security Administration Office to let me apply for a Social Security Number, arranged for me to take the driver license exam and helped me to open a bank account.

He opened opportunities for me to work and lead religious services in his temple. He taught me how to organize lay Buddhist groups and how to consult lay Buddhists in trouble to adjust in their adopted nation. In addition to temple works, I could learn English in an ESL program at the University of Hawaii - Manoa via his financial support.

He was my closest senior and religious advisor until my departure in August 1997 to study Buddhism academically in the Buddhist Studies program in the Department of Languages and Cultures of Asia at the University of Wisconsin - Madison, where I received a Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies in 2002. To this day, he remains the most important advisor and the most reliable senior monk for me to consult and to solve difficult problems. Whenever I need his help, advice and suggestions, he is very kind and considerate to answer my requests.



This book is composed of the five special speeches and twenty-three articles presented in the Fifth International Seminar on Buddhism and Leadership for Peace in Seoul during November 18 - 21, 1991. I want to generally introduce the background of the International Seminars on Buddhism and Leadership for Peace, 1983-1995. To make readers understand the seminars more concretely, I will briefly explain the Korean Buddhist Dae Won Sa Temple of Hawaii.

The temple complex of Dae Won Sa was founded by Ven. Daewon, who arrived in the United States in 1975. On a mountainside in Honolulu's Palolo Valley, he began the first structure in 1980 and finished it in 1982. The plans for the larger complex were first drawn in 1983 and construction began in 1984. The work has been long and arduous and is still going on. It is the only traditionally structured Korean Buddhist temple and the largest cluster of Korean traditional architectural works outside the boundaries of Korea. It is composed of the Four Heavenly Kings Gate, the World Peace Pagoda, the Bell Tower, the Hall of Memorial to the Departed, Donor's Tablets, the Main Hall, the Statue of Maitreya Bodhisattva, Buddhist Cultural Center Building, several residential houses and other structures.

Since 1983, seven international seminars on Buddhism and Leadership for Peace have been convened. They originated from the vision of Ven. Daewon Ki. The concept underlying the seminar is to bring Buddhist thinkers, peace leaders and peace scholars together from several countries on themes of common interest for mutual benefit. Although Buddhism provides the convening inspiration, all participants need not be Buddhist in any formal sense. So, leading these seminars, he has opened them to all scholars who want to participate, regardless of their religion or beliefs. Thus, participants have included Christians, Gandhians, Hindus, Jains, Muslims, Marxists, Secular Humanists and others.

The first seminar was held in Honolulu, Hawaii during October 22-28, 1983 on the theme of "Buddhism and Leadership for Peace." It was held under the auspice of the Dae Won Sa Temple of Hawaii and was co-sponsored by the Department of Political Science, University of Hawaii at Manoa. Professor Glenn Paige from the Political Science Department served as the Director of the Seminar. There were three discussion papers on Buddhism by Wimal Dissanayake, on leadership by Chaiwat Satha-Anand and on peace by Johan Galtung. Participants came from China, South Korea, Sri Lanka, the Soviet Union, Thailand and the USA. The contents of the seminar are recorded in *Buddhism and Leadership for Peace*, edited by Glenn D. Paige (Honolulu: Dae Won Sa Buddhist Temple of Hawaii, 1984).

The second seminar was held in Tokyo, Japan during December 2-7, 1985, on the theme of "Buddhism in the Context of Various Countries." The seminar was held under the joint auspices of the Dae Won Sa Temple of Hawaii and the Peace Research Institute of Soka University. Professor Glenn Paige from the Political Science Department of the University of Hawaii - Manoa served as the Director of the Seminar. Context papers included those on Bali by Gedong



Bagoes Oka, China by Zhao Baoxu, India by N. Radhakrishnan, Japan by Nakano Tsuyoshi and Takamura Tadashige, Mongolia by I. Ochirbal, the Soviet Union by V. Baykov and V. Hlynov, Thailand by Chaiwat Satha-Anand and the United States by Ryo Imamura. Bali, India and Mongolia were added to the nations represented in the first seminar. The proceedings are included in *Buddhism and Leadership for Peace*, edited by Soka University, Peace Research Institute (Tokyo: Soka University, Peace Research Institute, 1986).

The third seminar was held in Honolulu, Hawaii during May 23-28, 1987, on a theme suggested by Chaiwat Satha-Anand from Thailand, "Peace Making in Buddhist Contexts." It was co-sponsored by the Dae Won Sa Temple of Hawaii and the Peace Institute of the University of Hawaii. Participants included those from China, India, Japan, South Korea, Mongolia, the Soviet Union, Thailand and the USA. Principal discussion papers concentrated on Sri Lanka by A. T. Ariyaratne, Thailand by Chaiwat Satha-Anand and Vietnam by Thich Nhat Hanh. Professor Glenn Paige from the Political Science Department served as the Director of the Seminar. I am planning to publish selected papers from this seminar together with those from other sources in a general volume on *Buddhism and Nonviolence*.

The fourth seminar was held in Ulan Bator, Mongolia during August 16-24, 1989, on theme of "Buddhism and Nonviolent Global Solving." It was held under the joint sponsorship of the Dae Won Sa Temple of Hawaii, the Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace (ABCP) and the Center for Global Nonviolence Planning Project of the Institute for Peace, University of Hawaii. Professor Glenn Paige from the Political Science Department served as the Director of the Seminar. Themes of papers included Buddhism by Sulak Sivaraksa, leadership for global problem solving by Mushakoji Kinhide and the context for peaceful global transformation by Johan Galtung. Discussions focused on the relevance of Buddhism for solving the interrelated problems of disarmament, economic justice, human rights, environmental preservation, and transnational problem-solving cooperation. Participants came from China, India, Japan, two Koreas, Mongolia, the Soviet Union, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam and the USA. Some seminar papers have been published in the journal of the Asia Buddhist Conference for Peace, *Buddhists for Peace*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (1989).

The fifth seminar was held in Seoul, Korea during November 18-21, 1991, on theme of "Exploration of Ways to Put Buddhist Thought into Social Practice for Peace and Justice." It was held under the joint sponsorship of Dae Won Sa Temple of Hawaii and Korean Buddhist Research Institute of Dongguk University, cosponsored by the Federation of Korean Lay Buddhist Associations and the Korean Buddhism Promotion Foundation. Professor Jeongil Do from the Department of English Literature of the Kyung Hee University served as the Director of the Seminar. More than 60 participants came from Canada, China, Germany, India, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Thailand, Vietnam and the USA. The present book contains selected papers from the fifth seminar.



The sixth seminar was held in Honolulu during November 24-28, 1993 on the theme "A Buddhist World View and Concept of Peace." The seminar was held under the joint auspices of the Dae Won Sa Buddhist Cultural Institute of Hawaii and the Department of Philosophy at the University of Hawaii. Ten participants presented papers related to early Buddhism, Mahāyāna, East Asian Buddhism as well as modern Buddhist movements in Asia and the West. Participants included those from Korea, Sri Lanka and the USA. Professor David Kalupahana of the Department of Philosophy served as the Director of the Seminar. I am planning to publish the seminar's papers under the title "Buddhist World Views and Concept of Peace" as one in a serial of volumes on *Buddhism and Leadership for Peace*.

The seventh seminar was held in Honolulu during June 3-8, 1995 on the theme of "Buddhism and Peace: Theory and Practice." The seminar was held under the joint sponsorship of the Dae Won Sa Buddhist Cultural Institute of Hawaii and the Department of Philosophy, University of Hawaii at Manoa. More than forty scholars and religious leaders from Asia, Europe and the USA participated in the seminar. Papers deal with five themes: (1) Individual and Peace, (2) Society and Conflict Resolution, (3) Environment, (4) Health and (5) East Asian Buddhism. Professor Kalupahana directed the Seminar. I plan to publish this book under the title of the same theme *Buddhism and Peace: Theory and Practice* in the near future.

As you have seen in the above passages, the articles presented in the first, second and fourth international seminars on Buddhism and Leadership for Peace, held in 1983, 1985 and 1989 respectively were selected and published. This book is the outcome of the fifth international seminar on the same topic in 1991.

In the near future, I am planning to publish the remaining three books by selecting and editing the articles submitted in the third, sixth and seventh international seminars held in 1987, 1993 and 1995 respectively as the serial volumes. However, unfortunately, the international seminar has not continued since 1995. I sincerely hope to revitalize the international seminar in order to promote peace in this struggling human society, domestically and internationally, by continuing the original vision of Ven. Daewon Ki in Hawaii or elsewhere as soon as possible.

Chanju Mun  
Los Angeles, California  
November 2005



## **Acknowledgements**

First of all, I want to express my sincere appreciation to Ven. Daewon Ki. He provided me an invaluable opportunity to edit and publish the vital articles that were presented in the fifth International Seminar on Buddhism and Leadership for Peace held in 1991 on the theme of “Exploration of Ways to Put Buddhist Thought into Social Practice for Peace and Justice.” He convened seven international seminars from 1983 to 1995 biannually, each of which has its own theme under his profound vision to promote the peace in this problematic human society.

I wish to extend my thanks to Ven. Dawon Ki’s religious followers without whose financial support and various activities the seven successive seminars could not be held. They enthusiastically supported Ven. Daewon Ki in constructing the huge temple complex in the Palolo valley in Honolulu, Hawaii and in making a peace bridge between two Koreas in particular and two political antagonist blocs in general during the cold war period.

I am very appreciative of the more than sixty participants and particularly five special speakers and the contributors of the twenty-three articles. I am also honored to include the important articles by the world renowned and eminent scholars in this humble book. Especially, I thank the seminar director Professor Jeong-il Do from the Department of English Literature of the Kyung Hee University. In making the table of contents for this book, I am tremendously borrowing from their organization frame of the seminar.

I scanned all articles and transferred them into document files. I organized this book under my responsibility as the chief editor and was assisted by my close colleague and coeditor Dr. Ronald S. Green, specialist in Japanese Buddhism. I also extend my thanks to Dr. Green for editing this book in English and offering invaluable ideas and suggestions on it, for creating the index and making the camera-ready preparations necessary for publishing this book.







## Introduction

This book is composed of the five special speeches and twenty-three articles presented in the Fifth International Seminar on Buddhism and Leadership for Peace on the theme of “Exploration of Ways to Put Buddhist Thought into Social Practice for Peace and Justice,” during November 18 – 21, 1991. The seminar was held under the joint auspice of the Dae Won Sa Buddhist Temple of Hawaii and the Korean Buddhist Research Institute of Dongguk University. Professor Jeongil Do from the Department of English Literature of the Kyung Hee University directed the seminar. More than sixty peace leaders, social scientists, human scientists, religious leaders, Buddhist scholars, literary men and so forth from thirteen nations participated in the international conference. They delivered special speeches, presented articles or attended as panel members. The Most Venerable Uihyeon Seo, President of the Korean Buddhist Jogye Order and Chair of the Federation of Korean Buddhist Sects, Mr. Daejung Gim, currently opposition leader of the Democratic Party and later President of the Republic of Korea, and Dr. Byong-chun Min, President of the Dongguk University hosted the dinner party during the seminar respectively.

The titles and academic affiliations of participants are listed according to their status in 1991, when the fifth seminar was held. Among them, there are many local, Korean participants including: Mr. Eun Koh, Korea’s admired poet, novelist and democratic leader; Professor Yongjeong Gim, Vice President of the Dongguk University; Mr. Jiha Gim, the nationally renowned poet and democratic leader; Dr. Hak-joon Kim, Chief Assistant to the President for Policy Research; Dr. Byong-chun Min, President of the Dongguk University; Mr. Wan-il Park, President of the Federation of Korean Lay Buddhist Associations; Ven. Wolju Song, Former President of the Federation of Korean Buddhist Sects; Professor Jae-ryong Shim, Department of Philosophy, Seoul National University; Dr. Eul-byong Chang, President of the Sunggyunkwan University; Dr. Ki-young Lee, President of the Korean Institute for Buddhist Studies; Professor Byeongjo Jeong, Department of Ethics, Dongguk University; Ven. Jin-wol Lee; Ven. In-hwan Chae, Director of the Korean Buddhist Research Institute, Dongguk University; Professor Seungjik Hong, Director of the Center for Asian Affairs, Korea University; Professor Useong Heo, Department of Philosophy, Kyung Hee University and others.



Many people participated in this seminar from the United States and one from Canada as follows: Professor Glenn D. Paige, Department of Political Science, University of Hawaii – Manoa; Professor Sung-bae Park, Program in Korean Studies, Department of Comparative Studies, State University of New York – Stony Brook; Professor David J. Kalupahana, Department of Philosophy, University of Hawaii – Manoa; Professor Jamie Hubbard, Department of Religious Studies, Smith College; Ms. Jean Sadako King, Former Lieutenant Governor of the State of Hawaii; Professor David Chappell, Department of Religious Studies, University of Hawaii – Manoa; Ven. Daewon Ki, Abbot of the Dae Won Sa Buddhist Temple of Hawaii; Professor George Bond, Department of Religious Studies, Northwestern University; Professor Bernard Faure, Department of Religious Studies, Stanford University; Professor Taisetsu Unno, Department of Religious Studies, Smith College; Mr. J. C. Cleary, worldwide famous writer and translator; Professor Padmanabh S. Jaini, Department of South Asian Studies, University of California – Berkeley; Professor Graeme MacQueen, Department of Religious Studies, McMaster University, Canada and others.

There were many participants from Asia including the following: Professor Tadashige Takamura, Director of the Peace Research Institute, Soka University, Japan; Professor Hiroharu Seki, Dean of the Faculty of International Relations, Ritsumeikan University, Japan; Ven. Medagoda Sumanatissa, Principal of the International Theravāda Buddhist Centre, Sunethra Maha Devi (University) Privena, Boralessgamuwa, Sri Lanka; Professor Suwanna Satha-Anand, Department of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand; Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh, Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University, Thailand; K. S. Vimala Devi, G. Ramachandran Institute of Nonviolence, India; N. Radhakrishnan, Director of the Gandhi Smriti & Darshan Samiti, India; Professor Baoxu Zhao, Department of International Politics, Beijing University, China; Professor Jiwen Du, Institute for Research on World Religions, the Chinese Academy of Social Science, China; Ven. Thich Minh Chau, Vice President of the ABCP (Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace) and Vice Chairman of the Vietnamese Buddhist Sangha, Vietnam; Dr. G. Lubsantseren, Secretary General, ABCP, Mongolia and so on.

Several people attended this seminar from Europe as follows: Dr. Johan Galtung, Professor of Peace Studies, Spark M. Matsunaga Institute for Peace, University of Hawaii – Manoa and Olof Palme Professor of Peace Studies, HSFR, Sweden; Professor Sanje D. Dylykov, Institute of Oriental Studies, Academy of Sciences of the USSR and Vice President of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, USSR; Dr. Eremey Parnov, President of the European Society of Science Fiction, USSR; Mr. Erdem Mytypov, Secretary, Central Religious Board of Soviet Buddhists, Datsan Ivolginsk, Buryat ASSR and so forth.



This book is divided into two parts: “Special Speeches” and “Buddhist Explorations of Peace and Justice.” In the first part, there are five special speeches by five Korean dignitaries. First, Byong-chun Min presented “Welcoming Address”; second, Daewon Ki’s “Buddhism’s Role in Modern Society”; third, Eun Koh’s “What is Buddhism to Peace?”; fourth, Eul-byong Chang’s “World Peace, Korean Unification and Democracy”; and fifth, Wan-il Park, “Social Function of Buddhism.” Unfortunately, we were not able to include some of the special speeches delivered in Korean without English translations, by some of the Korean dignitaries.

The second part of the book contains twenty-three articles. Of the original contributions, some valuable articles in this group also had to be omitted. Since the time of the seminar, some presenters have passed away. Others could not be reached to review their articles for publication. The article by the late Ki-young Rhi has been included in this book even though there are no footnotes. The book also includes an article by Dr. Hak-joon Kim even though it is outdated in its discussion of the international situation surrounding the Korean peninsula in late 1980’s and early 1990’s. Even so, the article is very good for readers to understand the ROK’s policies to build a peaceful Northeast Asia just after the Cold War period. General articles on peace and justice in Buddhist contexts are arranged in the earlier part and articles related to Korean Buddhism in the later part of the book.

This is the most comprehensive book on the theme of peace and justice in Buddhist contexts to date. The number of distinguished contributors nearly equally came from the two major Buddhist traditions, Theravāda and Mahāyāna. The array of speeches and articles thoroughly investigate peace and justice from many different Buddhist traditions.

Ven. Daewon Ki, abbot of Dae Won Sa Buddhist Temple of Hawaii, held seven international seminars on Buddhism and Leadership for Peace, which have gained worldwide reputes for leading academic discussions on the subject. Of them, the fifth seminar comprehensively explored ways to put Buddhist thought into social practice for peace and justice. The scope of the fifth seminar was the widest among them. More than sixty peace activists and Buddhist scholars from thirteen nations participated and discussed peace and justice.

Peace activists, Buddhists and non-Buddhists, may draw upon the academic information and the knowledge shared by these profound thinkers, to build peace and promote social justice in this struggling and problematic world. The book is intended for social scientists, peace activists, Buddhist scholars, engaged Buddhists and all people concerned about social conditions. We hope they may incorporate Buddhist wisdom on peace and justice to broaden their understanding and to discover ways of bring about happiness in this world of conflict and injustice.







## **PART 1**

### **SPECIAL SPEECHES**







## **CHAPTER 1**

### **WELCOMING ADDRESS**

Byong-chun Min

As the president of Dongguk University, I am very honored to have this opportunity to welcome you to this very important seminar on Buddhism and Leadership for Peace. I should like to extend my cordial welcome to all of you, in particular, to those who are from distant places abroad.

I would like to make a few remarks concerning the significance of this seminar as follows.

First, this seminar is held under the joint auspices of the Dae Won Sa Temple of Hawaii and the Institute for Buddhist Culture at Dongguk University. Since the fourth century C.E. when Buddhism was introduced into Korea from China, Buddhism has had an important effect upon Korea's traditional culture. The spirit of Buddhism has been based on harmony rather than struggle. Our Dongguk University, with 17 colleges and 20,000 students, aims to prove truth and to transmit it on the basis of the spirit of Buddhism. This is why Dongguk University holds this seminar under the joint sponsorship of the Dae Won Sa Temple of Hawaii.

Second, I think that this seminar on the theme of "Exploration of Ways to put Buddhist Thought into Social Practice for Peace and Justice" is valuable in view of the current international situation. We know today that most countries try to alleviate international tensions and pursue peaceful prosperity in coexistence. However, we are still suffering from civil wars, violent revolutions and international wars. Therefore, both "liberation from war" and "liberation from violence and terror" remain unrealized. In this situation, it will be meaningful for peace-loving scholars and religionists to meet together, discuss the theme of common interest and try to solve the problems.

Third, this seminar is very significant because it deals with peace and justice in the Korean Peninsula where cold war tensions still remain. As everybody knows, South and North Korea are pitted against each other in many aspects. Especially, peace-loving people in the world as well as the Korean people worry over the situation that North Korea tries to be armed with nuclear weapons and refuses international inspection of its nuclear-weapons



development. Nowadays, it is a serious obstacle to reconciliation and peaceful coexistence between South and North Korea. Therefore, this seminar on Buddhism and Leadership for Peace plays an important role in the divided Korean Peninsula.

It is my deep hope that through your participation in this seminar you discuss and suggest clear ways to put Buddhist thought into social practice for peace and justice in the world as well as in the Korean Peninsula. I express my heartfelt thanks to you once more for your committed cooperation during the whole process of this seminar. I wish you a successful seminar and a good time in Korea.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **BUDDHISM'S ROLE IN MODERN SOCIETY**

Daewon Ki

I convened the fifth international conference on Buddhism and Leadership for Peace from November 18<sup>th</sup> through the 21<sup>st</sup> 1991 to discuss the role of Buddhism in modern society and the social aspects of Buddhist practices. We thoroughly discussed these matters with the various specialists, who have diverse experiences and research backgrounds. Nevertheless, when confronted with the definition of Buddhism, we are at a loss to come up with a singular definition. Nowadays, we cannot say that our tradition is only true by denouncing another tradition. The way of cultivating and practicing Buddhist spiritual realization is not singular, but plural.

There are two distinct traditions, namely, a textual and theoretical tradition and a devotional and belief one. Looking at these two different traditions, we should not say that one side is true and authentic and the other is not. They are expressed so variously according to the inner needs of humanity according to the gestalt of the society and time. When the texts become separated from humanity, they end up with doctrinal dogmas that are merely “dead literature.” Many types of Buddhist beliefs have sprung up according to the immediate needs of whatever time and place are in question. The massive amount of the Buddhist texts has been created by answering the various diverse needs of the people so that Buddhism allows such diversity in itself. In context, Buddhists have needed even a lot of “apocryphal texts” through its history.

When looking at Buddhist tradition, there is the strict division between monastics and laymen. The monastics must go through long and arduous self-cultivation to attain enlightenment, and the layperson, though revering the monastics, can attain easy access to Sukhāvātī (Pure Land) through charitable deeds. Based on what they need, Buddhism offers different cultivation methods to laypersons and monastics.

Buddhism has never been hostile and violent to any other religions. Buddhism has accepted many elements of the traditional Brahmanist beliefs in India and the native religious elements from Bon in Tibet. Due to the fact that China had a highly developed and intellectual tradition before the introduction



of Buddhism, Buddhism was completely domesticated to Chinese tastes. In Korea and Japan, Buddhism respectfully accepted the indigenous values and ideologies. Buddhism has never used bloody wars as a mode of transmission to other nations. Buddhism creates syncretic characteristics with local cultures and religions.

Likewise, here we come to the main theme of this fifth international conference: “What can Buddhism give contributions to this modern society?” Buddhism is not a religion definable by a singular doctrine, principle or ideology. In looking at medieval European history, one sees exactly two distinct powers, namely the royal crown’s secular authority and the religious authority. This can be seen as a history of the struggle for dominating hegemony between them. In all of history, Buddhism has had no such turbulence in hegemony struggles. While Buddhism has altered itself on its own accord for the goal of harmonizing with the indigenous traditions, those indigenous traditions have been “Buddhicized.”

If we look at Vinaya texts in Pali, there is the following exemplary story. When the Buddha was still alive, there was a famous Jain general Siha. Having heard from the Licchavi people such high praise of Pākṣyamuni Buddha, he went to see the Buddha directly ascertain the truth of it. He met the Buddha and having heard his teachings, he requested the Buddha to accept himself as a lay disciple. The Buddha recommended he continue to believe in Jainism as he had done. When he continually requested the Buddha to accept himself in the Buddhist community, the Buddha allowed him to believe in Buddhism with a condition that he should support the Jain community even after his conversion from Jainism to Buddhism.

When the Buddha’s disciples went out to other regions to spread the Buddhist teachings, they used regional dialects rather than the high intellectual Sanskrit language used by the Brahmins and the Kṣatriyas. They used prose instead of poetry in their preaching. Buddhism was a live and often modernized teaching that was not monopolized only in the mouths of socially high-level persons. It retained the spirit of the people. With this kind of spirit, Buddhism incorporated other traditions and cultures into its umbrella and Buddhist texts were translated into the context of other cultural traditions.

In this modern and scientifically advanced society, Buddhism is faced with an emergency crisis represented by a European Nietzschean provocative slogan, “God is dead.” The modern people anticipate the more convincing new worldview. Let us look at Buddhism. With the excessive and disproportionate use of materials, modern society has fallen into dire straits no matter what its ecological world is. We can also look to the important messages given here in Buddhist doctrines, beginning with the Dependent Origination Theory according to which everything is related each other at innumerably multi-dimensional levels.

Exclusivist religious tenets procreate war in the name of religion and strongly support antagonistic religious disaccord by asserting that only their



religious tenets are true. However, many different Buddhist traditions coexist within a relationship of symbiosis and harmony that is not one of confrontation and conflict. Furthermore, in the light of the much research on excavations and inscriptions, the previous coexistence of differing sects together within ancient Buddhist saṅgha can be seen. It was a case of singing the Lord Buddha's eternal sound in beautiful harmony expressed by different voices. We understand this to be the distinct "gates" or "vehicles." Even though the gate through which one enters or the vehicle that one rides is different, we cannot deny the fact that they are equally going to the unified goal of "enlightenment." We cannot declare only one specific way as being the true orthodox teaching of the Lord Buddha.

As for this spirit of Buddhism's diversity and harmony, Buddhism was not created by a special group and it is not the product of a specific time. It is created as a universal religion for all of mankind. It is not only an Asian religion but also a world one. While Buddhism is progressing forward for a new future by means of experimentation and challenges, it has many hopeful possibilities. While trying to appropriately adapt the Lord Buddha's eternal sound to our era's particular necessity, we need to understand it in a different regional and ethnic context in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.







## CHAPTER 3

### WHAT IS BUDDHISM TO PEACE?

Eun Koh

I remember the final stage of the Vietnam War in the late 1960s. Bertrand Russell referred to it by saying, “The world has learnt conscience from Vietnam.”

Back in the late sixties, I had a chance to visit Saigon. At the Than Son Nut airport, there were more Air Force fighters than civilian airplanes. And it struck me very naturally for there was a war going on. I went here and there by visiting the southern jungles and back streets of war-stricken Saigon. I went to a Buddhist temple and met a senior monk from whom I learnt a precious Vietnamese word, “*Hoabin*.” It was the first thing he uttered to me. It sounded like a Vietnamese response to a protesting young man against the US-led war. In the late sixties the US government was presenting to the world the image of a split nation. Even though hundreds of thousands of the US combat soldiers were put in Vietnam, the number of young men and women several times more than the number of the US soldiers in Vietnam fought against the war in the US territory. There was a senior monk dreaming about *hoabin* beyond war in Saigon.

The *hoabin*, had it been a mere un-political prayer in the mouth of monks, would have been nothing but a dream. But, when monks were burning their bodies on streets in Saigon to protest against a corrupt dictatorship, the *hoabin* was certainly more than an idle dream. The word was pregnant with meaning and explosive power. Perhaps that is why the word is still alive in my memory.

When expressed in Chinese characters and pronounced in our way, *hoabin* is “*hwapyeong*” 和平. It means “*pyeonghwa*” 平和 (peace). *Hoabin* or *pyeonghwa* is antithetical to war but it is more than anti-war, for peace is much loftier than mere antithesis to war. In this sense, I am not content with some of Western theories of peace, for example, the definition given to peace by theorists like Raymond Aron.

Many words of the European languages have their etymological roots in Latin or in Greek. We have many words whose meaning is kept in vivid image formed in the Chinese hieroglyphic. For Instance, the character “*pyeong*” 平 in the vocabulary “*pyeonghwa*” 平和 (peace) gives us an image of parity: pair of



articles on the scale, each on a par with the other. The letter “*hwa*” 和 combines both “rice” 禾 and “mouth” 口, that is, rice entering the mouth. Equal and even distribution of rice (material) is the condition for the parity visualized in the Chinese character “*pyeong*” 平. Then the “*hwa*” 和 comes as the humblest euphoria we experience after the act of eating. Thus, an equality combined with euphoria constitutes the peace content of the word *pyeonghwa*. The hieroglyphic composition of the word shows us, on the morphological and semantic level, that peace is hollow when poverty and starvation prevail in the house. Peace is the fair share of a world in which no one is a stranger to equality and happiness.

In the modern world there are still millions of starving people; and more than millions are dying everyday with no decent medical care. This is a sheer mockery of peace. Peace is nothing if it does not mean deliverance from suffering. That is why compassion for the suffering mass of the people looms as the largest value in Buddhism.

You may have seen various images of the Buddha in many different parts of the world. Those images, as objects of study or of reverence, or even as art objects, give us different impressions. The Buddha images of Tibet differ from those of China. The medieval Buddha images of Japan, though they were replicas of ancient Korean Buddha images, have something distinctly Japanese. The Buddha images of West India, filtered through the Gandharian arts, can easily be distinguished from the Buddha images of Southeast Asia. The regional uniqueness of the images seems to reflect the history, culture, and life of the societies from which the images come.

Despite the uniqueness, however, there is also something common to all the different images: the peace expressed and embodied in the Buddha’s face. It is the face of peace, or rather, the face is peace. If taken in pieces, i.e., eyes, nose, and lips, the parts hardly express peace or joyousness; but when assembled into a configuration, they produce a gestalt image of peace with a delicate and joyous smile. If you have a chance to visit, perhaps after this seminar, our ancient city of Gyeongju in the south, you will find a Buddha image from the Silla dynasty sitting timelessly in a stone cave Seokgul-am on Mt. Toham. Whenever I talk about the face of the Buddha image, the Buddha image of the Seokgul-am always comes to my mind with his smile alighted by the distant sunrise of the Eastern Sea. You will know his smile. Buddhism seeks no images. But the images serve as a useful means.

But if there were no idea of Buddhist peace, there would be no Buddhist peace image. Buddhism is the thought of peace and compassion and it is this thought that produces the images.

All the Buddhist scriptures are dealing with peace. In the *Dhammapada*, it is said that winning a battle, war, or competition begets rancor. The *Mahāyāna-saṅgraha* preaches to us about the virtue of patience, saying that peace originates from patience: If one is virtuous enough to stay away from anger, it is his peace; and if one is virtuous enough not to provoke anger and rancor in others, it is the peace of the others.



This is a paradigm of peace applicable to the relations of nations, perhaps with the qualification that it must not be taken as a policy of laissez-faire. In the time of the Buddha, there was in the saṅgha a man named Sona whose disposition was prone to quarrelling. Records show how often Ānanda, Pākyamuni's cousin, troubles himself to keep Sona away from feuds, telling him that it is not good to anyone if he fastens a quarrel upon others and that it only begets more sufferings.

In the Orient, the army was once meant not for war but for the war prevention. But on the vast continent of Asia the time of peace was always short. Laozu and Confucius lived in an age of warring nations. Human history has more pages devoted to wars than to peace. Time of peace is often considered a mere pre-war time to prepare blood to shed. Buddhism is not prepared for this kind of history, but it must always find itself in the world. In Korea, Buddhism had emphasized too much of its otherworldly philosophy which often ended up in siding with feudal ideology or in locking itself up in a complete withdrawal from the world.

Now the world is changing. The Cold War is fading into the dust of history. Even in Lebanon, where all the problems of the world seem to be packed in one spot, there are signs of life reviving to its normal rhythm. After the Persian Gulf War, the international community is busy holding all kinds of peace conferences. This certainly is the age of international cooperation.

And where does Korea stand? It is a land where the Yalta system and the cold-war ideology still hold sway; it still remains as a divided nation. The land is vivid with memories of war and confrontation. In such a country, this seminar devoted to the question of Buddhism and peace is quite meaningful, but it is also burdened with the question of Buddhists roles in this nation.

What can Buddhism do in a place where peace is cried for? It is not enough for Buddhism and Buddhists of this country to sing and dance to the tune of the peace mood now prevailing all over the world. What is needed in this country is a serious Buddhist peace movement. It is not too much to say that Buddhism embodies the thought of complete interpenetration; it is a religion based on the idea of peace and compassion. Wonhyo, Korea's ancient Buddhist thinker, has bequeathed to us the idea of "Harmonization of Disputes" 和諍 by which he proposed ways to overcome all divisions and confrontations. But I think it is not enough to propagate the ideas of Buddhist peace as mere ideas." Such ideas should be cherished by all Buddhist monks, scholars and laypersons. Ways must be found to translate ideas into concrete social projects. And the projects must be endowed with a sense of certain purpose.

Traditionally, Korean Buddhism has been content with telling its followers to become a Buddha. Thus, the idea of becoming a Buddha has been taken as the ultimate purpose of Buddhism. The fastest way to become a Buddha is to practice to Seon (Jp., Zen). In the southern part of this country, there is the meditation center called the "Three Day Hermitage." There is a story of a Seon practitioner who achieved enlightenment through a mere three-day practice of



Seon. Hence the hermitage is named. I do not want to engaged in discussing on whether or not it is possible to become a Buddha in such a short time. What I want to say is that becoming a Buddha is not Buddhism's ultimate end but a means. Buddhism's ultimate purpose is to practice compassion, thereby eliminating all the causes of war, disputes, crimes, exploitations, oppression, starvation, overpopulation, disease, and ecological deterioration. To become a Buddha is a means to tackling such problems besetting the present world. To be a Buddha is not merely to achieve redemption on the individual level; it is to be a Buddha for the world community.

Buddhism is a religion for practice and action. The middle way, thought so fundamental to Buddhism, amply suggests that Buddhism can develop a universal program of action for changing the world to transform the very structure of confrontation which is based on the self and non-self opposition. To do so, the present Korean Buddhist organizations and other affiliate institutions would need "secularization" on a greater scale.

The Buddhist saṅgha is not for individuals, but for community. Peace does not come through the heroic action of one man; it springs from the hope of a mass of people and is achieved through their cooperation. Peace in this sense is thoroughly Buddhist, for it is not a providential grace to be given to us from somewhere outside human action and history; it is what we make out of the very historical life we lead.

Buddhism and compassion, Buddhism and liberation, Buddhism and peace, these are pairs. In each pair one element is not weightier than the other. They have equal values. Buddhism is peace. In the house of peace you are not a guest; so far as peace is concerned, you are the master of the house.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **WORLD PEACE, KOREAN UNIFICATION AND DEMOCRACY**

Eul-byong Chang

We all know that today our world is in the vortex of change. The bipolar order of the world's beginning to show definite signs of decomposition as the socialist world has for some time now been undergoing the process of change, which enables us to imagine a world beyond the grip of the Cold War.

There are of course other voices, voices of worry expressed over the possibility that the fading ideological warfare might be displaced by yet another round of confrontation in the more sinister forms of economic conflict or nationalist turmoil. Yet, to the Korean people, who have suffered most from the cold ideological war, the changes occurring in the world today are certainly more than welcome. As the new developments on the international scene are expected to bring about some kind of peace, however limited it may be, on the political and military level, Korea can at least entertain the hope that "division," the Cold War's last remnant, may soon disappear from the Korean peninsula.

Korea and China are the only remaining cases of divided nations in today's world. But each has its own stories: the process that led to division in both countries is quite different. For China, the division was the result of a civil strife, something that was not imposed on it from without. In the case of Korea, however, the division was entirely a product of the international power interests. This difference is important for it shows that the division of the peninsula into North and South could in no way be justified and, therefore, must be removed from it; but it is also a factor that renders our effort towards reunification all the more difficult. For the division is not only a problem to be solved by the North and South Koreans but a question that involves the dynamics of power relations in Northeastern Asia.

However, the emergence of a unified Germany that came about in one year or two has helped us Koreans to believe a unified Korea may not be an impossibility.

Up until two years ago, there were not many who looked to an optimistic future of one Germany. This was no less true with the German people



themselves. For the Germans knew that the interest of the Allied Powers was not the only cause of the German division; they at least knew that their agony was something they had had to pay for the historical errors made in their own name. This was why the German people never allowed themselves to entertain the idea of early reunification.

Yet, the moment of surprise came on the day of November 9, 1989. On that day, the Berlin Wall crumbled down. And in less than a year from that moment, on October 3, 1990, East and West Germany became one nation by achieving political and legal integration.

What was it that had made the change possible? I believe the answer could be sought in the ability of the German people, especially the Western Germans, who were able enough to turn the disadvantageous condition of “four plus two” into a promising “two plus four” formula. From the very beginning, the German question was predominantly under the whims and at the mercy of the Four Allied Nations, but the Germans were successful in bringing the question under their own control by maximally exploiting every new development in the Eastern Europe. By outpacing the Cold War, the Germans could work out a strange but splendid arithmetic by which one gets five from “two plus four.”

But there is one more interesting question. How could West Germany turn the disadvantage into an advantage?

One widely held view is that West Germany’s economic power was the miracle worker. This is a hermeneutics of the Mark, according to which German unification is interpreted as West Germany’s Big Purchase of East from the USSR, a deal made on the power of the Mark.

But the Mark explains only one aspect of the matter. It was not merely by economy alone that the West Germans transformed an impossible condition into a workable one. It was its political power, its democracy that made it all possible. West Germany was politically more advanced than East Germany and the USSR. This fact had many times been confirmed by those East Germans who risked their lives in their exodus to the West. Most of them fled from East Germany to seek freedom rather than economic affluence.

Long before the recent political debacle, East Germany and other socialist countries had already shown signs of internal dissolution because of their lack of political democracy. West Germany, helped by its economy, turned the situation to their advantage in stepping a great stride towards unification.

Where does the Korean question of unification stand in light of the German experience?

The German experience suggests at least two things to Korea. One is the important lesson that the question of unification can be dealt with effectively only when it is returned to the hands of the immediate parties. The other is the lesson that, of the two immediate parties, the one which is in the superior position not only in terms of economy but more importantly in terms of political democracy will be able to take initiative in working towards a solution of the question.



The end of the Cold War, together with the radical transformations in the socialist countries, seems to provide both North and South Korea with an excellent opportunity to raise their voice over the question of unification. Both Korea should never lose the opportunity. What is important in this case is that both Korea must guard against the possibility of falling prey once more to the manipulative politics of “divide and rule” by their surrounding four powers. It is in this sense that South Korea is keenly concerned with the on-going Japan-North Korea’s negotiations, even though South Korea’s basic posture is to support the normalization of relations between Tokyo and Pyongyang.

In terms of economy, it is true that South Korea is in a better position than its northern brother. But the South is not superior enough economy-wise to achieve integration through absorption. It is also true that the South is a bit better case in terms of political democracy, but here again the superiority is not absolute.

Thus, South Korea merely enjoys a relative superiority over the North. With this fact in mind, what is the easiest way for the South to take initiative in dealing with the question of national reunification?

To me, the way is the realization of much greater and broader democracy on every level of national life in the South. Only in this way can the South secure for itself absolute superiority over the North.

I think the same is true with North Korea. The North can shed the fear that the South may take steps toward integration through absorption; the South is simply not capable of bearing the immense burden of unification cost. The North would rather be informed by the counsel that a greater democratization in their part of the peninsula is the best recommendation for them to take equal initiative.

My point is simple enough: the shortest possible way for both North and South Korea is to bring about democracy across the whole land. So to speak, reunification and democracy are the head and tail of the same coin. By bearing this fact in mind, we would be able to come closer to anything like reunification.

Lastly, I would like to add that by democratization I do not merely mean extension of political rights. It means that economic welfare and benefits are also part of democratization. Peace needs equal political rights; but it also needs equal distribution and economic justice. What is Buddhism if it is not democracy in both senses of the word? Perhaps it is here that Buddhism in this country can address itself to the national question that is the peaceful reunification of two Korea.







## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SOCIAL FUNCTION OF BUDDHISM**

Wan-il Park

#### **1. Real Happiness in the Dharma**

Once the Buddha said, even a thousand hands and a thousand eyes are not enough to save the living beings in the world. As material prosperity and industrialism have been developed in the complicated society, human beings are facing many troubles due to the unbalance between material wealth and spirituality. Even though materialism brought us wealth and prosperity, it has made us slaves of desire and has brought us egocentric individualism. Humankind is confronting a crisis in that happiness is being measured by fulfillment of desire and possession of wealth.

In such a situation, Buddhism has been expected to do something to save the world, but rather Buddhism in passive attitude has been challenged by the unhealthy society. All the religions in the world pursue the same happiness, overcoming earthly sufferings, although there are differences among them in means and ways to approach it. It can be said that the essential functions of religion are self-saving and social service.

Religion can exercise its strong influence on the society when it complies with the human wishes and needs of the times. That is the reason why Buddhism has been keeping its vitality for 2500 years. Buddhism has been exercising its leadership through history. However, nowadays, the material civilization is devastating the spiritual value of the world. Accordingly, crimes are flourishing everywhere in the world. The crimes of modern society have been brought about by the loss of humanity. The desire to possess is erupting into a form of crime as a symptom of the social pathology. As the Buddha said, human happiness is found in the Dharma as a spiritual virtue, not in the material one.

#### **2. Law of Dependent Origination**

We should not fail to notice the diseases from which humankind suffers, that is, air pollution, destruction of natural surroundings and even the horror of



the nuclear weapons. Ignoring those problems in the world, Buddhism will lose its place in history and it will become empty ritualism of taking care of the dead, a priesthood without a sense of reality.

It cannot be denied that Buddhism seems to be depressed and degraded in coping with the reality. Isn't it true that the Buddha's teachings are covered by the thick crust of ritualism and rhetoric of ideas without giving lessons to the world in suffering. The Buddha gave us lessons to attain supreme happiness by awakening the Buddha nature.

Looking at the social situation, we find cravings erupting and spreading all over society without any moral control. Cravings find their own way into hostility, conflict, and suffering. From a gathering of cravings, greed, anger and ignorance are produced. There is a deep gap between the haves and the have-nots. Craving for possession accelerates itself for more, and competition makes society a battleground, which yields many thorns of crimes.

In a word, egoism produces various crimes. Nothing can exist independently. As the *Avataṛsaka Sūtra* (Ch., *Huayan Sūtra*) tells, one is related to all in which every one is interdependent for accomplishment of unity and harmony. Social health should be recovered by the recognition of the law of dependent origination.

### 3. The Man Who Falls to the Ground

Buddhism has been exercising its leadership in the course of Asian history, adapting itself to the needs of the people of the times. But now it seems to neglect its role in society. It seems to turn its energy to the superficial expansion without any presentation of wisdom to the diseased society. Buddhists avoid facing the realities of society.

Faith in Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva has flourished for a thousand years in Buddhist societies, because his wishes to save humankind and his practices of compassion have been exercising influence on the society in sufferings. Altruism shown in Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva is the core of the Buddha's teachings.

As Jinul said, the man who falls to the ground should lift himself up on the exact same ground. The problems occurring in society should be settled in society. We, Buddhists, should not take the problems into temples. On the contrary, we should go out of the temple and meet them to cope with. We should go out to society with a Mahāyāna spirit.

As a rule, there is a division between saṃgha and laity. But, it is not an absolute difference. When they aim to attain the same purpose, the difference is removed. In the light of the Mahāyāna tradition, all the living beings equally share the same Buddha nature that should be realized in the world by practicing compassion.

Manhae, a leading spirit of the people, insisted on the renovation of Buddhism in Korea in his *Renovation of Joseon Buddhism*. He believed Korean



Buddhism should be restored by destruction of superstitious elements and by the abolishment of the chanting shrine. He proclaimed Buddhism in the city and in the market where the people shared sufferings together. He insisted that independence and identity of Korea could not be protected only by chanting or prayers and that a new Buddhist movement should be practiced. His foresight should be applied to these times as well.

#### **4. Practice of Six Pāramitās**

The Buddhist ideal should be established in society and in this life. The Buddhist Pure Land should be built here, not in the afterlife. The role of Buddhism should be found in this society. That is the task that Buddhists should carry out.

The Pure Land means that freedom and equality is realized in a democratic society, and that people are happy with each other in peace. Democracy cannot be established only by law or a system, but also depends on moral support. There are numerous articles of law to maintain social systems, but there are also many crimes and disputes due to lack of respect between human beings. So, morality is indispensable to democracy in the society. In order to realize the ideal of Buddhism in society, the Buddhist moral precepts must be observed by practicing Pāramitās as the Bodhisattvic ways. Society should be restored by a Bodhisattva spirit.







## **PART 2**

### **BUDDHIST EXPLORATIONS OF PEACE AND JUSTICE**







## CHAPTER 6

### EXPLORATION OF RIGHT LIVELIHOOD AS ONE PATH TO PEACE AND JUSTICE

Jean Sadako King

We are both a likely and unlikely band of explorers gathered this week in Seoul for a few days, and come from a variety of lands shaped by a diversity of cultures and bonded by a common hope. Some of us have met before and some are meeting for the first time. I hope to know all of you before we leave. I arrived last night from Hawaii where I was born half a century plus another decade and a half ago.

And that choosing is woven into the theme of this fifth international seminar: "Exploration of Ways to Put Buddhist Thought into Social Practice for Peace and Justice." I'm grateful to be here.

A world where peace and justice are so intrinsic that they can be taken for granted is indeed a noble ideal. If most people truly practiced what's at the heart of Buddhism and all great religions, i.e., love and compassion, we would nurture the flowering of such a world. Humankind has been lifted by the courageous women and men who have done so before us, some of whose stories are emblazoned in the stars, some only whispered by the sands of time.

Recent events are both discouraging and encouraging. People's commitment and courage regarding democracy and freedom in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, China and Africa are certainly encouraging. The violent suppression that has triggered in some countries and ethnic strife in others is certainly strong negatives. As the Dalai Lama says, however, "Peoples' concern about democracy and freedom shows that there is some kind of forces based on basic human nature. This force is now getting the upper hand."<sup>1</sup> We may all take a happy observation on it into heart.

This paper focuses on an exploration of Right Livelihood as one path toward Peace and Justice. One knows even without thinking about it that beyond the specific confines of our means of livelihood, there is a larger arena in which the struggle for peace and greater justice is being waged. Other papers and

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<sup>1</sup> *Seeds of Peace*, 7-3, Sep. - Dec. 2534 [1991].



speakers, I am sure, will enlighten us on this broader perspective of Social Practice.

Many of the eminent participants here this week are Buddhist scholars. I am not a Buddhist scholar and I hope that you will forgive any oversimplification on my part. Sometimes I wonder whether things are very simple at the core with a complex multi-faceted surface, or whether the surface that we see is simple compared to the exquisite complexity of what we do not readily perceive. Perhaps both are true.

When we look at “Putting Buddhist Thought into Social Practice,” the double meaning of “practice” seems to me significant. Practice, the noun, means the habitual or customary performance. Practice, the verb, means to do habitually or usually. “Practice makes perfect,” the old slogan goes, and if we practice putting Buddhist thought into social action, though we may not achieve perfection, that will become and will be the way that we live, customarily, without thinking about it.

There is an old Chinese proverb that goes something like “Where many people trod, a road appears.” In Chinese and Japanese, the character for an actual road or way is also the character used in a figurative sense to indicate the path that one may follow in life. As, of course, it is in English, “I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh to the Father, but by me” (John, xiv, 6). A suggestive aspect of the Chinese and Japanese ideogram (which, as you know, the Japanese got from the Chinese) is that the part on the right is in itself the character for “*kubi*” (to use the Japanese with which I am more familiar) meaning “neck” or “head,” and by extension, “individuals” or “people.” The left part of the character is a symbol indicating forward movement. Although the obvious idea suggested is that a road is a place where an individual moves forward, one can (I, anyway, would like to) figuratively imagine that it means the head is “moved forward,” that is, changed, as you move along the path of life, in ways that reflect the path that you have chosen. It is a hopeful thought in terms of the positive consequences of the social practice of Buddhist thought.

Let us return, then, to our seminar theme, “Exploration of Ways to Put Buddhist Thought into Social Practice for Peace and Justice.”

Exploration is an exciting word, suggesting the possibility of discovery and, in this context, discovery together. The roots of the word “discover” are also, it seems to me, significant: *dis* is from the Latin meaning apart, asunder, away and having a reversing force, in this instance upon or against *cooperire*, to cover up. So etymologically the essence of discovery is to find again what is already there.

Also, in the Seminar title, “Ways” is thoughtfully plural, and by the end of the week we shall have explored together a number of them. As stated, the way that I am undertaking to begin exploring with you is specifically Right Livelihood.

What is Right Livelihood?

At its minimum, it is to earn our living without inflicting harm on other creatures and on our planet, in short, non-violently. But just as Not Killing has



the positive extension of nurturing life, so not inflicting harm while earning our living has a positive extension to enhance life by the work that we do.

Let's look first at not inflicting harm. The obvious seems easy. To earn our livelihood manufacturing weapons is certainly to engage in a process aimed at harming others. There are those who argue that deadly equipment can be destined for defense to keep others from killing you. (We used to have a Secretary of War in the United States; then we changed the title to Secretary of Defense. One wonders with Shakespeare whether a rose by any other name...)

In my country an enormous amount of money and an enormous amount of jobs are involved in the production of weapons. In August (8/5/91), the U. S. Air Force announced that it had awarded contracts worth nearly \$11 billion to a team headed by Lockheed Corporation, including General Dynamics, Boeing, and Pratt & Whitney, to build and test a new radar-evading jet. "The Pentagon eventually intends to buy 648 of these jets at a cost of more than \$60 billion... More than two dozen subcontractors in 15 states and 650 suppliers will be part of the effort to build the plane, known as the F-22."<sup>2</sup> Two months earlier (June 1991), we "offered Israel 10 F-5 jet fighters worth \$650 million and pledged \$200 million in military funds. Washington also agreed to sell the United Arab Emirates 20 Apache helicopters, the first ever offered to a Persian Gulf state."<sup>3</sup> The U.S. is the top weapons supplier in the world, our share of the global arms market now having risen to 40%. According to *The Defense Monitor* (Vol. XX, No. 4, 1991), U. S. weapons sales and military assistance to other countries in the financial year of 1991 will likely top \$41 billion, one export market we are certainly effectively competing in.

The *Monitor* points out that the vast expansion planned for overseas weapons sales "is partly a reward to nations that helped the U.S. against Iraq and also an attempt to increase the business of U.S. military contractors who might otherwise have to shut down weapons plants." These military contractors have great political clout that it will take considerable social practice to counter.

Lawrence Eagleburger, Undersecretary of State, said on July 10, 1990: "It is the policy of the United States that our diplomatic posts abroad should support the marketing efforts of U.S. companies in the defense trade arena as well as in all other spheres of commercial activity." And Charles Duelfer, Director of the State Department's Center for Defense Trade, last year stressed, "The State Department can have a very key role in helping manufacturers identify possible markets, helping them find their way around the host government, find the right people to talk to.... We want to make sure that our manufacturers can compete." One recalls the eloquent warning about the dangers of the military-industrial complex by a man who knew the very top levels of both military and government, General, then President, Eisenhower: "In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence,

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<sup>2</sup> *Associated Press, Honolulu Star Bulletin*, 8/5/91.

<sup>3</sup> *Associated Press, Honolulu Advertiser*, 6/17/91.



whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.”<sup>4</sup>

At a time of rising unemployment in the U. S. and an increasingly shaky economy, what is a person to do who supports her or his family by working in a weapons factory?

There are no easy quick answers. There are two hopeful trends.

One is the ending of the Cold War and the perceived necessity for weapons on such a massive scale. The ending of this perceived necessity, of course, does not at all mean that the production, so profitable to some, will decline but that, given sufficient pressure by people, it now is more susceptible to being phased down. And indeed the idea becomes increasingly attractive, the attractive magnet being the desperately needed life-enhancing activities that could be funded instead with the money: health care, housing and education.

The other hopeful trend is what is often referred to as Economic Conversion. What is Economic Conversion? “The change-over of military and military-industrial facilities to civilian oriented activities”;<sup>5</sup> “The process through which workers, communities and businesses work together to transform industries from wartime production to the production of useful goods.”<sup>6</sup>

An idea that goes back before the ending of the Cold War, Economic Conversion is certainly one whose time has come. To the extent that it can be implemented, it will make it easier for thousands to choose Right Livelihood and move us closer to a more peaceful planet as well as to a world with a greater possibility of multiple kinds of justice.

Is it feasible? Roy Takumi, formerly American Friends Service Committee’s Program Director in Hawaii, cites a number of examples. “Over 75 percent of the automobile industry,” he points out, “switched to the production of tanks and armored vehicles in 1940, then returned to making automobiles in 1945.”<sup>7</sup> He also points out, “Ironically, the most substantial contemporary program of conversion is guided by the Department of Defense through its Office of Economic Adjustment. It was set up in 1961 by then-Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to help ease the impact of base closings and to transfer defense facilities to civilian use. In the sixty-one communities in which the OEA had terminated its assistance by 1973, 82,000 civilian jobs were lost due to Department of Defense cutbacks. However by careful planning, these communities have generated 162,000 new jobs. Only seven of the sixty-one communities affected lost more civilian jobs than they gained. Many of these bases were converted to industrial parks, educational centers and municipal installations such as commuter airports.”

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<sup>4</sup> Farewell address, 1/17/61.

<sup>5</sup> Professor Lloyd J. Dumas, political economist, University of Texas.

<sup>6</sup> International Association of Machinists.

<sup>7</sup> “The Need for Economic Conversion,” a talk given at a symposium “Church and University in Dialogue: Towards a Just Society,” September 17, 1986.



There is also the shining example of Lucas Aerospace in Great Britain where in 1974 a committee, comprised of shop stewards of all the unions at all the Lucas plants, drew up an Alternative Corporate Plan. The plan was based on the response to questionnaires distributed to rank and file workers, the people who know their plant and equipment best. The workers came up with 150 socially useful products that could be produced with existing equipment and skills.

Two other conversions cited by Takumi are (1) the AVCO engine manufacturing plant in Charleston, South Carolina, which in the early 1970s stopped producing Army helicopters and switched to truck engines, employing more workers than before; and (2) the Boeing Vertol plant south of Philadelphia which converted much of its plant from the production of helicopters for use in the Vietnam War to trolley cars.

Putting compassion into social practice, why couldn't we in the United States, for example, exert nonviolent political pressure to implement, for a start, what United Auto Workers president Walter Reuther called for in 1989: set aside a portion of each defense contractor's profits as a "conversion reserve trust fund"? Many who practice Right Livelihood themselves could by their social action make it easier for others to engage in Right Livelihood, others not now able to without risking their or their family's economic security.

We would not be acting alone. There is, for example, a citizen group, the National Commission for Economic Conversion & Disarmament. This past May it sponsored meetings across the United States, including one in Hawaii at the State Capitol Auditorium coordinated by Sane Nuclear Freeze Hawaii and endorsed by 15 other organizations.

I also have quite a bit of material here with me about the activities and accomplishments of the Peace Economy Project in Maine for those who might wish to see it. I will only take time now to refer to one individual in Maine, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Bath Iron Works Corporation William E. Hagget. Bath Iron Works has been building ships for the U.S. Navy and for merchant ship operators since 1884, most recently working on high tech naval vessels such as the AEGIS Cruisers and Destroyers. But Hagget, "recognizes that Bath must diversify into other industrial work and merchant shipbuilding if the company is to maintain its workforce at the current level of 11,300... [and] has taken on a new role as co-chair of the United Nations Association's Economic Policy Council on the Challenges of Economic Adjustment After the End of the Cold War."<sup>8</sup>

As it was for manufacturing or trafficking in lethal weapons, the designation is relatively simple. Again, the question arises, "What does a person do who is supporting a family by working in such a plant, with no ready alternative?" And again, there is no swift or simple answer.

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<sup>8</sup> "Main Stream Attitudes," cover story, *Positive Alternatives*, Spring 1991.



There are those who have chosen to try to work within their job sites to try to remedy or report practices that endanger health or lives, or pollute the environment. Some have paid dearly for their conviction and courage. Here again, nonviolent pressure from the outside community, putting Buddhist thought into social practice by approaching plant executives, adverse publicity and boycotts and by calling on government agencies and elected officials, can sometimes change practices that generate greater short term profit. The changes might be made voluntarily; they may require government regulation and genuine supervision. The changes could transform a workplace from one that harms people or the environment to one of Right Livelihood.

Some jobs seem clearly Right Livelihood such as in education or health service where you are helping others. But, as the Dalai Lama notes, "Also in jobs such as working for a company or as a factory worker, even though you may not be directly helping others, you are indirectly serving society. Even though you are doing it for the sake of your salary, it does indirectly help people, and you should do it with a good motivation, trying to think that work is meant to help people."<sup>9</sup> It seems to me also that our attitude toward our co-workers and the individuals we come in contact with, perhaps giving the work itself our own extra, can spin off an extra modicum of good cheer and satisfaction.

There are, however, clearly means of livelihood that move us closer to peace and justice or further away from it and this is why in the context of this Seminar I have devoted more time to the armament industry and the possibilities of economic conversion. For such conversion will also free funds to achieve greater equality and quality in health care, housing and education, moving us toward a more just society as well, of course, as opening up more Right Livelihood jobs in those areas.

It also seems to me, though, that without compassion, even what would appear to be Right Livelihood can be demeaned. A social worker speaking or acting unfeelingly toward an individual on welfare can add to perhaps an already existing injustice rather than helping remedy it. An insensitive doctor, an arbitrary teacher, can also change the nature of their work.

Some jobs can be either Right Livelihood or not, depending on how we use them. Serving in elective office, for example, can be a source of personal prestige, power and profit or can be used to open up genuine opportunities and choices for those not in positions of power, used to protect the environment and to make government more open and more accessible.

Just as what appears to be Right Livelihood can be demeaned, Right Livelihood can be enhanced. Dr. Jannette Sherman of Fairfax, Virginia, for example, already with a private practice in internal and occupational medicine and toxicology, has written a book, *Chemical Exposure and Disease - Diagnostic and Investigative Techniques*. Both the writing of the book and the

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<sup>9</sup> *Kindness, Clarity and Insight*, 94.



testimony that she gives as an expert witness has expanded the dimensions of her healing work as a physician. Dr. Sherman's purpose is clear:

It is imperative that the persons who make the decisions to manufacture and use toxic chemicals be aware of their responsibility for harm done to workers, users of products and the environment. It is equally imperative that health care workers, *including physicians*, become educated as to the effects of exposure to chemicals and obtain from every patient's information concerning possible exposures to chemicals in the workplace and general environment....

Morality, as it pertains to knowledge of right and wrong and its effect on the general welfare, and ethics, exemplified by not benefiting oneself to the detriment of others, must be made cornerstones of our burgeoning technology. A "how-to" mentality, without "why" and "what if" considerations, is a hollow achievement.<sup>10</sup>

Dr. Sherman points out that immediate industrial cost savings can mean vast amounts spent for treatment later on, such as the money "saved" by asbestos companies in the 1940s and earlier by not using adequate respiratory protection. "Unfortunately," she tellingly adds, "the costs of disease and death generally accrue to one segment of the population, while the benefits of production accrue to another."<sup>11</sup> That is certainly not justice.

Most people would rather earn their living by engaging in work that doesn't harm others or the planet. Greed, of course, mitigates against this and needs to be understood: (1) greed in terms of the desire not for a reasonable profit but for the maximum possible regardless of negative impact on human life, animal life, plant life and the environment; and (2) greed in terms of the desire for more and more things. Perhaps this will be discussed by others at this seminar. I hope so.

For to try to explore Right Livelihood as one social practice leading to greater peace and justice is only to bring home how linked everything is. What holds it all together, it seems to me, is the degree to which we are compassionate and loving.

Our world is certainly more and more tightly interconnected whether we look at economics, the environment and the quality of people's lives. I hope, then, that we also can discuss exploitation of Third World countries (I wish that we could think of a better designation) and the nature of the development attempted to be foisted on them. It is not Right Livelihood that does violence to a people or a culture. Meager wages vis-à-vis high profits are not just. To induce dependency is not just.

Glenn D. Paige, Professor of Political Science of the University of Hawaii, who has played such a key role in the fruition of the seminars of which this is the fifth, urges as part of a ten-year startup program for the global nonviolence

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<sup>10</sup> *Chemical Exposure and Disease - Diagnostic and Investigative Techniques*, vii-viii.

<sup>11</sup> *Chemical Exposure and Disease - Diagnostic and Investigative Techniques*, 185.



institution that he is advocating a series of advanced research seminars into various topics. One of them, relevant to Right Livelihood, is nonviolent economics.<sup>12</sup> That would be valuable indeed. We also cannot wait, and Professor Paige pays high tribute to specific nonviolent problem solvers and leaders who have put their beliefs into social practice.

We need to act *while* we are learning. As Roshi Aitken says, “I do not hold to the perfectionist position that before one can work for the protection of animals, forests and small family farms or for world peace, one must be completely realized, compassionate and peaceful. There is no end to the process of perfection and so the perfectionist cannot even begin... Compassion and peace are a practice, on cushions in the dojo, within the family, *on the job* (italics added), and at political forums.”<sup>13</sup> In the doing we enhance our understanding (the “head” moving forward), which in turn makes more effective our social practice.

This paper is only a beginning exploration by a non-scholar of ways to put only one Buddhist thought Right Livelihood into practice for peace and justice. The many gradations of Right Livelihood, the difficulties and the opportunities in the context of today’s swiftly changing world, and the *necessity*, can all be explored further in our discussions. Discussion of the difficulties would require a hard look at the negatives built into what is loosely referred to as the free market system. As for opportunities, we can all cite cases that we know of individuals who have creatively formed niches of Right Livelihood. In Hawaii, John White has created a very successful Food Bank; Patricia Tummons has begun a much needed, environmentally oriented monthly publication, “Environment Hawaii”; and Gigi Cocquio has founded The Farm, where children from a nearby school can learn about aquaculture, organic farming and the possibility of greater self-sufficiency.

As we practice non-violence and compassion, whether in the form of Right Livelihood or in other ways, we inadvertently become teachers. The more of us who do, the more of us who will. Remember the story of The Hundredth Monkey? ... Let’s remember too the fable of the bundle of sticks - easy to snap one, impossible when many are together... And let us not forget the Chinese proverb, “If we do not change our direction, we are likely to end up where we are headed.” Well, if we *do* change our direction, we are likely, in spite of real difficulties, to end up closer to where we together want and need to get a peaceful and just world.

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<sup>12</sup> “Gandhi’s Contribution to Global Nonviolent Awakening,” the 3rd Annual Gandhi Memorial Lecture, New Delhi, 10/26/90.

<sup>13</sup> *The Mind of Clover*, 20-1.



## **CHAPTER 7**

### **SO MANY DIFFERENT WORLDS**

J. C. Cleary

When we speak the language of modern times, we must say Buddhism is the science of the mind. The traditional forms Buddhism has taken in the context of the various cultures of South, Central and East Asia have been, and in some cases still are, meaningful to the people living within those cultures. But it is the universal science of mind contained in the Buddhist teaching that can contribute most decisively to the modern world as a whole and the modern search for peace and justice.

In the countries where Buddhism is part of the historical cultural mix, modern day Buddhists will have to strive to present Buddhism anew in its universal aspect as a science of mind, if Buddhism is not to be relegated to the traditional sector and passed over as irrelevant to modern issues. In the Western countries where Buddhism is something still relatively new and exotic, modern day Buddhists will have to free Buddhism from its image as a religion for cultists and irrationalists, and present Buddhist theory clearly for what it is - an analysis of the human mind that is more modern than modern.

The Buddhist science of mind analyzes how human perception is shaped in ways that obscure reality and lead to conflict and frustration. The Buddhist science of mind highlights the self-defeating character of the most common human motivations to action, the motivations that spring from ignorance, desire and aggression. The Buddhist science of mind maps out another approach to living, another approach to action based on wisdom and compassion working in tandem.

We can turn to the Buddhist science of mind for a perspective on social activism and the search for peace in the world that is far different from the more usual activist mind-set based on ideological allegiances and us-against-them emotionalism.

When we study modern history, we cannot fail to notice how often movements for social change have ended up bringing on results that were far different from, and even totally opposed to, the original professed purposes of the movement. Maybe there is some fundamental flaw with the model of political activism that tries to mobilize people by arousing emotional allegiance



to abstract slogans and utopian ideals. Maybe movements seeking peace and justice would be more effective in achieving their goals if they founded their strategy and tactics on a more accurate and all-encompassing view of how people's minds work.

One version of this more accurate view of the human mind is contained in Buddhist teaching. In this talk, I will dwell on some aspects of this view of mind, and try to suggest some of the strategies for social activism that it implies.

In our everyday life, we often make the naive assumption that we are all living in the same world. But in fact, this is not true. For us ordinary unenlightened sentient beings, what we perceive as "the world" is actually the result of a complex interaction between the bare reality of the outer world, and the set of concepts and categories we have been conditioned to project upon the world by our language, culture, personal history and particular place in the social structure. In effect, each of us lives inside his own bubble of perception, his own perceived world. In this sense, there are many different worlds, as many worlds as there are minds of sentient beings.

This basic Buddhist observation on the multiplicity of perceived worlds may offend the dogmatic common sense that all cultures strive to inculcate in their members, but the evidence for it is right in front of us every day. At the level of cultural differences, the multiplicity of perceived worlds is an obvious fact. Every language has its own way of dividing the world into categories and emphasizing certain distinctions over others. Every culture has its own value system, its own sense of duty and honor, its own standards of right and wrong and beauty and ugliness.

These cultural and linguistic systems decisively shape our perception of the world. A food that the people in one culture have learned to consider familiar and delicious tasting, the people in another culture might find bizarre and unpalatable. The bare reality of the food as a certain ensemble of molecules is the same, but the perception is totally different. The sounds that the speakers of one language have no trouble recognizing and pronouncing clearly, the speakers of another language might find impossible to tell apart or pronounce correctly. Again, the bare reality of the sounds as an acoustic signal is exactly the same, but the perception is completely different. These are all obvious facts familiar to anyone in the modern world who has experience of diverse cultures.

Even within nations and communities that share the same general overall culture, there is still a multiplicity of perceived worlds. Differences in gender, age, occupation and personal history tend to create profound differences in perceptions of the world. Different perceptions of the world lead to different motivations, different values and different judgments of "the same" situation. Again, this is an obvious fact, but people seldom stop to ponder its practical implications.

Here our task is to consider the implications of the multiplicity of perceived worlds as pointed out by the Buddhist science of mind for the movement for peace and justice in the world.



If the Buddhist perspective on the conditioned nature of ordinary perception and the multiplicity of perceived worlds were more widely known - and it is the duty of Buddhists to make it more widely known - it might help eliminate the ethnic antagonisms that plague the modern world. As long as people remain locked up within the perceptual world of a given culture, they are bound to think their own values and customs are the only correct, reasonable, and natural values and customs, and that the values and customs of other peoples are strange, irrational, and probably dangerous and wrong. This kind of perceptual parochialism lays the groundwork for ethnic antagonisms. The modern world sorely needs the tolerance for cultural differences that is the natural result of the Buddhist perspective on perception.

It is no accident that in Asian history Buddhism proved itself capable of crossing all sorts of national, ethnic and class barriers, adopting local languages and cultural forms while keeping its core message intact. Since the Buddhist adepts were not trapped within the narrow perceptual world of the culture they were born into, they were able to communicate across cultural barriers. They could take the perceptual world of the local people into account, and reformulate the Buddhist teaching in ways that would be understandable to people from all sorts of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Modern day Buddhists must take a lesson from the way the classic Buddhist adepts were able to rise above the limitations of particular cultures and their narrow worlds of perception and achieve a truly cosmopolitan outlook. Buddhism should teach the world to look past the accidental differences that divide people into cultural and ethnic groups, to the underlying potential for wisdom and compassion, the basic Buddha-nature, that all people share.

As we look upon the world today, it is easy to see that many misguided and self-defeating strategies for social action have been based on a simple-minded misunderstanding of the multiplicity of perceived worlds.

All the classic strategists emphasized that to win victory, there are two fundamental requirements in the realm of perception.<sup>1</sup> First, it is necessary for us to know how our opponent thinks, to appreciate how he perceives the situation and how he perceives his own options, so that we can anticipate his actions and meet them effectively. Second, it is equally necessary for us to prevent our opponent from understanding us and to avoid falling into predictable patterns. Perhaps the best way to accomplish this is to operate on strategic and tactical principles that are not even part of the opponent's world of perception.

It is easy to see that, despite the noble intentions and the dedication and courage of their adherents, many movements for social improvement in the modern world have been defeated again and again because they ignored these basic strategic necessities. From a Buddhist perspective, we can see that social movements structured in certain ways may even be incapable of following these basic strategic principles.

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<sup>1</sup> See Thomas Cleary, tr., *The Art of War*, Ch. 1 "Strategic Assessments".



A movement that is based on emotional allegiance to certain ideals will inevitably fall short in both areas where good strategy demands a sophisticated awareness of the nature of perception.

Because the leaders and the rank-and-file of such a movement will tend to consider their opponents to be totally evil, they will find it difficult to suspend this judgment long enough to reach a full appreciation of how their opponents see the world and what is motivating them. Emotional aversion will make them unwilling and even unable to enter into their opponents' perceptual worlds, and see them accurately for what they are. With only a simplistic view of how the opponents think and act, it will be almost impossible for the movement to formulate consistently effective strategies.

Moreover, a social movement based on emotional allegiance to certain ideals will tend to be very predictable in its actions and this will make it very easy for the movement's opponents to anticipate these actions and checkmate them. The movement will be like an open book to its enemies, who will easily discover and attack its weak points. At the same time, the atmosphere of passionate idealism may blind the movement itself to its own weaknesses. Emotional fervor cannot take the place of a shrewd grasp of strategy. Sincerity and depth of commitment cannot take the place of clear judgment and ability.

When we examine the matter from the Buddhist perspective, we see that there may indeed be fundamental flaws in the whole model of promoting social change through ideological movements and conflict-oriented political activism. Let us briefly mention some of them.

Ideologies are inevitably too oversimplified to provide detailed guides to practical action. Slogans do not make good blueprints. Ideology carried into practice can become self-fulfilling prophecy. If our ideology tells us that certain people are inevitably our enemies, we will treat them as enemies, and *make enemies of them*.

Ideological allegiance may lead to inflexibility and the inability to adapt to changing circumstances. Unforeseen contingencies may arise. Strong ideological commitment often excludes the ability to rethink a situation and perceive it in a new way. Ideological commitment by definition means an emotional attachment to a certain way of looking at things, and emotionalism always limits and distorts perception. When ideological commitment becomes a test of loyalty to the movement, these problems are intensified because any different perspectives are taken as signs of disloyalty.

Social activists who think emotional fervor and ideological zeal are necessary ingredients in political effectiveness should ponder the Sufi saying: "If you want to make your enemy strong, if you want to make him rejoice and exult - hate him."

Polarizing a social situation into rival ideological camps may decrease the probability of a solution favorable to any of the parties. We can all think of episodes in the history of our own countries where extreme polarization of opinion and emotion led to ruinous conflicts that left everyone worse off, and



resulted in outcomes that satisfied no one. When rival factions each claim to have a monopoly on the truth, it may make it impossible to design a constructive solution that incorporates the most workable elements from both sides' policy proposals.

It will strike many in the modern world as heresy to question the model of social change through ideological mobilization and conflict. I think we can respect the sincerity and courage of the members of such movements, while at the same time questioning the effectiveness of their approach. This is where the Buddhist science of mind can open up a new perspective.

The study of Buddhism teaches us that any action motivated by hatred and ignorance is bound to produce bad results. It teaches us that as long as we stay imprisoned within a self-centered, self-righteous view of the world, we will never be able to perceive things as they are. These elementary Buddhist principles have direct implications for the strategy and tactics of social action.

Buddhist theory challenges social activists to consider their actions within a total social field that is always a complex network of causes and effects involving the diverse perceptions of many groups of people. It is naive to assume that one's perception of the situation is necessarily shared by all the other people concerned. It can be dangerous and self-defeating to act without accurately gauging the multifarious impacts one's actions will have within a complex web of cause and effect.

Social activists with an accurate view of this reality will have the responsibility to consider their own actions not only as they appear in terms of their own ideals and hopes, but also in terms of how their actions will be perceived by people outside the movement and by their opponents. To be sure that the actions they propose to undertake will really advance their goals, social activists need to have a clear idea of what reactions they are likely to provoke.

Effective social activists need the knowledge that the *Avataṅśaka Sūtra* attributes to great bodhisattvas, who know "the interpenetration of the mental activities of all sentient beings, the equality of faculties of all sentient beings, the impassioned habitual activities of all sentient beings, the mental compulsions of all sentient beings, the good and bad acts of all sentient beings."<sup>2</sup>

The cool and lucid view of human affairs contained in the Buddhist science of mind thus recommends to us that we decouple our fervent emotions, ideological passions and partisan intellectualizing from our social activism. Here we arrive at the basic Buddhist conclusion that seems so paradoxical to the worldly mentality: true compassion arises from detachment. Sentimental desires to "be good" or "do good" or "help people" or "save the world" are always, blind, and if they achieve any part of their purpose, it is only blind luck. The sincerest sentiments can and often do backfire and lead to unintended consequences.

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<sup>2</sup> T. Cleary, tr., *The Flower Ornament Sūtra*, vol. II, 344.



Like bodhisattvas, social activists need “the intellectual power of not arbitrarily discriminating among things, the intellectual power of not fabricating anything, the intellectual power of not being attached to anything, the intellectual power of realizing emptiness, the intellectual power of freedom from the darkness of doubt, the intellectual power of receiving support from Buddha in all things, the intellectual power of spontaneous awareness of all truths, the intellectual power of skill in differentiation of expressions of all truths, the intellectual power of truthfully explaining all things, and the intellectual power of gladdening all sentient beings according to their mentalities.”<sup>3</sup>

Cultivating emotional detachment and intellectual objectivity does not mean that we should avoid social action. It means that we have a duty to shape the strategy and tactics of our social activism to a realistic view of the total field of cause and effect, which necessarily involves the perceptions of many groups of people besides ourselves. It means that no matter how noble and sincere we feel our motives to be, if we are going to be effective social activists, we cannot let our emotional fervor cloud awareness of the real possibilities of a given situation and the appropriate strategies that the situation calls for.

These are relatively simple ideas, ideas that anyone who analyzes history and political strategy can arrive at without any appeal to Buddhist theory. What Buddhist theory lets us see is why the emotion-based, us-against-them, conflict-oriented model of social activism continues to be so appealing, despite its record of doubtful effectiveness. Buddhist theory also lets us see why the emotion-based social activism so often fails to realize its professed goals and fails the test of reality.

Every nation, every social movement, has its honor roll of martyrs and heroes and they deserve our respect. Within the bubble of perception created by the culture of a nation or a social movement, nothing could be nobler than sacrifice for a holy cause. But the inner tradition of Buddhism has always challenged people to step out of their conditioned bubbles of perception, and consider not emotional appeal, but real effectiveness. The compassion of the bodhisattva is not based on sentiment and conditioned opinions, but on wisdom and an accurate sense of real possibilities. It is this model of social activism, the model of the bodhisattva path, that Buddhism has to contribute to the search for justice and peace. The Mahāyāna scriptures all call us to the bodhisattva path, and none so eloquently as the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*:

Bodhisattvas study all projections,  
Projections of lands and beings,  
Of worlds and civilizations,  
And finally reach the other shore of projections.

The various distinctions of all worlds  
All are there due to perceptions and thoughts;

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<sup>3</sup> *Flower Ornament Scripture*, vol. II, 345.



Entering Buddhas' knowledge of means,  
The bodhisattvas clearly understand all this.

For each of untold groups  
They manifest embodiment  
Causing all to see the Buddha,  
And liberating boundless beings.

The profound knowledge of the Buddhas  
Is like the sun coming out in the world,  
Ever appearing everywhere  
In all lands.

The bodhisattvas realize all worlds  
Are provisional names without reality;  
Sentient beings and worlds  
Are like dreams, like shadows.

They do not produce false discriminatory views  
About the things of the world;  
Those free from false discrimination  
Do not even see false discrimination.

Measureless, countless eons  
They understand in one moment;  
And they know a moment has no moment -  
Thus do they see the world.

Innumerable lands  
They cross over in an instant,  
Yet through measureless eons  
They don't move from their original place.

Untold eons  
Are in the space of a moment;  
Not seeing long or short,  
They find absolute instantaneousness.

Mind is in the world,  
World is in the mind -  
About this bodhisattvas do not wrongly create  
Discrimination of duality and non-duality.

Beings, worlds, ages,  
Buddhas and Buddhist teachings  
Are like illusory projections;  
In the reality realm all is equal.

Throughout the lands of the ten directions



Bodhisattvas manifest infinite bodies;  
 Knowing bodies arise from conditions,  
 They have no attachments at all.

Thus they accordingly enter  
 The sphere of action of the Buddhas  
 And achieve Universally Good knowledge  
 Illumining all the profound realm of truth.

Attachments to beings and lands  
 They completely give up,  
 Yet rouse minds of great compassion  
 And purify all worlds.

Bodhisattvas always rightly remember  
 The marvelous teachings of the Buddhas,  
 Pure and clear as space,  
 Yet producing great expedient means.

Seeing the world always deluded,  
 Bodhisattvas determine to save and liberate all;  
 Their undertakings are all pure,  
 Extending throughout all universes.

Buddhas and bodhisattvas,  
 Buddhist principles and things of the world -  
 If you see their reality,  
 All are no different from one another.

Buddhas' reality-body matrix  
 Is in all worlds,  
 Yet while being in the world  
 Has no attachment to the world.<sup>4</sup>

The *Avataṃsaka* perspective on the bodhisattva path includes enlightening action at all levels, from the most lofty to the most humble, from the cosmic to the mundane. It is important for us to remember this when we consider strategies for social action, and our own roles in the search for peace and justice in the modern world.

Social action does not only mean mass movements and politics. Constructive social action can take place at any level of society, from the family and the neighborhood, to the workplace and the firm, to the city and the local region, to the level of national and international politics. We cannot let frustrations we encounter at higher levels discourage us and make us forget that

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<sup>4</sup> *Flower Ornament Scripture*, vol. II, 275-7.



small-scale local action can also be valuable. One of the better slogans social activists have come up with in the U.S.A. is “Think globally, act locally.”

If we take the bodhisattva path as the Buddhist model for social action, the decisive criterion is “do whatever needs to be done and can be done.” This could be building a neighborhood youth center, improving local schools, doing something for the aged poor in the community, improving the ethical climate in one’s business firm, or working to safeguard the natural environment; it could be something as small-scale as harmonizing a family or building a supportive circle of friends and neighbors or putting together a learning group. The *Avataṁsaka Sūtra* brings out clearly that the bodhisattva path can take many forms in its chapter “Chief in Goodness”:

Bodhisattvas’ various methods and techniques  
Adapt to worldly conditions to liberate beings:  
Just like lotus blossoms to which water does not adhere,  
In the same way they are in the world, provoking deep faith.

With extraordinary thoughts and profound talent, as cultural kings,  
They manifest, like magicians,  
Song and dance, and conversation admired by the masses,  
And all the various arts and crafts of the world.

Some become grandees, city chiefs,  
Some become merchants, caravan leaders;  
Some become physicians and scientists,  
Some become kings and ministers.

Some become great trees in the plains,  
Some become medicines or jewel mines;  
Some become pearls that fulfill all wishes,  
Some show the right path to sentient beings.

If they see a world just come into being,  
Where the creatures don’t yet have the tools for livelihood,  
Bodhisattvas become craftsmen  
And teach them various skills.<sup>5</sup>

If we give classic Buddhist works like the *Avataṁsaka Sūtra* the careful study they deserve, we see that they provide us with a comprehensive blueprint for a Buddhist-informed path of social activism and also a vast energy of cosmic inspiration. They let us see how genuinely effective social action in the bodhisattva spirit is both profoundly compassionate and utterly dispassionate.

There is one final topic I want to take up here, in connection with the Buddhist contribution to the search for peace and justice in the world. This is the need for contemporary Buddhists to keep the essence of the Buddhist teaching

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<sup>5</sup> *Flower Ornament Scripture*, vol. 1, p. 344.



alive in the world, and communicate it as widely as possible to the public at large. Buddhists must act and teach in ways that let modern people know that there really is “a jewel hidden in the mountain of form.”

I come from a country where the vast majority of people have no practical awareness that there is anything to human life but the endless quest for money, prestige, possessions and pleasure. It is a fairly prosperous country and by world standards, most of its citizens are quite well supplied with material possessions and entertaining pastimes.

Yet many people in my country feel that something is missing in their lives. Part of the problem is that in the so-called advanced countries there is an intense, systematic, never-ending effort to multiply people's desires and make them feel that their happiness depends on acquiring more and more material possessions. People are constantly teased with images of an ideal life of self-indulgence and ease that is supposedly available to anyone who has enough money. People who fall short of this imaginary ideal, as the great majority does, feel like they are missing out on something. This deliberate creation of dissatisfaction, after people's basic material needs have been satisfied, is one of the characteristic features of modern life in the so-called advanced countries.

There are also deeper problems. The materialistic definition of human life in modern culture has led to a destructive neglect of interpersonal relations and in many countries modernization brings with it the breakdown of family and community. Even more damaging is the lack of any higher purpose beyond satisfying the immediate animal concerns of worldly living.

If our concern is with peace and justice in the world, we must recognize that this mental state of dissatisfaction, restlessness and purposelessness that modern materialistic culture seems to breed is a threat to both peace and justice.

Modern materialism is an invitation to a totally selfish orientation to life. It openly justifies an attitude that judges every action in terms of “what's in it for me?” It remains to be seen if even secular society can survive on the basis of this unbridled selfishness. It is clear that the goals of Buddhism and the other spiritual traditions on earth can never be realized within this sort of mind-set.

The modern fantasy that happiness can be attained through material means is doubly deceptive. For most people, it leads only to frustration. Even more dangerous, it leaves people unaware of the real cause of their frustration, and quick to lash out at scapegoats. Under adverse economic circumstances, the modern materialist mind-set leads to a mass dissatisfaction that can find outlets in all sorts of dangerous and destructive ways. There is no shortage of political leaders ready to play on the ignorance and frustration of the people, and lead them into crazy adventures in quest of false salvation. People who have been taught to look for satisfaction in the wrong places will seek solutions for their dissatisfactions that cannot possibly work.

It is up to modern day Buddhists to inform the world of the Buddhist antidotes to the characteristic problems of modern life.



Buddhist psychology can show people why permanent happiness can never be found through acquiring money and status. The Buddhist analysis of cause and effect can demonstrate why self-centered action always leads to adverse consequences. Buddhist psychology can explain the depression and malaise that overtake so many people in the modernized countries, and show the way out.

The Buddhist analysis of perception and conditioning can fortify modern people to resist the steady stream of propaganda that is directed at them. I am speaking here not only of the overtly political propaganda so many governments spew out to their people, but also of the subtler propaganda that goes by the name of advertising. This propaganda is dedicated to planting unreal self-images in people's minds and convincing them that happiness lies in a superabundance of material possessions.

The Buddhist analysis of perception can open people up to experience the full humanity of people from other cultures and traditions. It can teach them to see cultural and religious differences for what they are, namely, accidents of history and birth - and to look past these superficial differences to the common humanity we all share.

Above all, the Buddhist bodhisattva ideal can supply the higher purpose that human minds need in order to be healthy. Humans cannot flourish without a sense of meaning. Self-centered materialism cannot satisfy the human mind in the long run in modern times, many have tried to find meaning through emotional allegiance to ideologies and causes, but this has left many people disillusioned and many people dead and maimed. The mythological religions of the past are out of reach for many modern people as a source of meaning. Buddhism is so valuable because it can provide a transcendental purpose without appealing to any supernatural categories, simply through an analysis of the human mind and the structure of reality.

It is part of the social duty of modern day Buddhist to work to communicate the priceless insights of the Buddhist teaching to the modern world. This involves many sorts of activities.

The fundamental work must be done by the enlightened adepts, moving through the world at all levels, perpetuating the life of wisdom, communicating the Dharma and inspiring people to adhere to Buddhist ideals. This is not something I am in a position to say anything about.

At the cultural level, it would be very helpful if people well versed in Buddhist theory also became conversant with various modern fields of learning, so as to be able to "translate" Buddhist insights into the modern idiom and communicate with the modern intelligentsia. Buddhist insights into the workings of the human mind should be flowing into modern day philosophy, psychology, cognitive science, economics and political science.

Although we ourselves may admire and be able to understand the classic expositions of Buddhist theory contained in the sūtra, śāstras and Zen literature, we must recognize that these expositions have to be "decoded" for a modern audience and reformulated in categories that make sense to modern people.



In reformulating the way Buddhist theory is expressed, we will be following the precedent of the Buddhist teachers of the past. As the Song dynasty Chinese Chan teacher Zhantang said: "For wayfarers of all times, the right strategy for skillfully spreading the Way essentially lies in adapting to communicate. Those who do not know how to adapt, stick to the letter and cling to doctrines, get stuck on forms and mired in sentiments - none of them succeed in strategic adaptation."<sup>6</sup>

It is also necessary for modern day Buddhists to prove through their actions that Buddhist principles of disinterested compassion and lucid wisdom can be carried out in real life. Modern day Buddhists should be active in all sorts of social services, and not confine themselves only to traditional religious forms. Modern day Buddhists must show that social activism can be carried out free from emotionalism, ideological dogmatism and self-righteousness.

This is a big task, I know. We may doubt our own strength and our own capacity. So, let me end with a quotation from one of the classic Chan masters. Huitang said:

"What has been long neglected cannot be restored immediately.

"Ills that have been accumulating for a long time cannot be cleared away immediately.

"One cannot enjoy oneself forever.

"Human emotions cannot be just right.

"Calamity cannot be avoided by trying to run away from it.

"Anyone working as a teacher who has realized these five things can be in the world without misery."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted in T. Cleary, *Zen Lessons*, 37.

<sup>7</sup> T. Cleary, *Zen Lessons*, 26-7.



## CHAPTER 8

### FOR CONTRIBUTION TO THE CAUSE OF PEACE AND JUSTICE

G. Lubsantseren

Buddhism has played an influential and tremendous role in the history of Asian countries in terms of sociopolitical and intellectual aspects of societies, being a dynamic force for harmony and tranquility. The omnipotence of Buddhism is manifested so that it can relieve an individual's concerns and bring peace of mind.

It is often asked whether Buddhism can lead to peace and thus contribute to the solution of present-day social problems. Buddhism can do a lot in this respect. The series of international seminars on Buddhism and Leadership for Peace in particular have been convened, thanks to the great efforts of the Most Venerable Daewon Ki and to the experience of Professor Glenn Paige of the University of Hawaii. The result of the research work or documents of international seminars and conferences held recently on this topic speaks in favor of the contribution of Buddhism.

Speaking on this role, we can address ourselves to the growing importance of Buddhism in the present-day international and national life of countries, on the significance of Buddhist philosophy and principles of compassion and morality and on the increasing importance of perfection and purification of man's inner world.

The positive influence of Buddhism on the present-day problems of peace and security arises from its principles of peace and harmony.

The peace principles of Buddhism are based in effect on the four *Brahma-vihāras* or four divine states of mind, (1) *mettā*, (2) *karuṇā*, (3) *muditā* and (4) *upekkhā*. By relying on these four boundless states, we as Buddhists stick to being purified in the body, speech and inner world actions, thus leading a life of peace, harmony and justice as the moral principles.

Should the peace principles and precepts of Buddhism be viewed in the light of present-day developments; the following may be observed:



1. As important peace principle in Buddhism lies in the fact that human physical force is subject to a purified inner peace of mind. Should humanity opt for material comforts and not for right mentality and mind purification, it may eventually destroy itself. At present, the role of mental wealth and cultural values is increasing for strengthening peace and harmony among peoples.
2. One of the basic principles of Buddhism is the principle of peace and harmony according to which one is supposed be kind and compassionate to others, share their afflictions, rejoice at other's joy and avoid the feeling of self or egoism. Thus, in a word, it means not to exploit the affliction of others but to bring them peace and happiness. So, these precepts are in conformity with the developments in the present-day international relations and with the new thinking and justice.
3. The root cause of all evils and all unwholesome deeds is the craving and lust. As Buddhism explains, these will beget miseries and wars when they continue to develop. Therefore, it is essential for humanity to check and control these phenomena as an important act for peace. The significance of this postulate is ever-increasing today.
4. Buddhists have been emphasizing the paramount importance of harmony and friendship of peoples for ensuring and preserving peace, and devoting prayers and activities to this end. Nowadays, these principles are of growing importance.

We must be aware of the broader sense of Buddhist precepts concerning the value of peace, harmony and morality in terms of relations among both individuals and nations. These principles can be, consequently, employed in international politics as a catalyst for promoting goodwill and peace.

More than 20 years ago a number of Asian Buddhist dignitaries, guided by the compassionate teachings of the Lord Buddha and the wishes to contribute to the common cause for peace and security, set up the Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace (ABCP). The founders of this Buddhist peace movement were from India, Mongolia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, etc., and since that time the movement has been turned into an internationally recognized organization associated with Buddhists from Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Japan, DPRK, Laos, Mongolia, Nepal, Soviet Union, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. The Council for Religious and Cultural Affairs of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Association of Korean Buddhists in Japan are also actively participating in our movement. ABCP has been working in contact with Buddhists of Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, China, Indonesia and Australia.



ABCP activities are guided by the sacred teaching of the Blessed One and we attach great importance to the common cause of universal harmony and justice, first, to the present-day problems of peace and security in Asia.

Situations have changed in the world including on the continent of Asia from confrontation to cooperation, from policy of strength to non-violence and from misunderstanding or mistrust to mutual understanding and trust. Thus, it is most likely that a congenial atmosphere for dealing with universal human interests and the fate of humanity may continue to prevail over other problems.

We are happy that thanks to these changes, there is satisfactory progress in the development of mutual understanding and good neighborly relations among peoples. In this context, it is to be understood that although we do not mean to rest on laurels, new changes and developments have prompted the creation of favorable conditions for work and activities of peace-builders. On the other hand, détente has been the main issue in some continents and regions, although the Asia-Pacific Ocean basin still appears to be a most complicated part of the world on which the focus of attention has to be centered as there are diverse interests and allures intermingled with various motives. The Indian Ocean area, which comprises one-third of the world population and is surrounded by more than 40 countries, should not to be allowed to remain a place of military confrontation but should be turned into a zone of peace by bringing principles of harmony, trust and cooperation into play in relations among states of this region. This calls for enhanced responsibilities on the part of Buddhists for the cause of peace, harmony and social justice.

In view of the crying out of the importance of halting the arms race, disarmament, especially the evil weapons of mass destruction for humanity to live in peace and progress, we as Buddhists regard it as a sacred duty to make efforts and help in this common cause. We devote, first, our efforts to bring the Buddhist principles of compassion and non-violence into effect in order to outlaw weapons of mass destruction and to effect disarmament.

The principle of non-violence as taught by the Lord Buddha is an expression of humanism and a criterion as to how an individual possesses human quality. The use of force by man against man to achieve his goal only reflects an un-intellectual moral deficiency and the lack of human quality in the person who attacks. It does not demonstrate his strength but weakness. Based on this assumption, we believe in the efficacy of dialogues and finding of political means to resolve even difficult problems of international or regional nature. Therefore, we believe that people, in particular, political leaders should have wisdom in politics and purity in morality.

Nowadays, great importance is attached to the use of the Buddhist teaching on peace and harmony and the principles of *Paṇḍita*, originating from it, in relation among individuals and among different countries as well. The contemporary world requires Buddhists to become more active in this field. The *Paṇḍita* principles of relations between states were worked out by eminent Asian political leaders including Jawaharlal Nehru, Zhou Enlai and Sukarno and



were declared in the final document of the Bandung Conference. They were further enriched in the context of present-day global problems solving, for example, non-violence, mutual understanding and trust, establishment of New Economic Order, elimination of all kinds of nuclear weapons, etc. It is very important for us, the Buddhists, to support and contribute to the cause of the non-aligned movement subscribed at this direction.

In the present condition of the activities for global peace and justice, it is of paramount importance to study and propagate Buddhism to preserve and develop Buddhist culture.

There are very rich and multi-sided contexts in the heritage of Buddhist teachings, culture and books which reflect the experience and knowledge of many thinkers, scholars and dignitaries of culture for a period of hundreds years in the history of Asian peoples. We should pay due attention to fundamental and supplementary studies of Buddhist teachings, questions of Buddhist philosophy and principles, and preservation of Buddhist culture and heritage as the main direction of our activities. These studies of Buddhism can serve to deepen the joint action of Buddhists and believers for the common cause.

It is crucial that we, the Buddhists, develop our cooperation in different fields for mutual understanding in order to realize the Buddhist mind in the social, practical activities for peace and justice. Through these efforts, we can jointly influence the mass of believers. We should seek suitable ways of collaboration with an eye on promoting solutions to social and other global problems that face continents, regions and individual countries, for example, to combat illiteracy, hunger and poverty, to protect the environment. Preserving and rekindling historic and cultural values is the case in point, and adequate projects can be worked out on these matters in collaboration with the communities concerned. In this respect, there are good traditions in each country. What is needed now is to initiate action, to jointly begin acting in this direction. There is no doubt that such wholesome work could be executed in the name of religion and that it could be worthy of widespread support from people young and old, regardless of race or gender, regardless of whether they are rich or poor.

We are confident that only close cooperation and more study of the Lord Buddha's teachings, on which we base our actions, can expand our activities and bring about results the results we seek, to enrich our contribution to the noble cause for peace, justice and social progress.



## CHAPTER 9

### THE RING OF WORLD AND BUDDHISM

Yeremei Parnov

A snake biting its tail is the most ancient symbol of the universe, heavenly forces, mystery, death, cognition, virility and eternal femininity. It is a sign that denotes the infinity of space and time.

The river of time is bearing us very fast into the third millennium.

There is such a concept as “millenarianism”, the Greek equivalent of which is “chiliasm”. It denotes the fear that envelopes humankind at the close of every century and particularly the close of a millennium. The human race has been suffering from it ever since the end of the first century when the dark revelation of St. John the Divine was written on the Island of Patmos. It is a chronic, almost genetic disease, the symptoms of which have been thoroughly studied, though they are not marked by constancy. It is doubtful that the prodigious outbreak of this fear at the turn of the first millennium, when people fled from the cities in fear, will be repeated in the few years that remain until the end of the current millennium. However, it has left an ineffaceable imprint on the collective consciousness where the superstitions of the Middle Ages still lie dormant. Fantastic extraterrestrials have stolen the show from demons, yet nothing has changed in substance.

In the paroxysm of violence and the terror that has engulfed both prosperous and poor countries, we also hear the clatter of the Ashen Horse's hooves. The past does not disappear without a trace, but continues to live within us. And that mysterious and hidden process is as destructive as it is creative. At any rate, it fits perfectly into the ancient Chinese philosophical system of *yin-yang* that focuses on the polarities of everything that exists.

Hopeful expectations, but most of the time gloomy prophecy, self-delusion, disappointment and protest - all these accumulate in one way or another in the vortex of public moods and feeling. Is the new world order that has manifested itself like a salamander in the flames of the oil wells in Kuwait, fated to be born? Add to this the dramatic developments in the countries of Eastern Europe, an attempted military-fascist coup in the USSR, which was fraught with a global catastrophe... What is in store for us behind the impenetrable curtain of the future? The scanning screens are dark. Flowing into tomorrow like the point of



light on the oscilloscope, we are scrutinizing the past rather than the future. In addition to a rare sense for prognostication, we should have a knowledge of mathematics and physics in order to truly understand how strictly determined, and yet at the same time absolutely open, is our future; how multifarious and unexpectedly connected is everything that is in the human being and in the world.

Astronomers have discovered a quasar, separated from us by a distance of fourteen billion light years. It is somewhere at the very edge of the dissipating Universe. It is a witness of the beginning of all things, a fragment of the turbulent youth of our cosmos when time was “switched on” and the inscrutable substance that was compressed to a point began to spread and gradually turn into space, i.e., the space and time of our subsequent existence. Another giant leap into stellar eternity is another imperative confirmation of what seems like abstract theories, the charisma of which is incomprehensible without the myth of the primordial egg that existed in all the great civilizations of the ancient world. Involuntarily one feels a great pride for the might of pure reason, for its ability to prophesy.

The beauty of poetic image is akin to the beauty of a mathematical formula. We comprehend the laws of the Universe because their imperative connection has formed the brain so that Nature could grow aware of itself. That is only one view of the problem and it does not deny the idea of an autonomous reason, be it the biblical Demiurge, the Hindu Brahman or the Ādibuddha of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Planets have been discovered at the tip of a pen, planets which astrologers believed to be the masters of destiny. Equations elegant in form have turned out to be the most correct. Machines, which are the mechanical continuation of the organs of our body, are no exception either. Models of planes attractive to the eye usually give the best performance.

Like Eros, beauty is a cosmic concept. It is inherent in the foundations of our universe together with all encompassing elements that are called information. And it is inseparable from the eye, the brain and the soul.

The possibility of an exact forecast with regard to any global problem is only one of the results of the new approach to the notion of information itself.

The cornerstones of the Universe, the individual and society, the economy and politics form a single information field.

Every person, with the exception of uniovular twins, is as genetically inimitable and inexhaustible as the Universe. The impetuous expansion of cognition is just as objective and majestic a process as the dissipation of galaxies. Before this century and this millennium are out, we shall see a genetic chart of the human beings drawn up and learn of our biological nature something that will substantially reshape all established notions. In any case, it will stimulate considerable progress in medicine and give a new dimension to the unity of the contrary elements of life and death. Shall we become the happier for it? On the one hand, it will drive home more keenly the old truth which linked knowledge



with the intensification of grief; while on the other, we realize that knowledge is a value in its own right, even if it often bypasses us as it flows along the traditional channels of information and does not settle in our memory cells or triggers chemical signals in centers of emotion.

Yet all things are summed up in one way or another, joining as in an ancient diagram - the macrocosm of the universe with the microcosm of the heart and brain.

The restoration of those imperative links is one of the global features of the coming millennium. Turning a deaf ear to the music of the spheres impoverishes both the composer and the astronomer. A knowledge of what sets the planets in motion and of how the world is regulated at the quantum level broadens the outlook of both the politicians and the industrialists. Good decision making requires knowledge of the whole range of cause and effect relationships, especially since the dualistic logic customary for the West can be supplemented by other systems like the paradoxical Buddhist system where the confrontation of dilemma is united by a triad. One of the purposes of Buddhism is to bring to light all imaginable alternatives and to accomplish a creative synthesis of these alternatives in scenarios for the future.

Back at the turn of the century, people deplored the fact that contemporary culture was divided into two continents that seemed to be drifting ever further away from each other. The abysmal lack of understanding that separates the mentality of the natural scientist and the social scientist can be overcome only at a higher systematic level, failing which the end of industrial civilization may turn into the downfall of culture in general.

Synthesis of ideas and cultures that will place humanity beyond confrontation is a noble goal.

The boundless world and we together with it are along an invisible riverbed, and our indefatigable, embracing activity manifests itself in the changing novelty. There is a profound meaning in the words that we use quite thoughtlessly, words like "the current moment" and "current period." "Current" is a definition that does not possess a clear-cut physical basis in contrast to a second or giga second. And yet we have a special, almost subconscious sense of that unique and inimitable instant when the future depends on us alone, all of us together and each one separately. And then we say my time, our time and the time of decision.

The realization of the foreseeable we usually take for granted, but the unexpected often plunges us into confusion. Usually it is something unpleasant that we had been unable to foresee. That is the way it was, that is the way it is, but that is not the way it should be in principle. The time has come for us to heed those who can predict the future.

Fascism and Bolshevism, the struggle and rapprochement between them, were predicted a way back at the beginning of the century. The atomic bomb was predicted long before the implementation of the Manhattan Project. So was the Chernobyl disaster. Finally, both Edward Shevardnadze and Alexander



Yakovlev desperately tried to warn us of the deadly menace of a coup in the USSR. We, the contemporaries of the outgoing century, were destined to live through what has forced us to look with a fresh eye at the customary Sunrise and Sunset and the general order of things. We are witnesses and participants of the greatest breakthroughs into space and the atomic nucleus who discovered the sad truth that tomorrow may not necessarily come. What is more, it may not arrive not for just one person - something we could reconcile ourselves to - it may not dawn for all of us.

Evidently we, the present masters of the planet, are not the best of the long line of generators. But not the worst, we have had a rougher time than the generations. I do not mean in the material, but in the spiritual sense. After all, it is not easy for a mortal to part with such an indestructible mainstay as the assurance of the immortality of the human race. Without it, a human being is like Antaeus without earth.

The past is beyond our power to change. We are reminded of that every night by the stars whose light reaches us through a chasm of millions of years. Not only the living but also dead worlds still shine on us today, even those that have been extinct a long time and contracted into extra dense dwarfs and turned into black holes.

On the other hand, the future yawns with primeval void ahead of us; at any rate until the moment that we take an irreversible step. What is more, the fatal irreversibility may come to light only after a while or, on the contrary, it may work like a detonator and set off a mechanism that will be beyond our control.

As we multiply knowledge, we do more than just multiply our sorrow. The time has come to gather stones, to sum up the precious experience of nations that have faded into oblivion to unite contrary principles into a unity of higher knowledge, to foresee coming cataclysms and to unite the mighty potential of the creative elite of the whole world.

The time has come for us to do that. Never before has the history given a more favorable chance to men and women endowed with knowledge and a high sense of responsibility.

The true nature lies in the ground of Mind.  
It has neither a head nor a tail.  
It manifests to meet the needs of living beings.  
For want of better words, we call it wisdom.

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<sup>1</sup> "Gāthās" by the Fifth Patriarch.



## CHAPTER 10

### BODHISATTVA SOCIAL ETHICS

David W. Chappell

Buddhist ethics has been dominated by the *vinaya* rules designed to ensure personal purity for monks and nuns and harmony in the saṅgha.<sup>1</sup> Ethical principles whose primary goal is to develop peace and well-being for society have been less visible in Buddhism, although some guidelines can be found in the Buddha's discourses that give advice on a wide range of topics, including the responsibilities of family members, the duties of pupils and teachers, right livelihood, fiscal management and a consultative way to run the state.<sup>2</sup> Later sources have even more guidelines as we see in the edicts of King Aśoka and Nāgārjuna's instruction to a king.<sup>3</sup> However, the model of social activism is offset in Buddhist history by the actions of Pākyamuni who abandoned his kingly responsibilities, and his homeless life of poverty and the spiritual cultivation have been the model for monastics both East and West.<sup>4</sup> Because of the powerful influence of the Buddha's life and of the monastic community, the

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<sup>1</sup> See H. Saddhatissa, *Buddhist Ethics: Essence of Buddhism* (New York: George Braziller, 1970) and S. Tachibana, *The Ethics of Buddhism* (London: Oxford, 1926).

<sup>2</sup> See Russell F. Sizemore and Donald Swearer, eds., *Ethics, Wealth, and Salvation: A Study in Buddhist Social Ethics* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1990) and the forthcoming book on *Buddhist Views of a Desirable Society*, ed. by Sulak Sivaraksa to be published by United Nations University, Tokyo.

<sup>3</sup> For example, when Robert Thurman wished to write about Buddhist social action, he used the edicts of the great Buddhist, King Aśoka, and Nāgārjuna's *Jewel Garland of Royal Counsels* written to his disciple, King Udayi of southern India. See Robert Thurman, "Edicts of Aśoka," and "Nāgārjuna's Guidelines for Buddhist Social Action," in *The Path of Compassion: Writings on Socially Engaged Buddhism*, ed. by Fred Eppsteiner (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1988): 111-44.

<sup>4</sup> Pākyamuni's leaving home has become a major model for young men growing up in Thailand, and his rejection of the wealth and influence of his political role for the sake of following his spiritual quest have been honored in East and West. Indeed, within Christian monasticism the Buddha's action was elevated into a "saint day" within the Catholic Church under the names of Baarlam and Josephat.



model for Buddhist ethics usually has been the values and practices of monastics. Accordingly, instead of offering guidelines for developing a peaceful society, the main message of Buddhism has often been to urge people to give up society and join the monastic life.

A major alternative to the monastic model of ethics has been the development of positive, and even heroic, examples of social activism offered by the bodhisattva ideal. Many different texts provide examples of practices and values for the bodhisattva life, such as the *Jātaka* tales of Southern Buddhism and the various bodhisattvas that populate Mahāyāna scriptures. However, in this paper I shall deal not with stories of heroic, socially active bodhisattvas, but with rules or precepts that were recited and followed by Buddhist groups. Although it is difficult to trace how widespread these rules were used in India, in East Asia the introduction of bodhisattva preceptual texts begins in the fifth century, and they become adopted liturgically by Chinese monastics and laity in the sixth century. In Japan, bodhisattva precepts became widespread in the eighth century<sup>5</sup> and became central to religious practice through the influence of Saichō (d. 822)<sup>6</sup> and later Tendai teachers.

There are a number of different sets of bodhisattva precepts,<sup>7</sup> but we shall focus on the two most popular sets in China and Japan: the Fangdeng list of twenty-four vows and the Fanwang set of fifty-eight vows. The Fangdeng precepts are based on an Indian scripture (the *Da fangdeng tolōni jing*) but the Fanwang set of ten major and forty-eight minor vows contained in the *Fanwang jing* (Jp., *Bommōkyō*) may have been compiled in China.<sup>8</sup> Certainly the Fanwang vows became the most famous and most used. Today all monks and nuns in China usually receive these precepts a few weeks after receiving their monastic vows at their ordination. Accordingly, this essay will focus on these two sets of precepts in an effort to find Buddhist guidelines for social peace and harmony today.

## 1. Fangdeng Bodhisattva Precepts

Tiantai Zhiyi (538-597) institutionalized a set of twenty-four bodhisattva precepts as part of the Fangdeng Repentance Ritual<sup>9</sup> that was a regular feature of

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<sup>5</sup> Serge Elisseeff, “The *Bommōkyō* and the Great Buddha of the Tōdaiji,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 1 (1936): 84-95.

<sup>6</sup> See Paul Groner, *Saichō: The Establishment of the Japanese Tendai School* (Berkeley: Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, 1984): 169-306.

<sup>7</sup> The *Upasākaṭṭhā-sūtra*, tr. into Chinese by Dharmarakṣa in 424-6 C.E. as the *Yuposaijie jing*, has six major and twenty-eight minor precepts for the laity, whereas the Yogācāra tradition has four major and forty-three minor bodhisattva precepts.

<sup>8</sup> Leo Pruden, “Some Notes on the *Fanwang jing*,” *Indōgaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 16.1: 925-915.

<sup>9</sup> For a translation and analysis of the Fangdeng Repentance Ritual, see Daniel Stevenson’s Columbia University PhD dissertation, *The Tiantai Four Forms of Samādhi*



his daily practice. The twenty-four bodhisattva precepts used in the Fangdeng Repentance Ritual are based on a text translated into Chinese in the early fifth century by Fazhong entitled the *Da Fangdeng tolōni jing* (T.21.645b22-646b25). This text seems to have “cut across a number of different currents of northern Buddhist thought and practice, which suggests that it was part of a common northern legacy and not the specific provenance of a particular line of teaching,”<sup>10</sup> including Pure Land teachers, meditators, the Three Stages Sect, and Tiantai.

Unlike the Fanwang vows, the twenty-four Fangdeng vows do not repeat the *pañcaśīla*, the five basic precepts against killing, stealing, lying, fornicating and intoxication. The Fangdeng vows assume knowledge of these five basic Buddhist precepts, but affirm that bodhisattvas are also responsible for helping others keep these rules. For example, Rule #9 says that if others are breaking the precepts, then the bodhisattva has a duty to remind them that they are violating the precepts and should stop. Similarly, Rule #8 says that a bodhisattva who learns that others are committing a major wrong should try to help that person at-least three times. More specifically, Rule #7 says that if an angry person is going to burn the saṅgha’s residence, the bodhisattva must strongly admonish that person against doing so. Thus, the Fangdeng vows assume that the bodhisattva is keeping the basic monastic precepts, and instead emphasize the responsibility of bodhisattvas for correcting the behavior of others. This is a socially active role that tells us to be “our brother’s keeper.”

Although there are a number of isolated precepts that deal with specific issues, such as not keeping money that is found by accident (Rule #5), avoiding places where you might get into trouble (Rule #20), not boasting of spiritual visions (Rule #24), and vegetarianism (Rules #21 and 22), the Fangdeng precepts are particularly concerned with how bodhisattvas respond to the wrongs of others. For example, the text not only is against eating meat, but also is against condoning others who do eat meat, such as by telling others that there is no harm in eating meat, or in continuing to honor people who eat meat.

While a bodhisattva is to become actively involved in correcting some wrongs, and not to condone others, there are some situations where bodhisattvas are told not to make things worse by broadcasting private misconduct to others. For example, the rule against sexual misconduct is assumed, and the Fangdeng precepts emphasize that a bodhisattva should avoid excessive indulgence (Rule #2), but the ethical principle added by the Fangdeng precepts is to say that a bodhisattva should not speak ill of a monk who keeps a wife (Rule #3), nor should a bodhisattva report a wife’s misconduct to her husband (Rule #12). That is to say, sexual misconduct is wrong, but it is also wrong to increase social pain and divisions by gossiping and inciting retribution. As a consequence, a

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and Late North-South Dynasties, Sui, Early T’ang Buddhist Devotionalism (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilm, 1987): 175-87 and 538-97.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.



bodhisattva must go beyond legalism and instead measure corrective action in terms of consequences for helping or harming.

“Words can kill,” is a popular saying, and Rules #4 and #6 continue the theme of #2 and #3 by condemning speaking to others with words that encourage suicide or killing others. Equally forbidden are words that discourage people from treating their enemies with kindness (Rule #14) or that discourage the charitable work of someone else (Rule #10). Although bodhisattvas should tell people not to do wrong, Rule #16 says that words of criticism are harmful and wrong when they are based only on our own emotions, and Rule #16 says that we should not criticize others so as to ruin someone’s reputation. Accordingly, we cannot interpret the precepts legalistically and praise or blame others mechanically, but bodhisattvas must discern the motives for their words, and speak words in a way that will encourage life, kindness, charitable work and harmonious social relations.

The major thrust of the Fangdeng precepts is not to be an enemy to others, but to be a helpful friend even to your enemies. This strong social message is found at the beginning of the precepts and is echoed throughout: bodhisattvas should help hungry people who come for food, drink and clothing (Rule #1); bodhisattvas should praise those who are doing good deeds (Rule #17); and should help those who are building stūpas or hermitages alone (Rule #18); bodhisattvas should not physically fight others (Rule #15), bodhisattvas should not consider their enemies as enemies (Rule #13); bodhisattvas should encourage people to have good spiritual friends (*kalyāṇamitra*) and to avoid bad friends (Rule #19); and bodhisattvas should not use threats of a bad future rebirth to get people to speak, but should understand expedient means (Rule #23).

These positive guides for social actions are far from being a vision of a good society. Nevertheless, the Fangdeng precepts at least move the bodhisattva beyond a concern for the inner, personal purity and legalism that was encouraged by the monastic *vinaya*, and instead they evaluated deeds in terms of their harm or benefit to others. In particular, they emphasized the power of words to help or to destroy, they insisted on welfare for the poor, and they required that the bodhisattva take responsibility for correcting the behavior of others.

## 2. *Fanwang jing* Bodhisattva Precepts

Whereas the Fangdeng precepts assumed the *pañcaśīla* and supplemented them with the bodhisattva path, the *Fanwang jing* begins with the *pañcaśīla* as the first half of the ten major precepts, which are then supplemented by an additional forty-eight other minor precepts. More than half of the fifty-eight precepts in the *Fanwang jing* deal with the relations of the individual to the saṃgha or to the Buddhist tradition, such as urging against slandering the Three Jewels, slandering or gossiping about the failings of other Buddhists, proper



methods of teaching the Dharma, avoidance of contaminating activities such as watching ball games or gambling, honoring the Sūtras and Precepts, maintaining the proper seating arrangement in the assembly of monks or nuns, procedures for receiving the Bodhisattva precepts, teaching repentance to violators of these precepts, not exploiting the Dharma by teaching it for gain, not provoking quarrels in the saṅgha, etc. Thus, the text can be seen as a more complete collection of guidelines that could function either as a self-sufficient lists of precepts (as in the case of Tendai in Japan<sup>11</sup>) or as supplemental to the monastic vinaya (as in the case of Chinese Buddhists), rather than serving only in a supplemental role like the Fangdeng precepts.

In addition to the precepts devoted to maintaining the dharma and the saṅgha, approximately twenty-four precepts in the *Fanwang jing* move beyond the Buddhist community to deal explicitly with actions in society, namely:

- I. Don't kill;
  - II. Don't steal;
  - III. No sexual misconduct;
  - IV. No false speech;
  - V. No intoxicants;
  - VII. Don't praise self and disparage others, but be willing to undergo slander and insult for others;
  - VIII. Don't be stingy, nor be insulting to the needy; and
  - IX. Must accept repentance and avoid hatefulness.
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2. Don't consume intoxicants or deal in intoxicants;
  3. Don't eat meat;
  4. Don't eat the five pungent plants;
  9. Care for the sick as the foremost field of blessing;
  10. Don't collect deadly weapons, nor seek revenge;
  11. Don't act as a military envoy;
  12. Don't conduct uncompassionate business dealings (for example, slavery, being an undertaker, keeping domestic animals);
  13. Don't deliberately slander others;
  14. Don't ignite destructive fires;
  - 16b. Help the needy, even if you have to give your own body, and then teach them the Dharma;

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<sup>11</sup> Having received a bodhisattva ordination in China, Saichō not only sought to establish a bodhisattva ordination platform in Japan beginning in 818, but he openly renounced the Hīnayāna precepts that he had received earlier and threw away his begging bowl. See Hisao Inagaki, "The Bodhisattva Doctrine as Conceived and Developed by the Founders of the New Sects in the Heian and Kamakura Periods," in Leslie Kawamura, ed., *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhism* (Waterloo, Canada: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1978), 168.



17. Don't curry favor with the powerful for the sake of selfish manipulation and to gain advantage over others;
20. Seek to liberate all beings (physically and spiritually) based on your kinship with all beings;
21. Don't seek revenge and kill others;
29. Don't conduct deviant livelihoods;
30. Don't conduct other deviant livelihoods but choose purer activities; and
32. Don't harm living beings.

The social ethics of the *Fanwang jing* begins with the standard set of five precepts common to all Buddhists, namely, (1) not to kill, (2) steal, (3) fornicate, (4) lie or (5) take intoxicants. The first four are the earliest, and are common to all world religions. The positive contribution of the *Fanwang jing* precepts is to go beyond the negative prohibition against wrong action, but instead emphasizes constructive action. For example, the prohibition against killing in the monastic tradition is straightforward, but the *Fanwang jing* also urges developing the inner attitudes of kindness, compassion, and filial respect. Furthermore, a bodhisattva “should devise skillful means to rescue and protect all beings.” This takes an essentially negative precept and changes it into a directive for saving the world! Thus, what begins as a rule to maintain personal purity is transformed into a rule for social responsibility and positive action for the well-being of others.

Similarly, the prohibition against stealing adds the positive goal of developing inner attitudes of kindness and filiality, as well as to “aid people to produce blessings and happiness.” In the case of sexual misconduct, the bodhisattva precepts also urge people to “rescue all beings and instruct them in the dharma of purity.” In the precept against lying, the bodhisattva not only should use proper speech, but also maintain “proper views and lead all other beings to maintain them as well.” Thus, the rule is not just against misleading others, but for positively correcting others and spreading the truth.

Usually in the monastic precepts, the goal is to ensure the inner harmony of the saṅgha and the well-being of the individual rather than the enhancement and protection of society. For example, in discussing the fifth precept against taking intoxicants, the *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya* (Ch., *Sifen lu*) that is used in East Asia offers the following ten reasons not to take intoxicants:

1. One's facial complexion becomes unattractive;
2. Physical strength and balance is lost;
3. One can't see straight;
4. One's behavior gives the appearance of anger;
5. It is a waste of resources to use grain for alcohol rather than food;
6. Illness increases;
7. One's temper is lost more easily and gets involved in fights;



8. A good reputation is lost;
9. One loses the ability to think clearly and so acts stupidly;
10. At the end of life, one will receive a lower rebirth in hell, as a hungry ghost, or as an animal.<sup>12</sup>

Although there is a warning against influencing others to develop distorted thinking by dealing in intoxicants, the weight of these monastic warnings is on protecting one's individual life, or the well-being of the monastic community. In contrast, the bodhisattva precepts dealing with intoxicants (the fifth major precept and the second minor precept, #V and #2 in our list above) show primary concern for the welfare of others. Specifically, the major precept is not against a person drinking, but against dealing in alcohol so as to injure others. Only in the minor precepts is there the injunction against consuming intoxicants oneself.

Like the Fangdeng precepts, the sixth major precept states that publicly talking about the misconduct of other Buddhists is so serious that the bodhisattva no longer can be a member of the Buddhist community. This is an internal rule aimed at removing communal dissension that comes from gossip, but does not prohibit reporting civil crimes that injure society. However, the seventh major precept goes beyond the saṅgha to advocate a rule for all society, namely, not to flaunt one's own virtues and hide the good of others. This is so serious that the *Fanwang jing* also requires dismissal for this action, and is supported by a minor precept prohibiting slander (#13 above). Two other precepts that affect society and require dismissal if they are violated are the eighth precept against stinginess and the ninth precept against anger and fighting:

The eighth major precept prohibits stinginess and insult. A disciple of the Buddha must not act in a stingy manner, encourage others to do so, or involve himself in the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of stinginess. When a bodhisattva encounters any poor or destitute person who has come to beg, he should give that person anything he needs. Hence, if a bodhisattva directs evil or hateful thoughts at such a person or refuses to give him even a penny, a needle, or a blade of grass, or to speak even a sentence, a verse, or a dust's worth of dharma for one who seeks dharma, and if he further scolds and humiliates such a person, he thereby commits a bodhisattva *pārājika* offense.<sup>13</sup>

The ninth major precept prohibits deliberate hatefulness and refusal to accept repentance. A disciple of the Buddha must not become hateful, encourage others to do so, or involve himself in the causes, conditions, methods or karma of hatefulness. He should always maintain a mind of kindness, compassion, and filial compliance. If instead a Bodhisattva abuses sentient or insentient beings

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<sup>12</sup> Based on the list offered in *The Buddha Speaks the Brahma Net Sūtra* (Talmage, California: Dharma Realm Buddhist University, 1981), 1:96.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:102.



with harsh speech by going so far as to attach them with his fists, knife, or club, by continuing to maintain relentless hatred, or by refusing to set aside his grudge even when the object of his enmity with sincere words confesses, repents, and seeks forgiveness. He thereby commits a Bodhisattva *pārājika* offense.<sup>14</sup>

These offenses that require dismissal from the Buddhist community are largely focused on personal control and compliance, but do not advocate taking responsibility for society. Even though they have social implications in being non-violent and responsive to the needs of those who ask for help, there is no obligation to reform society. Furthermore, a handful of other minor precepts also support non-violence (see #10, #11, #12, #21 and #32 above) but are not directed toward socially active reform.

Directives for actively improving society are found in a minority of the *Fanwang jing* precepts, but a very important one is the ninth minor precept (#9 above):

The ninth minor precept prohibits failure to look after the sick. Whenever a disciple of the Buddha meets with anyone who is sick, he should constantly make offerings to that person just as he would a Buddha. If the person is one's parent, one's teacher, a member of the saṅgha, or a disciple, is one with impaired faculties, or is afflicted with any of the manifold illnesses, one should make offerings and care for that person until he recovers. Of the eight fields of blessings, looking after the sick is the foremost. Hence if a Bodhisattva fails to look after the sick, or if he directs hateful thoughts toward that person and therefore refuses to rescue the individual, whether he is in a dwelling of the saṅgha, the city, the wilds, the mountain forests or along the road, he thereby violates this minor precept and commits a defiling offense.<sup>15</sup>

A portion of the sixteenth minor precept (#16b above) requires that we make offerings to Buddhist leaders even by burning our finger, arm, or body if need be. Then the text adds that we should “forsake one's entire body, one's flesh, hands and feet as an offering to starving tigers, wolves, lions, and hungry ghosts.”<sup>16</sup> This directive echoes the famous example of the *Jātaka* story of the Buddha giving his body to the hungry tigress<sup>17</sup> and is so extreme that only a few have dared to take it literally. Less dramatic but more practical is the twentieth minor precept that is grounded in the Buddhist worldview (#20 above):

The twentieth minor precept prohibits failure to liberate beings. A disciple of the Buddha must maintain a mind of kindness and cultivate the practice of

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:105.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:133.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:151.

<sup>17</sup> See the account in R.E. Emmerick, *The Sūtra of Golden Light* (London: Luzac, 1970), 87 ff.



liberating beings. He should reflect thus: “All male beings have been my father and all females have been my mother. There is not a single being who has not given birth to me during my previous lives, hence all beings of the six destinies are my parents. Therefore, when a person kills any of these beings, he thereby slaughters my parents. Furthermore, he kills a body that has once (been) my own, for all elemental earth and water have previously served part of my body and all elemental fire and air have served as my basic substance. Therefore, I shall always cultivate the practice of liberating beings and in every life be reborn in the eternally-abiding dharma and teach others to liberate beings as well.”

Whenever a Bodhisattva sees a person preparing to kill an animal, he should devise a skillful method to rescue and protect it, freeing it from its suffering and difficulties. Furthermore, he should use the Bodhisattva precepts and explain them in order to teach and transform beings and to rescue and deliver those beings. On the day that one’s father, mother, or brother dies, one should request a dharma master to lecture the Bodhisattva precepts, sūtras and moral codes to generate blessings for the deceased and lead him to see the Buddhas and secure rebirth among humans and gods. Hence, if a Bodhisattva fails to act accordingly, he thereby violates this minor precept and commits a defiling offense.<sup>18</sup>

Two very important points are included in this precept: (1) we should actively seek skillful ways to save animals, as well as ways to teach the dharma to other people, and (2) that the reason we should do this is that all beings are our relatives. Previously we have seen the injunction not to kill but to save all beings (#1), not to be stingy (#VIII), to care for the sick as the foremost field of blessing (#9), and to help the needy, even if you must give your own body (#16b), but this is the first time that we are provided with a motive other than to avoid a bad future rebirth, namely, we should help others because we are closely related to them. They are our kinfolk.

In English, the word “kindness” is not based on an emotional state or feeling of kindness, but on the word “kin”: to have a sense of “kinship” with another. You should help others because they are not separate or different or other than you are. You should help others as you help yourself. This provides a kinship basis for the golden rule “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

### 3. Theory and Practice

Johan Galtung has been a leading figure in previous meetings of this group, and he has produced an inspiring book entitled *Buddhism: A Quest for Unity and Peace*<sup>19</sup> that sets forth his experience and vision of Buddhist ethics in

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<sup>18</sup> *Brahma Net Sūtra*, 1:162-3.

<sup>19</sup> Johan Galtung, *Buddhism: A Quest for Unity and Peace* (Honolulu: Dae Won Sa Temple, 1988).



comparison with his idea of other world religions. For all its insights, a distressing weakness of the book was the failure to distinguish the ideals of Buddhism from its actual historical practices. As a consequence, he chose to compare the ethical ideals of Buddhism with the practices of Christianity, especially the crusades and inquisition, while omitting the ethical ideals of Jesus who advocated loving your enemies, healing and helping others, and endless forgiveness against those who wrong you. On the other hand, he chose to invoke many ethical ideals from Buddhism, but failed to mention the forms of social injustice that Buddhists have practiced. It is true that Buddhist institutions have been less violent than Christian and Muslim groups, but Buddhist individuals and nations also have their full share of intolerance, injustice and violence: discrimination against women, rampant sectarianism in Japan and recently militant monks in Sri Lanka. Buddhist nations such as Mongolia, Burma and Thailand have had many ethical problems that may be different in kind and degree from Christian nations, but which are still far from the ideals of the Buddha. Galtung's six weak points all deal with practice whereas his twenty positive points all deal with ideals, goals and doctrines.<sup>20</sup> The "structural injustice" of his book is that he compares the ideals of Buddhist with the practices of other religions. Accordingly, we must now ask, "To what degree did Buddhists actually practice these sets of Bodhisattva precepts that they used ritually?"

Like every religion, Buddhist social practice and historical communities often diverge greatly from the ideals of their scriptures. The life of Buddhists is lived in this creative tension between transcendent goals and mundane forms of practice. Although being enlightened may mean "never having to say you are sorry," how many Buddhists are enlightened? Indeed, Buddhism is filled with various forms of repentance practices, some of which are performed daily, in order to help Buddhists rectify their behavior and avoid the evil consequences of bad actions. The pervasiveness of repentance in Buddhism is a sign that practice by Buddhist individuals and groups has its share of human conflict, injustice and harm.

Like all human movements, Buddhism also shows that sometimes there develops a discrepancy between self-image and reality. Mahāyāna Buddhists are fond of saying that the earlier schools (whom they called Hīnayāna, the "little vehicle") were attached to nirvāṇa, whereas Mahāyāna Buddhists followed a higher and more inclusive practice based on wisdom and compassion. In spite of this claim, modern Mahāyāna Buddhism in East Asia is remarkable for its lack of social service activities in comparison to the social activism of Theravāda Buddhists. For example, in the recent book entitled *The Path of Compassion*:

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-31. This weakness has recently been noted by George Tanabe in his paper "Buddhism, Politics and Peace" delivered at the University of Hawaii - Taishō University conference, August 23-24, 1991.



*Writings on Socially Engaged Buddhism*,<sup>21</sup> most of the examples are from Theravādin countries. The major Mahāyāna voices are Western. Recently the Nishi Honganji Temple in Japan has established an institute dealing with social service, but has accomplished very little except for a growing hospice movement for the terminally ill. A recent Japanese-Hawaiian traveler remarked to me that it was striking how warm people were to him in Theravāda countries in comparison to Mahāyāna people who were cold or indifferent. Although this experience may be based on culture more than religion, Mahāyāna Buddhists still need to be careful that their rhetoric is supported by deeds.

There are two Buddhisms: the actual and the ideal. If we are concerned to bring peace and harmony to society, we need to be aware not only of the ideal images, but also when and how historical and social practices fulfilled these goals and also when and why they failed to live up to these ideals. Since the vision of peace and justice is shared by all religions, it is most important for us to discern what have been good methods and what have been bad methods for implementing these values in individual Buddhist practice, in Buddhist institutions and in Buddhist societies. Recently Whalen Lai has studied Buddhist social activism in China as a comparative history of religious charities. He concludes,

At one time, medieval Buddhists in China and medieval Christians in Europe observed an almost identical set of “corporal works of mercy”: feeding, clothing, hospitality, visiting the sick and the imprisoned, and burying the dead. And there is no way that one can be said to be necessarily better or more loving than the other. They were alike in caring.<sup>22</sup>

Lai goes on to observe that both were innovations since in classical Chinese and Western societies “the burial of the dead was the sole duty of the families; and the feeding and clothing of the poor was the sole obligation of the state.” As a consequence, Christian charities were banned by Roman authorities, and in 717 C.E. Emperor Xuanzong was advised that based on the teachings of Confucius, Buddhists should not be operating charities at their temples. Buddhist hospitals began in South China in the sixth century by the kings and princes of Chi and Liang, and in North China the Three Stages Sect developed many charitable works based on the apocryphal sūtra called the *Xiangfa jueyi jing* (dated about 520 C.E.) that elevated the “field of compassion” above the “field of reverence” in order to redistribute donations to the temple away from monastic indulgence and give it to the poor and needy:

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<sup>21</sup> *The Path of Compassion: Writings on Socially Engaged Buddhism*, ed. by Fred Eppsteiner (2nd edition, Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1988).

<sup>22</sup> Whalen Lai, “Christian Love, Buddhist Compassion: A Comparative History of Religious Charities,” ms., 4.



In various sūtras I have stressed the perfection of charity, for I wish that my disciples, both monks and laymen, would cultivate the compassionate heart, and give to the poor, the needy, the orphaned, and the aged, even to a famished dog. However, my disciples did not understand my idea, and only offered gifts to the *jingtian* (field of respect) and not to the *beitian* (field of compassion). When I speak of the field of respect, I refer to the Three Jewels, the Buddha, the dharma and the saṅgha. When I speak of the field of compassion, I refer to the poor and the needy, the orphaned, the aged, and even the ant. Of these two categories, the field of compassion is the superior one.<sup>23</sup>

The hospital wards and system of charities developed by Buddhists in the sixth century were encouraged and adopted by Empress Wu in the eighth century, but were taken over completely by the state during the persecution of Buddhism in 845. The imperial decree read:

As for the fields of compassion and the hospitals, these have no one to manage them since the monks returned to lay life. I am afraid that the infirm and the sick would have no one to look after them. Let the two capitals estimate and make available monastery land ... Each field would be administered by a venerable old man chosen for the purpose. The harvest from the land would be used to supply the food needed.<sup>24</sup>

After a brief revival of Buddhism, the Song Dynasty (960-1279) also restricted ordinations that emptied the temples of monks and caused them to be available for state confiscation as schools in 1151. Although the religious laity began to form mutual aid associations to fill the gap left by the decline of the temples, these associations (such as the White Lotus and White Cloud groups) were seen by the state as a threat to their power, and were banned. Thus, the Buddhist charities of the Sui and Tang Dynasties ended in state persecution that forbade social activism.

In 1666 mutual aid societies were banned again by the Ching government for fear that they would form a nucleus for popular rebellion. Although some charities reappeared under the sponsorship of the Sacred Edict of 1724, these were secular and not Buddhist. As a consequence, when Dharmapāla visited China after the World Parliament of Religions in 1893, the monks of Longhua Temple in Nanking were so afraid of being arrested by the government for

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<sup>23</sup> T.85.1336ab, tr. by Kenneth Ch'en, *The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 295. Ch'en goes on to quote from another sūtra, the *Foshuo zhude futian jing* (T.16.777b) that lists seven activities constituting the field of merit: 1. Construction of stūpas, monastic halls, and pavilions; 2. establishment of fruit gardens, bathing tanks and trees; 3. dispensing medicine for the sick; 4. construction of sturdy boats to ferry people; 5. construction of bridges; 6. digging of wells along well-traveled roads; and 7. construction of toilet facilities for the convenience of the public.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 298.



forming “illegal associations” that they asked him not to set up a branch of the Mahābodhi Society.<sup>25</sup>

I am sure that a similar, sad story could be told of state control of Buddhist charities in Japan. As a consequence, the bodhisattva ideals cherished in ritual and ceremony become restricted to temple hospitality, but until the end of World War II have offered little social activism in the world beyond the monastic walls.

The good news is that in recent decades there has been an explosion of activity by Buddhists in Taiwan as they use their new political freedom to develop schools, hospitals, social welfare and other charitable activities. This represents a new chapter in the practice of bodhisattva social ethics, and we must wait to see whether practice will live up to the theory and ideals of traditional bodhisattva precepts, and whether new goals and practices will be formulated for this new age.<sup>26</sup>

#### 4. Appendix

Although the *Fanwang ching* list of precepts has been translated into French and English, there is no translation of the *Fangdeng* precepts. Accordingly, below is a draft translation<sup>27</sup> based on the Taishō Tripi aka text.

1. Twenty-four Major Precepts for a bodhisattva from the *Fangdeng tolo jing*, T 21.645c9 - 646b41. If a bodhisattva doesn't comply with the wishes of hungry people who come to his/her place for food, drink and linen, then this is called violating the first major precept.

2. If a bodhisattva excessively indulges in sexual desire, not precluding animals (as a partner), then this is called violating the second major precept.

3. If a bodhisattva based on his/her own inclinations speaks ill of a *bhikṣu* who (wrongly) keeps a wife, then this is called violating the third major precept.

4. If a bodhisattva sees someone who is melancholy and contemplating committing suicide, and based on her/his own opinions increases that person's anger and destroys that person's will to live, then this is just like burning down everything with fire,<sup>28</sup> and is called violating the fourth major precept.

5. If a bodhisattva leaves the hermitage and going to a deserted road finds money or a precious object and keeps it following his/her own inclinations, then this is called violating the fifth major precept.

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<sup>25</sup> Whalen Lai, “Religious Charities,” Part II, 16.

<sup>26</sup> As an example of recent efforts to find new ways to apply Buddhism to our modern world, the Chung-hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies is organizing a conference for July 18-21, 1992 in Taipei to explore the *vinaya* and bodhisattva practices in the light of historical and contemporary needs.

<sup>27</sup> I am indebted to Ven. Ruoxue for her assistance in translating these precepts.

<sup>28</sup> This prohibition against wantonly destroying things with fire is the Fourteenth Minor Precept according to the *Fanwang ching* (T.24.1006a6-90).



6. When seeing someone who out of anger is going to take other person's life, if a bodhisattva praises that person's anger with pleasing comments, then this is called violating the sixth major precept.

7. When seeing someone in an angry rage, and hearing that out of anger that person is going to burn the saṅgha's residence, if a bodhisattva doesn't wholeheartedly admonish that bad person, this is called violating the seventh major precept.

8. When seeing or hearing of someone who is committing a major sin, a bodhisattva in this case should secretly call that person to come to his place, (saying that) "I have good medicine so that your capacity to keep the precepts can revive and come back to life." If that person won't come, the bodhisattva should call him three times. If there is less than three (attempts to help the person), this is called violating the eighth major precept.

9. When seeing or hearing of someone violating (any of) the five deadly sins, a bodhisattva should go to see him/her, saying that "this is not the righteous dharma," and "you are not performing pure acts, so don't do that." Failing to take this action is called violating the ninth major precept.

10. When seeing or hearing of someone else's plan to establish great charitable work, if a bodhisattva becomes angry and destroys that person's understanding of good deeds, this is called violating the tenth major precept.

11. When seeing someone else indulging in food and wine, if a bodhisattva just based on his/her own emotions scolds that person and regardless of the causes and circumstances (says that) it is an impure deed, then this is called a violation of the eleventh major precept.

12. If a bodhisattva sees or hears of someone seducing someone else's wife and goes to that woman's correct husband and reports what has happened, saying that someone is offending him and that he can go and see, this is called violating the twelfth major precept.

13. If a bodhisattva considers his/her enemy as an enemy, this is called violating the thirteenth major precept.

14. If a bodhisattva, at the sight of some else regarding his/her enemy with innate kindness, goes to that person's place who is acting in this way and says: "Excellent! Excellent! But how can you treat this person with innate kindness? It is an inauspicious appearance." This is called violating the fourteenth major precept.

15. If a bodhisattva, when seeing someone fighting against others, goes to help that person and uses strength to fight the other people, this is called violating the fifteenth major precept.

16. If a bodhisattva discovers someone else's secret affairs and slanders that person and causes grief and anger for the person by making it known to the four assemblies, then this is called violating the sixteenth major precept.

17. If a bodhisattva, when seeing or hearing of another's benevolent deeds, doesn't have any word (of praise) for it, this is called violating the seventeenth major precept.



18. If a bodhisattva, while walking on a deserted road, sees people building stūpas, or sees people building hermitages, but doesn't go to help them, this is called violating the eighteenth major precept.

19. When seeing or hearing of someone who has left good spiritual friends (*kalyāṇamitra*) and is getting involved with bad spiritual friends, if a bodhisattva never praises that person by saying how lucky they would be to leave the bad spiritual friends and get involved with good spiritual friends, this is called violating the nineteenth major precept.

20. A bodhisattva should not go to places where s/he can get into trouble, such as the areas where ill-bred persons live,<sup>29</sup> the places of evil people, fierce dogs, and members of the two vehicles, *śrāvaka* (and *pratyekabuddha*), except if there is urgent business, otherwise this is called violating the twentieth major precept.

21. If a bodhisattva sees, hears, or suspects butchering, s/he should instantly think inwardly that one who eats meat destroys the seed of great benevolence and will commit a major wrong. Saying that there is no harm from eating (meat) without seeing, hearing, or suspecting the butchering, this is called violating the twenty-first major precept.

22. If a bodhisattva, when seeing, hearing, or suspecting butchery, pretends not to see, hear, or suspect butchery, and if s/he eats the meat, then s/he is against the treasury of all the Buddhas of the past, present and future, as well as disregarding the benevolence of all the Buddhas of the past, present and future. To consider this person as worth of honor, this is called violating the twenty-second major precept.

23. If a bodhisattva understands expedient means and knows the capacity of (certain) sentient beings, and says that not speaking will incur the retribution of sin, this is called violating the twenty-third major precept.

24. While keeping these precepts if a bodhisattva sees Huazhu, Xugongzang, Guanshiyin, or any other bodhisattva, he cannot tell people about it, such as his seeing or not seeing them or other matters about seeing them, nor that he saw those Princes of Dharma and so forth. If he says that he sees them, he will get white blotches on his body and encounter things that hinder the Way, and sometimes may become dull-witted, green-blind, or dizzy; or he receives the sickness of delusion from ignorant discrimination of the essentials of the Buddhist dharma. Those who slander these precepts will also receive misfortunes like these.

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<sup>29</sup> Literally, *Ca½āla*, who was considered in ancient India to be an outcast, the lowest and most despised half-breed who had a *śūdra* father and a brahman mother, and who carried a flag and sounded a bell to warn of his presence. Nevertheless, people of this class were accepted as converts for ordination by the Buddha.



Sometimes there are people who uphold these precepts, but do not propagate them to outsiders (saying) “I have seen these things.” Those who do not speak out for seven days, then for their remaining days they will already have gone outside (the path) and will not be able to speak.

Good sons, these are called the twenty-four precepts of a bodhisattva-mahāsattva.



## **CHAPTER 11**

### **WHAT THE MODERN WORLD SHOULD SEARCH FOR IN BUDDHISM**

In-hwan Chae

Buddhism is a religion. The basic proposition of a religion is to look into the following questions: “What am I?” “Why do I live?” and “What is the right and genuine way to live through this world?” A religion that can offer us the right answers to these questions is a true religion. Otherwise, you might as well call it a religion that is no longer alive with us.

Buddhism, if one wants to define it, is a religion that teaches us how to attain enlightenment, how to find true self, how to become a Buddha. It is also a teaching of how to live life truthfully. Therefore, I would like to say a few words of my own about what meaning Buddhism can offer to modern society where the material civilization is highly developed and where there is a great deal of confusion about the real values of life.

According to historians, the history of humankind spans about two million years. During this long period, humanity has experienced all kinds of changes. In particular, we suffered the most incredible misery and sorrow in the wake of World War II. A single atomic bomb took the lives of 300,000 people in Hiroshima and about 150,000 people died or were wounded with the atomic bomb in Nagasaki. There are still many people suffering from injuries caused by the atomic bombs.

A few years ago, I had an opportunity to see the remains of the damaged building with a dome in Hiroshima, all that was left there in the center of the town where the atom bomb fell. I also saw many kinds of articles and pictures displayed in the commemoration building that vividly portrayed the horror of the atomic bomb. It was not only soldiers who were victims of the atomic bomb, but there were also civilians including women, the elderly and children. The effect all of this had on me was hardly bearable.

How could these incidents have taken place? It was atomic research that had developed the atomic weapons. It is also due to the advancement of scientific techniques that we can cure diseases that could not be treated a short time ago. Among these scientific techniques, atomic physics has advanced most, and the



atomic bomb and the hydrogen bomb are both examples of highly advanced products of the atomic physics of today. It is said that the hydrogen bomb is a hundred times more powerful than the atomic bomb though the hydrogen bomb has never been used. It is also said that there are thousands of atomic bombs and hydrogen bombs both in the United States and in the Soviet Union. The Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles that will carry these atomic and hydrogen bombs are placed to face the direction of the potential enemy. Britain, France and China also claim that they possess these bombs.

Can you imagine the consequences of World War III if a war breaks out? It is only going to last ten minutes this time, though our conventional war in the past lasted for several years. All they have to do is just to press a button at the war headquarters and this single action is more than enough to ruin both the United States of America and the Soviet Union. And it is beyond doubt that those countries that do not take part in this imaginary war cannot escape the danger and remain safe. The air that contains the dreadful radiation will spread out to every corner of the earth and destroy humankind. If you watch the world situation of today very closely, you cannot help but notice that this critical moment is gradually approaching us.

We benefit so much, at the present time, from our advanced scientific techniques. Yet, on the other hand, we are on the verge of being totally destroyed, at the slightest mistake, by the very civilization that we have achieved.

If humankind could be destroyed by such things as nuclear weapons, is it the atomic bomb or the hydrogen bomb which is to blame? Or should we say that atomic physics is largely to blame because of the fact that these bombs are made by applying the study of atomic physics? I can firmly say that neither of these is right. Because it is strictly up to us to make a decision on whether we want to use atomic physics for peaceful purposes or to use it in developing weapons such as atomic or hydrogen bombs that might destroy our lives.

It is humankind itself and nothing else that essentially commands and dominates its own destiny. That being the case, I believe the most important things now are the thoughts we have in our minds and how conscious we are. We can see our body. In a sense, we can see our mind by reflecting on ourselves. But there is something absolute which we cannot see at all, however hard we try. It is the supreme world never touched. Such an absolute state of subjectivity sometimes becomes itself and sometimes becomes the state of objectivity. At other times, it is in a state of confrontation with itself. Sometimes it appears as a state of no objectivity and no subjectivity; the self is in the states of non-existence. According to a Linji Chan master in China, these are the four ways of analysis in Chan Buddhism. Thus, the absolute thing (the Buddha Nature) with the highest authority can lead to a free creative life in many ways. Only this can govern the world and our mind as the essence of real power.



Pākyamuni Buddha thoroughly understood that everybody has it (the Buddha Nature) within. And here indeed is the world of Eternity that he was looking for.

The great subjectivity that controls the world is the true self and in realizing this immortal self, there will be salvation, joy and happiness. Also, when this realization aims towards the objective world, it becomes and works as a great love. It becomes vast and boundless mercy that will work for other people. Becoming conscious of immortal life and absolute love is the conclusion that Pākyamuni Buddha achieved.

The consciousness of the human mind always works toward the outside. Truth that is discovered by observing the outside is called scientific truth. When we observe plants in detail, this is called Botany and when we study animals, it is called Zoology; the study of society is called sociology. In short, as our eyes look towards the outside, the truth that we find by turning our consciousness towards the outside is called scientific truth. Yet, sooner or later, we sense an urge that says, "I always look out from inside of myself." What is this self that observes the outside? And as our consciousness turns towards the inside, the truth we find there is called religious truth.

We can say that science is that which searches truth by turning towards the outside, and religion is that which seeks the truth by turning towards the inside of oneself. Science always searches for the truth in the world of objects, but the actual existence which is absolutely free from becoming the object of any kind is the world which dwells in your mind and which the Buddha discovered. This inner truth is called the Dharma by the Buddha.

One of the Buddha's disciples, Ānanda asked him, when the Buddha was facing his last moment of life, "After you leave us, whom shall we follow and what shall we depend upon?" the Buddha replied, "Take yourself as a guiding light, take yourself to depend upon, take the Dharma as a guiding light and depend on the Dharma. Do not depend upon anybody else."

In other words, "the guiding light" is within yourself and it is within yourself upon which you must depend. The essence of the eternal human nature and of great love is the guiding light of the Dharma in your mind. You must depend upon them as you live. You should not depend upon anything else. These were the Buddha's last words.

Everybody should live life truthfully, brightly, and powerfully, by realizing the most dignified personality in oneself. They should realize their absolute subjectivity. This is what the Buddha taught us.

The Buddha is he who put the truth into practice consistent with reality. Therefore, we too must lead a life of practicing the truth with a firm belief that existence itself is emptiness. And the world of distinction itself is the world of equality. This is the purpose of Buddhism.

The modern world, however, only persists in situations where there is racial discrimination, class distinction and national discrimination, and humanity continues to struggle endlessly. Such continual struggling in this complicated



modern society originated in human egotism. Even at this moment, for the sake of people who are captured by egotism, our science develops the most dreadful nuclear weapons, the instruments that will self-destroy humankind. And these instruments only go on increasing. If we only realize that this will lead to the total annihilation of humanity, we can avoid the destructive consequences by having a correct understanding of the fact that every struggle in every society arises from egotism. The most demanding thing in this era is self-examination. We, who live in this modern society, must concentrate on the task of solving our egotism much more positively than ever.

In order to achieve this, it is required that all of us undergo the training of our personality through the practice of Chan. This training is basic to Buddhism and has been available for a long time. However, this training of the personality that is being practiced through meditation and contemplation is not something that is unique to Buddhism. It was also known in ancient Greece and China.

Yet, it is the Chan of Buddhism, among all these methods, which has maintained a continuing tradition. It is my firm belief that the self-reflection of the total personality can be revived through the practice of Chan and that this can lead us to world peace.



## **CHAPTER 12**

### **THE THERAVĀDA BUDDHIST EXPERIENCE OF SOCIAL PRACTICE FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE**

Medagoda Sumanatissa

Today, termination of the human adventure on earth has become a real possibility as never before, especially with the cascade of problems facing humankind. Confronted with such overwhelming difficulties, it goes without saying that differences of race and religion, class and color, ideology and dogmatism become secondary to enabling a future to be faced with confidence. The major task we face is how to take firm steps on the one hand, to avoid the cataclysms of war and on the other, the consequences of environmental destruction enveloping the globe. We believe that it is in this light that a review and re-examination of the social practices that contributed to enduring civilizations of the past becomes not only important but also urgent.

At the very outset of the treatment of our subject, we wish to make the preliminary observation that in our present necessarily brief survey of some of the key aspects of the Theravāda tradition from the point of view of building a righteous society, we are compelled to exclude detailed reference to the equally significant experiences in the Mahāyāna tradition, whereas, for a balanced judgment of the full Buddhist experience, the totality of the experience needs to be examined without prejudice to draw the best lessons.

It is significant that among the countries that fall within the Theravāda tradition and have been under that influence for very considerable lengths of time, the most significant are Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. Among these countries, it must be stated in all modesty that Sri Lanka appears to have the longest line of “Buddhist experience,” although it came under strong and continuous imperialist influence for over 400 years, with approximately 150 years of it under British rule.

Talking of Buddhism and the influence that this religion has pervaded over mankind for close upon two and a half millennia, the role that the Buddha’s teachings played to re-cast and re-vitalize human potentialities



over a substantial part of humankind's way of life, regardless of place and culture, must indeed be significant. Its universality of applicability irrespective of time, place or culture has been proven beyond doubt. When we examine the question of the experience of Buddhist social practice in relation to the goals before us, it cannot be done independent of considerations of the personality of the Buddha. This is because of the remarkable influence the Buddha's teachings have had on the lives of both Bhikkhus and the Buddhist laity, considering that the Buddha attained the highest spiritual perfection that humans may be capable of.

Among the many shining examples of the Buddha's message, the following, which represents his advice to monks as much as his own responses to false accusations and slandering which are baseless, presents one glorious facet of the Buddha. The Buddha advised the monks:

If anyone finds fault or abuses me, do not, monks, for that matter, be offended, displeased or ruffled. If you by any means be offended or perturbed, it will be your own harm. On the other hand, whenever people hurl abuse and criticize, you should pause and think whether what they say is just slander and false. Likewise, monks, if someone were to praise and glorify me, the doctrine or the noble order, you should not for that matter feel particularly elated or pleased. If you do so, it will be to your own harm. On the contrary, in such an event, you should pause and examine the truth of the matter. You should find out whether what they say is actually to be found in us and whether they are correct.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, the equanimity displayed and the capacity demonstrated to rise above likes and dislikes as well as the emphasis laid in the determined pursuit of truth is a most significant characteristic of the Buddha, quite apart from his compassion towards all beings; all this arising from his incomparable inner strength and firm conviction.

There are numerous other instances, recorded in the texts that can be cited to demonstrate the magnificent and peerless character of the Buddha. Another instance can be illustrative. The Venerable Ānanda, the Buddha's chief disciple and companion once saw the Teacher being reviled publicly and so spoke to the Buddha about it. The dialogue that transpired is recorded as follows:

“Sir, these citizens are reviling us openly. Let us go elsewhere.”

“Where shall we go?” The Buddha inquired, and the following discussion ensued.

“To some other city, Sir.”

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<sup>1</sup> *Brahmajāla-sutta*, in *Dīgha-nikāya*.



“If the people abuse us there, where shall we go?”

“To another city, Sir.”

“If men revile us there also, then?”

“To still another city, Sir.”

“No, Ānanda, that is not the proper way. Where a difficulty arises, it should be resolved. Only when that is done should one move. Rather, Ānanda, I am like a battle elephant whose duty it is to withstand the arrows that are shot from all directions. Even so it is my duty to endure with patience the vile words of wicked men. This will continue only for a week and then the people will know.”

The Buddha’s rational spirit clearly influenced the thinking of Bhikkhus and lay Buddhists, particularly in the Theravāda countries where the Buddha’s teachings were recorded in Pali and learned by devotees.

The extent to which free enquiry was encouraged by the Buddha is well illustrated in the Buddha’s Discourse to the Kālāmas, citizens of Kesaputta in India. When the Buddha visited the kingdom of Kosala where the Kālāmas lived, the people gathered to greet the Buddha. The discussion that ensued is recorded in the *Āṅguttara-nikāya* and has a vital lesson on the “Buddhist Charter of Enquiry.”

The Kālāmas said,

“Venerable Sir, many religious teachers come to our place from time to time and expound their respective doctrines in detail. All of them say that what they preach is the only truth and the others are wrong. Thus, while glorifying themselves and their doctrines, they find fault and despise others. Now, Sir, we are at a loss. How are we to know which of these teachers speak the truth and which speaks falsely?”

The Buddha said,

“Yes, Kālāmas, it is quite natural to doubt where doubting is proper. Now come, do not accept a thing merely because it has been handed down by tradition or from generation to generation or from hearsay. Do not accept a thing because of mere scriptural sanction, nor by mere logic or inference, nor by superficial knowledge, nor yet because of your fondness for some theory, nor because it seems to be suitable, nor again just out of respect for a certain religious teacher. But Kālāmas, when you know for yourself that certain things are unprofitable, blameworthy, censured by the wise, and when performed or undertaken to conduce to loss and suffering, you should reject them. Now what do you think, Kālāmas, when greed arises within a person, does it arise to his profit or to his loss?”



“To his loss, Sir.”

“Well, by becoming greedy or being overcome by greed and thereby losing balance of mind, does he not indulge in killing, commit theft, go after another’s wife, tell lies and not only that, mislead others into evil and immoral acts which lead to his own loss and misery for a long time?”

“Yes, he does, Sir.”

“Likewise, when hatred or malice, delusion or ignorance or such other evil states arise, do they not make people lose control of their minds and thereby lead them to perform all kinds of evil and immoral acts which end in loss and suffering?”

And when the Kālāmas answered in the affirmative as above, the Buddha continued,

“It is precisely for this reason, Kālāmas that I told you not to accept a thing merely because it happens to be traditional, and so on, and that you should reject a thing when you know for yourself that a thing is harmful and will bring misery to yourself and to others. On the other hand, when a person is not greedy, nor malicious, nor deluded - that is to say, is liberal, kindly and wise - what do you think: will not these qualities be to his own profit and happiness?”

“They will, Sir.”

The Buddha continued,

“And by being liberal, kindly and wise, will they not become self-controlled and refrain from immoral acts of killing and so forth? And will that not be for their own and also for others profit and happiness?”

“Yes, that is so, Sir.”<sup>2</sup>

For a proper building up of social peace and justice, the wide acceptance of principles of rationality can also be regarded as a necessity, as the Buddha taught and the Bhikkhus and the laity tried to emulate.

The spirit of reason runs through the Buddha’s teaching. On another occasion, the Buddha had clearly stated that, “Whether the Buddhas arise or not, the truth remains unchanged.”

Much the same spirit is conveyed in the Buddha’s conversation with Ānanda before his final passing away.

The Venerable Ānanda, the personal attendant of the Buddha had been found weeping, and the Buddha knowing of it called him and after comforting him said,

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<sup>2</sup> *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, I, 188.



Ānanda, I have fulfilled all the duty of a real teacher. There is nothing that I have left esoteric. I do not have the closed fist of a so-called teacher. Lead the holy life, and if so, you will make an end of suffering. Be a light unto yourself, let the Dhamma be your only light, your only refuge, and naught else.

With these brief references to the personality of the Buddha, it will be well to examine the role of “Man in Society” from the point of view of Buddhism.

In today’s world of interdependence there is not only a progression towards universality of social and scientific outlook, much in evidence is also a humanitarian temper, extending globally particularly evident in times of natural calamities. Also, in the scientific field there is an unceasing endeavor to comprehend the totality of human experience in limited ways even as problems of war and conflict are not.

Since much of the social ills of our time’s are causally inter-linked and have some close-relation to economics and politics, it may also be well to look at the philosophical background of Buddhist thought as also at the social teachings of the Buddha as can be gleaned from the sermons as recorded in some of the suttas.

It may be recalled, “the philosophy of the Buddha comprehends a theory of knowledge, a theory of reality, an ethical system, a social and political philosophy as well as suggestions for a philosophy of law and international relations. A careful examination of the essentials of these aspects of the philosophy shows that they are inter-related and inter-connected.”<sup>3</sup>

Buddhists believe that Dhamma operates upon man as upon the universe. The Buddha taught: He honors me (the Buddha) best who practices my teaching best.

Buddhist philosophy among other things explains that the interdependence of all things are governed by the “process of dependent origination,” operating in the universe governed by five orders, viz.,

- (1) The physical / inorganic order. The order of seasons that cause wind and rains, and the nature of heat would belong to this order.
- (2) The order of germs and seeds, the physical organic order may be illustrated by rice growing from rice seed, or the particular characteristics of certain fruits or trees. The scientific theories concerning cells deal with this order.
- (3) The order of act and result. In this order it is clear that desirable and undesirable acts produce corresponding good and bad results. As surely as water seeks its own level, so do acts produce inevitable

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<sup>3</sup> K. N. Jayatilleke, “The Contemporary Relevance of Buddhist Philosophy,” in *The Wheel*, 248 (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1967)



results, not in the form of rewards or punishments, but as an innate sequence. This sequence of deed and result, known as kamma, is as the natural and necessary as the way of the sun and the moon.

- (4) The order of the norm, gravitation and other similar laws of nature, or the reasons for being good, may be included in this group. The order of the norm explains the natural phenomena occurring at the advent of a Bodhisattva in his last birth.
- (5) The order of mind or psychic law included the processes of consciousness, the arising and perishing of consciousness, the constituents of consciousness, the powers of the mind and such mental powers – Telepathy, telesthesia, retro-cognition, premonition, clairvoyance, thought-reading, and all psychic phenomena which are inexplicable to modern science are included in this order.<sup>4</sup>

Whereas the above five orders are believed to encompass all mental and physical phenomena and operate without a lawgiver, life is held to go on by a cyclic process governed by the law of dependent origination, already referred to. This teaching is designated as *pa icca-samuppāda*. The *Nidāna Saṅgutta* of the *Saṅgutta-nikāya* explains this doctrine thus:

When this is present, this happens; on the arising of this, this comes into being. In the absence of this, this does not happen; by the cessation of this, this ceases to be.

The Buddha's teaching is that impermanent are all component things and arising and cessation is inherent in them; they come into being and then cease to be.

The understanding of dependent origination is considered basic to an understanding of Buddhism. The Buddha said, "Who so understands dependent origination, understands the Law and who so understands the Law, understands dependent origination."<sup>5</sup>

It may be well to appreciate that the Buddha has taught that physical and mental phenomena of existence five categories called the five aggregates or *skandhas*. And what, in brief, are the Five Groups of Existence? They are corporeality, feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness.<sup>6</sup>

It may be interesting to note that William Ross, writing on "The scientific character of Buddhist philosophy" points to the following among the many parallels between Buddhist philosophy and science.

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<sup>4</sup> U. Thittila, "The Fundamental Principles of Theravāda Buddhism," in *The Path of Buddhism*, ed. Kenneth W. Morgan (New York: Ronald Press Co, 1956), 78-9.

<sup>5</sup> *Majjhima-nikāya*, 28.

<sup>6</sup> *Dīgha-nikāya*, 22.



1. Both have a highly technical aspect accessible to specialists only, and a popular aspect appreciated by the common man.
2. Both reject miracle and both claim that everything in the universe is subject to natural causes only, and therefore, also subject to human analysis.
3. Both have developed a terminology of their own and both made use of two “dead” languages in establishing their vocabulary - science using Greek and Latin, while Buddhist philosophy uses Sanskrit and Pali.
4. Both place great emphasis upon using correct methods for obtaining knowledge.
5. Both require that their exponents possess certain qualifications and these are acknowledged by granting specific degrees and titles.<sup>7</sup>

In social relations, the acceptance of the operation of the Law of Kamma makes it necessary for the realization of the importance of ethical conduct, part of which is the practice of *mettā* (loving kindness). In the *Mettā-sutta* (Discourse on Universal Love), the Buddha says:

As a mother, even at the risk of her own life, protects and loves her only child, so let a man cultivate love without measure toward all beings. Let him cultivate love without measure toward the whole world, above, below, and around, unstinted, un-mixed with any feeling of differing or opposing interests. Let a man remain steadfastly in this state of mind all the while he is awake, whether he be standing, walking, sitting or lying down. This state of mind is the best in the world.

Buddhism, as a religion concerned with the understanding of reality in its totality also recognizes the reality of social life. This includes personal and individual life. Thus, it is concerned with the cessation of suffering extending outward from the individual to the social sphere. What needs to be emphasized is that the teachings of Buddhism are aimed as much at building a healthy social order as they are aimed at the harmonious ordering of each individual's personal life.

A simple example of this is the parable of the Lotus in the pond referred to in the *Nikāyas* of the Pali Canon. Nourished by the unclean mud at the bottom, the lotus stalk grows, piercing through the unclean water. Finally appearing on the water surface with a bud, it blossoms forth in all its purity and glory quite clear of the water, free from impurity. In similar fashion, the lotus of the individual has the potential to blossom forth in the pond of human society. Likewise, the individual through persistent effort, spurred by proper guidance, has the capability to rise above the situations of misery and conflict and realize his parity and greatness even in the midst of

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<sup>7</sup> “World Buddhism,” in *Vesak Annual* 2511-1967.



an environment consisting of material forces and fellow-beings among whom he finds sustenance.

It is significant that the lotus features widely in the architecture, sculpture, painting and literature of Buddhism, which represents symbolically the relation of man in society.

The Buddha taught the virtues of liberty and democracy and established an order of monks and nuns precisely on the basis of democratic and corporate principles, undoubtedly aimed to indicate to lay people the desirability of following similar principles in the matter of establishing and reorganizing their own social institutions.

Buddhists realized, according to the Buddha's teaching that misery and injustice in society were due to the corruption and corruptibility of human nature itself and sought to mitigate, if not eliminate it through the practice of *sīla*, moral discipline, the most basic of which is *pañcaśīlas*, the five precepts to which all Buddhists voluntarily pledge themselves to observe. The Buddha unequivocally declared that human worth and dignity were to be adjudged not in terms of birth and breed, but solely in terms of each individual's actions in thought, word and deed.

The following translation of the *Vasettha-sutta* sets out in beautiful poetry some aspects the time-less message of the Buddha, quite appropriate for our times.

Vasettha, I will expound  
 To you in gradual and exact truth  
 Division in the kinds of living things;  
 For kinds divide. Behold the grass and trees.  
 They reason not, yet they possess the mark  
 After their kind; for kinds indeed divide.  
 Consider then the beetles, moths and ants;  
 They after their kind too possess the mark...  
 And so four-footed creatures, great and small ...  
 The reptiles, snakes, the long-backed animals...  
 Fish and pond - feeders, water-dwellers...  
 Birds and the winged creatures, fowls of the air  
 They after their kind all possess the mark;  
 For kinds divide.  
 Each after his kind bears his mark..

In man there is not manifold.  
 Not in the hair or head or ears or eyes,  
 Not in the mouth or nose or lips or brows,  
 Not in the throat, hips, belly or the back,  
 Not in the rump, sex organs or the breast,  
 Not in the hands or feet, fingers or nails,  
 Not in the legs or color or voice,  
 Is mark that forms his kind, as in all else.  
 Nothing unique is in men's bodies found:



The difference in men is nominal.<sup>8</sup>

The social philosophy of the Buddha has its foundation in the position of the basic oneness and the unity of humankind. The social ethics that form part of the Buddha's teaching has the widest appeal since it transcends all barriers of time and space, as much as differences in creed and color. This constituted the reason why Buddhism spread throughout the Asian continent overcoming ethnic barriers across national boundaries.

Buddhism believes in the social contract theory of the origin of state and kingship. Mahāsaṁmata, meaning "chosen by the people," was the first standard appellation of a king. Buddhaghosa says, "This King Mahāsaṁmata is the Bodhisattva."

Moving on from the Buddha's teaching and through it to the practice of Buddhist politics and economics, we see the application of these in the service of humanity by pious kings. For instance, there is in the Jetavana slab inscription the proclamation by King Mahinda IV in Sri Lanka (956-972 C.E.), "None but the Bodhisattvas would become kings of Sri Lanka." The *pāramitās* (perfections) must be developed by a Bodhisattva. According to the *Cariyapīṭaka* commentary, *pāramitās* are those virtues which are cultivated with great compassion, guided by reason, not influenced by selfishness and unaffected by mis-belief and without conceit. The *pāramitās* among the Theravadins number ten as follows:

1. *Dāna* (generosity);
2. *Sīla* (morality);
3. *Nekkhamma* (renunciation);
4. *Paññā* (wisdom);
5. *Viriya* (energy);
6. *Khanti* (patience);
7. *Sacca* (truthfulness);
8. *Adhiṭṭhāna* (resolution);
9. *Mettā* (loving-kindness); and
10. *Upekkhā* (equanimity)

These *pāramitās* are cultivated with the aim to confer prosperity and happiness upon all beings and constitute a progressive scheme of practice serving to advance welfare, happy rebirth, serenity, increased spiritual advancement and supreme knowledge. Each *pāramitā* can be cultivated, progressing by degrees from the ordinary to the extraordinary and the superlative stages. These three developments have been distinguished as follows:

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<sup>8</sup> *Sutta-nipāta*, V, 3600-11.



1. Ordinary, when practiced by the ordinary person, seeking happiness in his present life and the next;
2. Extraordinary upon cultivation by disciples for attaining nirvana; and superlative when cultivated and developed by bodhisattvas for the welfare and liberation of all beings.

It should be stressed that the popular cultivation of *pāramitās* was much encouraged through education of the Jātaka Stories in which examples from the previous lives of the Buddha were held out for emulation. Learning from Jātaka stories examples of service and sacrifice for the welfare of fellow beings constituted part of the basic education imparted to children in temple schools or *pirivenas* of pre-colonial times. Such practices contributed greatly to the social orientation of the community to the practice of peace and justice in society.

It may be recalled that the Buddha had instructed the first batch of his sixty disciples in the words:

Go ye forth, monks, and wander, for the gain of the many, for the welfare of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, for the gain, and for the welfare of gods and men.

Doubtless, the example of the bhikkhus influenced the laity in the practice of selfless service for the community quite apart from their knowledge of the meritorious nature of such services. Aśokan inscriptions provide a glowing example where mass media communication techniques, appropriate to the times, were used by King to educate the people on morality and ethics, aimed to encourage the development of a righteous society.

In his edicts, Aśoka promoted the mission of love and piety. His advocacy was essentially to advance a practical code of morality among the people based on compassion, love and welfare of the masses. The concept of promoting the welfare and happiness of people in this world and the world hereafter was part of the rulership philosophy developed by kings in Buddhist countries. A more detailed treatment of the subject of “Social Philosophy of Buddhism as Interpreted in Aśokan Inscriptions” by Dr. C. S. Upasak is included in the publication *The Social Philosophy of Buddhism*<sup>9</sup> as part of a series of presentations on this subject.

While there are many suttas touching on the economic and social welfare of common people, one of the most significant is the *Sigālovāda-sutta* that lays down a code of ethics for the guidance of the Buddhist laity in particular, even though its message has a universal ring. Significant as these injunctions were in olden times, for peace and contentedness in the

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<sup>9</sup> Samdhong Rinpoche, ed., *The Social Philosophy of Buddhism* (Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1971).



populace, their strict practice in modern times do face difficulties. Yet, the spirit of the message has a ring appropriate for human societies for all time. Particularly noteworthy was the emphasis of workman's rights against exploitation by his employer, details of which are as follows:

1. That work should be assigned according to a worker's strength;
2. That wages should be paid for work done;
3. That medical care and attention should be provided in times of sickness; and
4. That workers should be released from work at the correct time.

Much of these have come to be recognized as rights of workers under modern labor laws, also now brought within the scope of Human Rights. An example from Sri Lankan history where cordial relations between the employer and workforce is seen in the labor relations policy practiced by King Dutugamunu in the construction of the Ruwanveliseya Dagaba in Anuradhapura. The *Mahāvamsa* (The Great Chronicle of Sri Lanka) records:

“Work shall not be done here without wage.”

At every gate he commanded to place sixteen hundred thousand *kahāpas*, very many garments, different ornaments, solid and liquid foods and drink withal, fragrant flowers, sugar and so forth, as well as five perfumes for the mouth.

“Let them take these as they will when they have labored as they will.” Observing this command, the King's work – people allotted (the wages).

The importance of providing fruitful employment to the people was recognized in Buddhism. The *Kutadanta-sutta* records the recognition of provision of employment to end disorder among people.

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 keep cattle and the farm, to them let this 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 door.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Dial.*, I, 176.



In the Buddhist texts, the workmen stand side by side with parents, wife and children of a private employer in deserving to be made happy, glad and kept well in happiness for their contribution to economic well-being.<sup>11</sup>

Among the basic lessons taught in the *Sigālovāda-sutta*, other than those already mentioned, are the “ministry to servants and employees,” injunctions laid out as to the ministry of servants and employees to their master. Other matters dealt with include rules of ministry to parents, ministry of parents to their children, ministry of students to teachers, ministry of teachers to students, ministry of husband to wife, ministry of wife to husband, ministry to friends and companions, ministry of friends and companions in return, ministry to members of the Saṅgha (monks) and ministry of members of the Saṅgha to a lay devotee.

It was the proper discharge of the shared duties of the respective groups in society that contributed greatly to the social stability that prevailed in Buddhist societies in ancient times, some characteristics of which still persist today, however weak, under the stressful conditions of modern times. There is, however, a strong pointer to the need to establish social stability if happy childhood and adequate care and protection of children are to be provided under modern conditions of mass consumerism and the influence of modern subliminal advertising.

We had occasion to refer earlier to the *Kutadanta-sutta* that provided a recipe for social peace through the provision of mass employment through the King’s Treasury. Even if that had been possible in ancient times, what do we find today in the modern world?

The former Secretary General of the Common Wealth pointed out,

After a monumental effort by the developing countries themselves, at the end of two decades of international action devoted to development, on the basis of three decades the working of Bretton Woods and the regimes – the result by 1980 is an increase of \$3 per capita in the annual incomes of the poorest group compared with the increase \$900 per capita for those of the richest.<sup>12</sup>

The World today has to face a kind of future with greater fundamental revolution if humanity is to face the challenges of the future with greater hope of success. It is said as follows: It is a question of seeing further than the end of our lives and thinking of the future of our children and grandchildren. It is a question of managing the planet which is the coming back to the theme of our paper, referring to social practice for peace and justice, we should like to point to the essentiality of the social philosophy of Buddhism, some aspects of which we have covered in this paper. The line

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<sup>11</sup> *Gradual Sayings*, III, 37.

<sup>12</sup> *The Round Table* 261 (1976): 62-3.



taken by U. Dhammaratana, in his approach to the study of the “Social Philosophy Buddhism” has been to examine it from such aspects as:

1. Attitude of the Buddha and his disciples to the social institutions of the day;
2. Teachings for social solidarity;
3. Implications of social notions;
4. Rules for regulating social relations;
5. Social implications for moral principles;
6. Dynamics of human behavior;
7. *Brahmavihāras*, and
8. Fundamental teachings of the Buddha and social changes.<sup>13</sup>

In our treatment of the subject, we have dealt with some if not all the aspects referred to, though not in any particular order as above.

Finally, may we quote from the conclusions of the seminar, out of which the publication *The Social Philosophy of Buddhism* grew, viz.,

It is the middle way, the practice of which eliminates all kinds of poverty, unemployment, riots and wars that are social of compassion, loving kindness, tolerance and wisdom. Its acceptance means so much to the world, indiscriminating and un-understanding to a great measure seeking illusory short cuts.<sup>14</sup>

We believe, in this way lies hope for a better world and for the survival of humanity. The Middle Path, pursued along the lines of the Eightfold Noble Path, does offer hope for humankind. In that way, we believe, lies the future of humankind.

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<sup>13</sup> U. Dhammaratana, “The Social Philosophy of Buddhism,” in *The Social Philosophy of Buddhism*.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*







## **CHAPTER 13**

### **READING BUDDHIST TEXTS WITH NEW LIGHT**

Chatsumarn Kabilsingh

The present conference focuses on “Realizing Buddhist Thought in Social Practice.” Being a Buddhist scholar with special interest in women’s issue, I think I can best contribute to the conference by focusing on how to get Buddhist women better involved in social responsibilities. This paper will then, attempt to give a study of Buddhist texts from women’s concerns in order to maintain the balance in Buddhist society in particular and in human society in general.

The most immediate problem for Buddhist society faced in every country is the problem of how to make the message of Buddhism relevant to present-day society. In every country, we cannot turn away from the fact that our society is being violently and forcefully swept away by materialism and consumerism. This is not a serious problem faced only by Buddhism but also by other religions as well.

There are two major conditions responsible for this situation. Though I am speaking from the context of Thailand, the fact remains true and applicable to other Buddhist countries. On the one hand, modern society is more and more open and western influences flow in without any visible attempt to check or even to screen them. As a result, a developing country is pathetically flooded with mentality of consumerism and materialism of the first world. The transition without adjustment leads a third world country even further downhill. Many problems are seen as a result of this encounter and the most serious ones are the degradation of the environment, degradation of human lifestyles, and degradation of spiritual values.

On the other hand, Buddhist institutions are most ill prepared to cope with the sudden change of the modern society. They are not only unable to hold a strong fort as a refuge for the spirit but are also mostly being swept away with the flood of materialism and consumerism. The senior monks in the hierarchical structure of administration are easily available to big



business outfits rather than to common people. This is just to give one example.

When we look closer to the quality of monks, approximately 300,000 in the whole country, we are faced with one stark fact, that most of them are not educated. The Buddhist system is such that a person, any person, can become ordained and that he can proceed on to study and practice Buddhism. But Buddhist education is very limited and only a few of them can have access to study at the two Buddhist universities in Bangkok. Though these universities recently expand their educational level to master-degree, the quality still needs much improvement. There is no requirement that monks must study. Because of this, a large portion of monks are left on their own with only the minimal six years of formal education. As a result, they end up coupling their animistic beliefs to the popular form of Buddhist practice maintained and generated at the level of their limited capacity. This group is the majority and the ones who are easily available to a larger public.

Now when we turn to look at the total population of the country, we have some 55 millions people. Half are women who have no representative in the upper Buddhist circle, as women are not allowed ordination in this country. The existing religious body of Buddhist women, known as “*Mae ji*,” wears white robes and has shaven heads. There are about 10,000 in the whole country. Significantly, they are not recognized officially as “ordained.” This means that they are not part of the *saṅgha*, and hence do not come under the responsibility of the Department of Religious Affairs, the only government body responsible for religious activities in the country. Further, they enjoy no benefits that the government provides for the “ordained.” They do not enjoy free public transportation. They have to pay full train fare and traveling tax when they make religious trips to Buddhist holy places in India (while Muslims are exempted when they make religious trips to Saudi Arabia). They have no place for proper Buddhist education. The two Buddhist universities are exclusively for monks, even though the budget provided by the government is drawn equally from men and women. In order to focus our thought on social practice, where is social justice in the above treatment as observed in Buddhist country? Even though I am speaking about a case in Thailand, I would like to urge all of us to look back and I am sure you that will find the same story repeated everywhere.

In order to strengthen the role of women in Buddhism to cope with the existing social problems, we need to look at some of the prevalent beliefs and social values denying women full participation in Buddhism. It is a common belief that the lineage of women’s ordination is extinct and women cannot become ordained. Throughout the 700 year history of Thailand as a nation, we have never had fully ordained nuns. This leads to even more negative comments that women would soil the robe with menstruation. In many temples, women are not allowed to circumambulate the *stūpa* and to enter the inner chapel because their presence is considered religiously



impure for the holy places. Women are considered and accepted as religious pollutants. Women are enemies of the purity of the monks. Because of these limitations, women are to fully support men who are monks. Because they themselves cannot be ordained, they highly prize the birth of sons as they can be ordained and hence make merit for their mothers. These are only some of the prevailing beliefs and values generated in Buddhist society in Thailand. How many of us ever question these beliefs? Almost none, simply because we, women, do not have access to proper Buddhist education. We do not know the true teaching of Buddhism. Buddhist education came down to us in bits and pieces of *Jātaka* tales as told by monks at various sermons. The Buddhist Tripi aka was not readily available in Thai scripts until 1957 C.E. Even then, because of its large volume, the accessibility is limited only to universities, libraries and temples.

In order to rectify all these mystic beliefs, one is forced to go back to the authentic source for better understanding of Buddhism. Again, the Buddhist Tripi aka cannot be taken literally at face value. We should approach the Buddhist Tripi aka with an inquiring mind, not a submissive mind. We can begin by questions like:

Who wrote the texts?  
When were they written?  
Where were they written?  
What was the purpose of writing?

Presumably, Buddhist monks put down the teaching in writing some 400 years after the passing of the Buddha. By that time, many schools of Buddhism were already in existence. It was written in Sri Lanka many hundred of miles away from the land where the Buddha had trotted. The Buddhist Tripi aka is a history, a history of community of the early period. It is also a record of the Buddhist teachings and the exposition of the teaching by leading disciples and later teachers. As a history, it is subjective in a way that the recorders chose to present events and teachings that are of relevance and importance to the recorders. With this in mind, one should not be surprised at the anthropocentric nature of the Tripi aka. Indian or Sri Lankan monks who came from Indian society with heavy Indian social values recorded it. Many prejudices expressed against women must be seen, read and understood within this limitation. Otherwise, Buddhist messages will be greatly distorted. Passages regarding women are often expressed from this social context. Cautious readers must be able to sift the meaning out of the limitation of such social contexts. Buddhism has spread its branches to many countries both in the East and the West and a great precaution is necessary to take care not to oppress women of other countries with Indian prejudices. It is enough that Indian women are oppressed under



their own culture, but it will be a shame to oppress women of other nations under the cloak of Buddhism.

Buddhist scholars must be able to appreciate and highlight the highest contribution Buddhism has offered to the world, that is, spiritual equality to both men and women. This is the focal point in the study of women in Buddhism. The Buddha allowed women to join his Order and to become fully ordained for more than 2500 years. But still women in many so-called Buddhist countries are not allowed ordination on the simple pretext that the lineage has died out.

After admitting women to the Order, the Buddha asked them to take the 8 *gurudhammas*, or the 8 important rules. Often Buddhist feminists tend to regard this as discrimination against women. One needs to look at them from Indian context of its time and one can truly understand and appreciate its value. They are to protect women on the one hand and to preserve harmony between the two saṅghas for the growth of Buddhist society on the other.

Now let us look at the *pārājikas*, the very first section of monastic rules for monks and nuns. “*Pārājika*” literally means “defeat”, that is, anyone who has transgressed any one of them is defeated, he or she is no more in the Order and cannot be re-ordained. Interestingly there are only 4 *pārājikas* for monks, (1) briefly not to kill, (2) not to steal, (3) not to tell lie, and (4) not to indulge in sexual behavior. In this same section, the nuns observe 4 more rules apart from the 4 rules mentioned above. They did not allow coming close to men, allowing men to touch their bodies from collarbones down to their knees, etc. All the four rules have the same nature. This set of rules puzzled me for some years. Why are they significant only for nuns to observe and not for monks? My understanding at this stage is that if a nun should allow a man such close contact, he will lose control of normal decency to a point that a nun cannot put up any kind of resistance to stop him from further sexual indulgence. Hence, these rules are important to safeguard the nuns themselves. From this point of view, one can appreciate the thoughtfulness that the Buddha should lay down the rules for protection of his female disciples.

People often quote a prevailing belief that the Buddha set down more rules for nuns, in Theravāda 311 for nuns compared to 227 for monks, simply because he wanted to limit the number of women who joined the Order by making it be more difficult. Anyone who holds such belief does not have a real understanding of the *vinaya*. The Buddha was far from being a legalist. Here I would like to point out to those who hold the legalist point of view that they should truly examine their stand. Monastic rules came into being as time passed by, and various cases were brought to the attention of the Buddha so that he laid down each rule as the case actually happened. Often these rules were amended again and again to make them relevant to the practice. The existence of nuns came about in the Indian social context



where men reigned supreme and women were but men's commodities. Hence, nuns had to be more careful. Many extra rules were purely out of the Buddha's compassion and were laid down for protection of the nuns. For example, "a nun must not cross the river alone." This was so because there was a case of a nun who crossed the river by herself and was eventually raped by the boatman.

Monks and nuns share certain core rules and each of them observes a certain set of rules applicable only for them. For the nuns, these rules are usually for their own protection as mentioned earlier. Whereas, monks have another set of separate rules, not for their protection but for the protection of the nuns not to be taken advantage of by monks! It should be reminded that the early Buddhist community was monks and nuns who were no other than men and women drawn from Indian society. After joining the Order, some of the monks still carried along the Indian social values and treated nuns the same way that they used to treat women at home. The nuns had to wash rugs and robes for monks, so much so that they had no time neither for *dharmma* study nor practice. The Buddha called upon the monks and laid down rules prohibiting monks from asking the nuns to do such work, etc. We see many rules of this nature, enough to conclude that the Buddha stood for justice. He tried to prevent any exploitative actions that the monks might do towards the nuns. As for the two saṅghas, he wanted them to live together like brothers and sisters, not as masters and slaves. In this manner, one can truly appreciate the spiritual and physical freedom as professed by the Buddha. In this respect, we Buddhists should maintain and generate this spirit for the progress of the Buddhist community.

During the Buddha's time, nuns progressed well in their spiritual growth. Some of them were singularly praised by the Buddha for being foremost in the long standing (*Mahāpajāpatī*), in *dharmma* exposition, in observing *vinaya*, etc. They were successful propagators of Buddhism and took the responsibility towards propagation of Buddhism in the same strength as the monks. Some of them had many disciples, among whom we find even king and ministers. We see, then, that by accepting women to the Order, they have proved valuable human resources, very positive energy to help propagate and establish Buddhism. In India both monks and nuns continued their work side by side until the Muslims invaded India and sacked all the major Buddhist centers in the 16<sup>th</sup> century C.E. As a result, both monks and nuns disappeared from Indian soil.

Three months after the great passing away of the Buddha, strikingly, 500 monks were invited to a gathering known as the first council. Yet, no mention is made of the participation of nuns, in spite of the fact that there were leading nuns, as recognized by the Buddha himself. This can be cited as a clear evidence of how strong Indian culture of patriarchal society prevailed in the Buddhist saṅgha. This point became even more convincing when Ānanda was accused of being responsible for bringing women to join



the Order. Even though Ānanda agreed to confess so as not to cause schism among the saṅgha, he made clear that he saw no wrong in his involvement to help bring women into the Order. This evidence shows that many monks were not happy with the acceptance of women to the Order. But as long as the Buddha was alive, no one brought his discontentment to the open. However, they did not hesitate to make it known the first chance they had.

Right after accepting women to the order, the Buddha was supposed to have prophesied that the duration of Buddhism would be shortened by 500 years. Luckily, we are now in 2534 B.E. and the time has proved that such prophecy does not hold true. The only way to explain this passage, then, is that it could have been interpolation inserted by monks who did not agree to accepting women to the Order. With deep-rooted prejudice, they might have indeed believed so.

How are we to reconcile with the common belief that if women were allowed to join the Order, they would soil the sacred robe with menstruation? How do we, as Buddhists, look at menstruation? It is only a natural occurrence that women of productive age experience monthly. There is no stigma to it. It is a normal bodily discharge much the same nature as urine or stool. If nuns happen to stain their robes, they just have to clean them as they did in the Buddha's time. Buddhism does not fuss over such natural occurrence. It is in Hinduism that menstruation is seen as "religiously unclean." In certain parts of India, Hindu women during menstruation and child-birth had to live in a kind of out-house. They would be excluded from the normal household. If we are to remain Buddhists, we must generate the right kind Buddhist attitude towards life and even menstruation.

With the acceptance of women to the Order, the birth of a male or female child should be equally valued. A woman, under Buddhism, can achieve her own spiritual salvation without depending on the male members of the family. Denying women their right to ordination is a simple statement of maintaining patriarchal values in society.

At this point, I would like to take my readers, one step further, to point out that by devaluing women and suppressing their spiritual growth, this patriarchal mentality actually pushes women further to have no value of themselves. Women often see themselves as being worthless, unclean, polluting. At its worse, women find themselves easily led to downgraded profession, flesh trade. Yet, many prostitutes are so concerned about their own uncleanness and try to overcome this by making large offerings to the temples, to the monks. They understand that it is the only way to guarantee that they will have a better future in their next lives. But what about their lives now? Nobody seems to know or care.

In order to involve Buddhist women in the activity of Buddhism, we must first clear the ground of the major negative social and religious values preventing women from full participation in the activities of Buddhism.



This can be done by making available Buddhist educational courses planned in a way to liberate and strengthen women to full partnership and not to further subjugate them under the patriarchal mentality that Buddhism tried to free itself from.

Buddhism is an open religion, at least in principle. Everyone should have access to the Tripi aka. But technically, in the past, the majority of people had no opportunity to make use of the Tripi aka. First of all, it was preserved in Khom script, readable only among educated elite monks. Secondly, when it was made available to the public in Thai in 1957, the Tripi aka itself being voluminous was available only at public libraries. The language used in the Tripi aka is highly monkish, often is not intelligible to mundane people at the very outset. People who can actually make use of the Tripi aka must already have some years of primary education in it.

Increasingly, there appears to be a strong need for the adjustment of Buddhism to make it available and relevant to the laypeople. In Thailand, the monks' population is only 300,000, while the population of laypeople is as high as 55 millions. We cannot leave the teaching of the Buddha in the hand of the monks alone. Women, as the other half of the population, must have a place in Buddhist education. Social problems are too immense to maintain prejudice to divisive attitudes between the two genders of Buddhists. Buddhists are urged to truly consider this issue and to grant women full participation in the material world as much as in the spiritual world.

In most countries following Mahāyāna Buddhism, they have been able to maintain the ordination lineage for women. They can well support Buddhist women of other less opportune countries by sharing the training and providing for education that women are still lacking. One must be reminded that Buddhism cannot remain strong if half of its followers are still suppressed and the other half are still oppressing. Such manifestations reflect the lack of understanding of the spirit of Buddhism.

At a practical level, this paper urges Buddhists to read the Tripi aka again with a new light, the light of compassion to women and the light of freedom for humankind. Only after that, we can hope to realize Buddhist thought in social practice.







## CHAPTER 14

### BODHISATTVIC ACTION IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER

Graeme MacQueen

#### 1. Introduction

As a North American, I watched the unfolding of the Gulf War with shame and horror. This paper is a kind of meditation on that event. I am afraid there is some anger in the meditation.

I will be bringing together two very different things: the bodhisattva and the New World Order. They are so different it may be asked how they can be brought into any sort of relation at all. The New World Order increasingly spoken of, and most clearly proclaimed by George Bush in January of 1991, is resolutely contemporary. It is an issue *now*. It is at the cutting edge of world history. It is also resolutely concrete: definite economic and political matters are at stake. In contrast, the conception of the bodhisattva is over two thousand years old and will seem to many people hopelessly out of date. Moreover, as a religious rather than a secular concept, it surely belongs to a quite different sphere of reality from the New World Order? In discussing the New World Order and the bodhisattva, am I not bringing together two incommensurate things?

I believe they can and should be related to each other, and I wish to use as the relational principle the concept of metanarrative. The term "metanarrative" I borrow from the French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard, known for his contribution to postmodernism.<sup>1</sup> Lyotard uses "metanarrative" interchangeably with "grand narrative."<sup>2</sup> These terms refer to narratives or stories that ground people's existence, give meaning to their lives. Within these great stories countless smaller stories dealing with

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<sup>1</sup> I have in mind, specifically, Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Bennington and Massumi (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1984).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, *ibid.*, xxiii, xxiv, 15.



various aspects of existence can find a place. Metanarrative is, like metaphysics, concerned with the underpinnings of human existence, with the issues of what is really real, what is good, what is the direction of human development (if any), what is human nature and so on. The difference is that metanarrative presents these things as story, as occurring in meaningful sequence in time. According to Lyotard, many of the secular metanarratives that have been so powerful for the past few centuries are now losing their force. People no longer believe in these stories, no longer derive their sense of meaning from them. The great emancipation narrative of Marxism, for example, according to which the proletariat acts as historical agent to rid the world of exploitation and to usher in a new age wherein there will be no more “exploitation of man by man” - this emancipation narrative is losing its believers. And so, according to Lyotard, are other metanarratives. He thinks, in fact, that increasing numbers of people in postmodern culture do not believe in any metanarrative anymore. Thus he can say, “I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives.”<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, he says, “Most people have lost the nostalgia for the lost narrative.”<sup>4</sup>

Lyotard is right, clearly, in saying that many of the great metanarratives are in trouble in specific contexts, but I do not agree that “most people” have rejected metanarrative and do not miss it. It seems to me that many people have great need of a sense of the overall shape and purpose of the world, and of human existence, and that metanarrative is for this reason both longed for and, at least in times of crisis, held to fervently. There are intact metanarratives as well as narrative fragments. Both are often very old. Implanted in the minds of individuals and societies, they influence the way that people lead their lives in times of crisis breaking through dramatically to the surface.

One of the main functions of narrative, as Lyotard has pointed out, is legitimation: enterprises or acts that cannot legitimate themselves are made credible and acceptable by incorporating them within a story. I wish to begin this paper by speaking of the New World Order in this context of legitimation, exploring briefly the narratives that I believe were used to legitimate the founding act of that order, the invasion of Iraq, and the way the New World Order is thus able to grasp the energy and commitment of people via their longing for grand narrative. After this discussion, I will draw in the narrative of the bodhisattva.

Since I will be calling for a serious consideration of the bodhisattva concept, it is important that I give a warning. I do not believe that any religious tradition has all the answers to the profound material, intellectual and spiritual problems that confront humanity today, and I do not believe

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, xxiv.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.



that any tradition should be content to look to its scriptures and the words of its seers and prophets of the past. All of these should be valued, but in the end we must face the present honestly and courageously, open to change. By honoring the bodhisattva, therefore, I do not put forward either Mahāyāna Buddhism or particular scriptures or sects as holding the key to the future. What I do is to draw attention to any extremely powerful and noble metanarrative that needs to be examined, subjected to criticism and change where appropriate, lived and acted on.

## 2. The New World Order

Last January, I watched as the President of the United States gives a talk on television in which he announced the birth of a New World Order. During the talk and in other speeches around the same time, Mr. Bush clearly wished his words to contribute to, and to be understood within certain narratives. Initially there were several stories explaining what was happening rather than a single story,<sup>5</sup> but as time went on some tended to disappear and a dominant narrative emerged, which went something like this.

The Oppressor, Iraq (personified by Saddam Hussein), invaded the Innocent Victim, Kuwait. The Oppressor robbed, murdered and tortured the Innocent Victim. On to this scene came the Liberator, the United States of America, later joined by its allies. Announcing, “The liberation of Kuwait has begun,” Mr. Bush (personifying the Liberator) proceeded with the liberatory act, with moderation but thoroughness. The Oppressor was beaten and fled in disarray, while the Innocent Victim was reinstalled in celebration and triumph.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> George Lakoff discusses this in his “Metaphor and War: The Metaphor System Used to Justify War in the Gulf.” See especially pp. 4 *ff.* I do not know if this article has been published. It was sent out urgently via computer networks just before the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in an attempt to provoke discussion and contribute to the forestalling of that invasion. Lakoff, whose work over the years has contributed greatly to the understanding of the importance of metaphor in our lives, works in the Linguistics Department, University of California at Berkeley.

<sup>6</sup> Lakoff’s version of what he calls “The Fairy Tale of the Just War” (*ibid.*, 4), written before the U.S.-led invasion, is as follows: “Cast of characters: A villain, a victim, and a hero. The victim and the hero may be the same person. The scenario: A crime is committed by the villain against an innocent victim (typically an assault, theft, or kidnapping). The offense occurs due to an imbalance of power and creates a moral imbalance. The hero either gathers helpers or decides to go it alone. The hero makes sacrifices; he undergoes difficulties, typically making an arduous heroic journey, sometimes across the sea to a treacherous terrain. The villain is inherently evil, perhaps even a monster, and thus reasoning with him is out of the question. The hero is left with no choice but to engage the villain in battle. The hero defeats the villain and rescues the victim. The moral balance is restored. Victory is achieved.



This, clearly, is an emancipation narrative, a story of liberation, and its success shows its power and the power of emancipation narratives in general. For although this national narrative - the actors, variously personified, are nations - is very old, the American people responded to it not with incredulity as sophisticated postmodern but with great enthusiasm. It made the invasion of Kuwait meaningful and evil and the invasion of Iraq meaningful and good. It legitimated Operation Desert Storm.

The above narrative was not presented as self sufficient but in conjunction with another national narrative, the grand narrative of the liberatory destiny of the United States of America. The Gulf War narrative was a chapter, a sub-narrative, in the larger story. According to the larger story, the United States is a chosen people with a mission to lead the world into ever greater freedom. Having finally broken down the adversary personifying opposition to this mission, the Soviet Union, the Liberator can now proceed to fulfill its historic task. The sphere under its beneficent leadership, the Free World, can now, in this “uni-polar” order, expand to include the whole world. It would be misleading to say that these two narratives, being national narratives, cannot be metanarratives, cannot fulfill the grand role of metaphysics for individuals. Insofar as the individual identifies with the nation, the story of the nation will be the story of that individual, and insofar as the nation is put at the center of reality, the story of the nation will be the unfolding of reality. Some of the most potent metanarratives in history have therefore been national narratives.

There is a dynamic common to both of the above national narratives. What drives them is a conception of competition and merit. Adversaries freely compete and one of them wins. The winner, having demonstrated superiority in a fair fight, takes its place at the top of the world as one who merits this position.

Other nations that joined the action against Iraq have their own national narratives and these were drawn on to legitimate the enterprise, especially with the citizens of these nations. In Canada, for example, the national narrative of Canada as helper-fixer, peacekeeper and supporter of the United Nations, was stretched - some of us believe far past the breaking point - to incorporate participation in the military operation.

And, of course, Saddam Hussein and his associates had their narratives. They were taking the field as champion of the Arab world - or, in some versions, of the Islamic world - against Zionist aggression as well as exploitation by the West as represented by the United States. They were

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The hero, who always acts honorably, has proved his manhood and achieved glory. The sacrifice was worthwhile. The hero receives acclaim, along with the gratitude of the victim and the community.”

Lakoff comments (4) that “the classic fairy tale,” which provides a “scenario for a just war” is “The most common discourse form in the West where there is combat to settle moral accounts.”



challenging the sell-out of the Arab world by oil elites such as the al-Sabah family of Kuwait, who bathe in oil while their fellow Arabs live in poverty. They were advocates of the Palestinians and other exploited people. Indeed, they were champions of the Third World in general, and keen to supply it with cheap oil. They alone had the courage to take the field against the strongest armies in the world. And so on.

The Iraqi people had the misfortune of being caught between the two opposing sets of narratives. They were forced by Saddam Hussein and company to play the role of leader of the Arabs and all the rest while being simultaneously forced by George Bush and company to play the role of oppressor: terrorist, evil Arab, Third World upstart and so on. Indeed, many Americans, quite ignorant of the history and geography of Iraq, clearly came to regard Iraqis, personified by Saddam Hussein, as a form of generic evil, who could therefore pay for the sins of all evil actors in the national narrative. Since, for example, Saddam Hussein was identified early in the Gulf War as Hitler, Iraqis became Nazis. At various other times they had to stand in for Vietnamese, Nicaraguans and Iranians, all of whom had at some point challenged the destiny of the Liberator. Under the bombs from B-52s there were no Iraqis. That is, they were not understood as Iraqis by those dispensing the bombs. Their lives, their culture and their history were irrelevant. They were playing parts in a story. As Nazis they were understood and as Nazis bombed. As Vietnamese they were understood and as Vietnamese bombed.

When Mr. Bush announced the New World Order, he was not merely describing. He was not merely saying: a new world order is dawning and this is what it looks like. He was speaking in the imperative mode, as one in a position to bring about the New World Order. As a king might say, Rise Sir Knight, and in that statement creates a knight by virtue of his kingly authority and power, and as the Buddha might say, *ehi bhikkhu* (Come Monk), creating a monk by his authority and power, so Mr. Bush said, "Let the New World Order begin." His announcement, therefore, is a cosmogonic statement, a statement that creates a particular order. To give it substance and shape, Mr. Bush accompanied his announcement with an act, the launching of an air strike against Iraq. This act thus became a cosmogonic act, an act that helped bring an order into being and to define its nature. An act described by Canadian theologian Gregory Baum as "the publicly approved massacre that sealed in blood the new politico-economic orientation."<sup>7</sup>

The relationship of the cosmogonic word to the cosmogonic act is important. By announcing the end of a world order based on might makes right while launching one of the most massive air strikes in history against a

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<sup>7</sup> *The Ecumenist: A Journal for Promoting Christian Unity*, 29.2 (Spring, 1991): 2.



vastly inferior foe, Mr. Bush created a motif of the New World Order, namely a complete disjunction of word and act. There is simply no reliable relationship between word and act. The two will sometimes be positively related (the act will reinforce the word), sometimes negatively related (the act will contradict the word) and sometimes have no apparent relationship at all. Within this (il)logic of word and act, the loyal citizen's role is, however, clear. Whatever appearances may be, word and act must at some deep level be in harmony. This is a matter beyond reason, a matter for faith.

Examining the cosmogonic act, Operation Desert Storm, is important because it reveals the nature of the order being established. I wish to refer here to two episodes from the war that I found especially enlightening.

The first episode was described in my newspaper under the heading, "Getting blown to bits in the dark."

The first high-tech video of ground fighting in the Persian Gulf war shows terrified Iraqi infantrymen shot to pieces in the dark by U.S. attack helicopters.

One by one they were cut down, bewildered by an enemy they could not see.

Some were blown to bits by exploding cannon shells. Others, jarred from sleep, fled their bunkers under a firestorm.

The tape was shot through the night-vision gun-sights of the Apache AH-64 attack helicopter, which turn pitch dark into ghostly day.

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[Pilots of the 6th Cavalry:]

"I just didn't quite envision going up there and shooting the hell out of everything in the dark and have them not know what the hell hit them," said Ron Balak of Beemer, Neb.

"A truck blows up to the right, the ground blows up to the left. They had no idea where we were or what was hitting them," he said.

A guy came up to me and we were slapping each other on the back and all that stuff, and he said, "By God, I thought we had shot into a damn farm. It looked like somebody opened the sheep pen."<sup>8</sup>

The second incident is the statement by Marine Lieutenant Colonel Dick White, who was reported (by Murray Campbell of Los Angeles) as describing "for pool reporters what it was like to see Iraqi troops in Kuwait

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<sup>8</sup> *The Globe and Mail* (Feb. 25, 1991): A 9. From Reuters News Agency, Northern Saudi Arabia.



from his plane. 'It was like turning on the kitchen light late at night and the cockroaches started scurrying. We finally got them out where we could find them and kill them.'"<sup>9</sup>

These quotations suggest to us that in the cosmogonic act a higher life form asserts its power over lower life forms, sheep in the one case and cockroaches in the other. These lower life forms are not historical subjects. They are objects, to be acted upon. They crawl about in two dimensions, restricted to the ground and vulnerable, while Americans fly over them like gods delivering divine judgment.

The insect reference is especially important. It is not at all unusual. It fits a pattern. References to opponents as insects go back decades in U.S. military experience<sup>10</sup> and seem, not surprisingly, especially closely tied to air power: the pilot sees the enemy on the ground as small, alien, insignificant. This perception combines with standard racism and the objectification of the enemy common in all wars to produce a racism of diminishment. The enemy is an ant, a termite, a spider and a cockroach. The significance of this will be apparent when we consider that the insect, in the West at least, is one of the few forms of animal life that one can kill in whatever numbers and by whatever means one wishes (one may even talk about extermination) without this being considered a moral issue. On an enemy identified as an insect, therefore, one can drop napalm,<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* (Feb. 18, 1991): A 12.

<sup>10</sup> See Michael Sherry, *The Rise of American Air Power* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1987), 101-2, 133-4.

<sup>11</sup> Napalm apparently came into use against Iraq during late February. "One American magazine photographer, who requested anonymity, said pilots told him they had been using the jellied gasoline on 'bunkers and artillery positions' and other emplacements. A senior marine officer, who asked not to be named, said napalm's role in combat was to reach entrenched troops, just like in Vietnam." *The Hamilton Spectator* (Feb. 23, 1991): 1. The above newspaper report goes on to quote Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Armitage, who defends the use of napalm as "one of the nasty weapons that is, from time to time, used," but which is "no better or worse than flame-throwers or many other nasty weapons on the battlefield." If brief, war is hell and why make a fuss about a specific weapon - a view presumably not shared by everyone, given the concern for anonymity among those quoted above.

Napalm was invented by Louis Fieser of Harvard in 1942 and since WW II has been chiefly a weapon of the technologically advanced, especially the United States, against Third World people. U.S. forces used approximately 32,000 tons of it in the Korean War and over 100,000 tons in Indochina. Napalm burns at approximately 1,000 degrees Celsius, adheres to skin, and produces third, fourth and fifth degree burns. The category of fifth degree burn was created by physicians trying to treat people injured by incendiary weapons, and it refers to a condition where the skin is charred all the way to the bone. According to resolution XXIII adopted by the International Conference on Human Rights held under UN auspices in 1968, "The use of chemical and biological means of warfare, including napalm bombing, erodes human rights and engenders counter brutality." See the United Nations document,



phosphorus<sup>12</sup> or whatever else. It will not be a moral issue, for these substances are merely cosmic insecticides.

By examining such statements within the cosmogonic act and by reflecting on their historical context, we can arrive at a number of principles that underlie the metanarrative of the New World Order. I have a list of ten such principles.

(1) The whole world is a vast meritocracy. Those with merit rise to the top, enjoying prosperity and dominance. In the sphere of nature homo sapiens has thus risen to the pinnacle and has become the decisive being on the planet, the king of the jungle and the top of the food chain. In the sphere of human society and of economic and political systems, the capitalist system, more often called free enterprise, is likewise triumphant. It is the most meritorious system. Attempts to build alternative systems will now, in the New World Order, be abandoned. The free enterprise system is best exemplified by the trilateral world of the United States of America, Western Europe and Japan.

(2) Within this trilateral world the United States will play the leading role. It is the chosen nation and world leadership is its manifest destiny. A crucial indication of this is that the United States is the only nation able to supply the ultimate factor essential for any world order.

(3) The ultimate factor is military force.

(4) The ultimate factor is now seen clearly as necessary not to fight socialism (which is doomed) but to fight the forces of disorder, the demonic forces lower in the cosmic hierarchy that are discontented with their lives in the nether regions and have inappropriate aspirations. This means the Third World.

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*Napalm and Other Incendiary Weapons and All Aspects of Their Possible Use: Report of the Secretary-General* (New York: United Nations, 1973). The quotation is from p. 1 of this document.

<sup>12</sup> Phosphorus may be used as the main ingredient in an incendiary weapon or as a supplement to other materials (often as an igniter). See *Napalm and Other Incendiary Weapons*. I do not know the details of its use in the invasion of Iraq, but it is clear that it took its toll: "When Charles Buckley began emergency surgery on the Iraqi prisoner of war, he couldn't believe his eyes. Wisps of smoke curled upwards 'like cigarette smoke' from the incision he made. Buckley, an Ottawa orthopedic surgeon attached to the Canadian field hospital, decided it was his imagination. He made a second cut, and again white smoke puffed out ... Phosphorus has a burning point of 38 Celsius (100 F), dangerously close to human body temperature, Buckley said. Exposed to the air, it ignites. 'We start to clean them out and they start to smoke. You see it like cigarette smoke: thin wisps, depending on how much phosphorus is left.' Unless it is removed, he said, the body keeps on burning. It will smoulder like a piece of hot coal. And if there is a lot of oxygen, it will flame like a candle." In *Toronto Star* (March 2, 1991): A1.



(5) Those low down in the cosmic hierarchy, being less meritorious than those higher up, are also less valuable. Further, they are less differentiated as individuals. They have an essentially mass existence. They are not fully persons and are not the subjects of history but only its objects. They grope at the bottom of the meritocracy and have an animal-like existence.

(6) Those high in the cosmic hierarchy have achieved individual subjectivity, and with it refinement, sensitivity, intelligence and culture. They and they alone are persons in the full sense of the word. They have achieved this status through their own effort and merit. They have earned it; they deserve it. They have no duty whatsoever to cede this position to anyone else, and it would even be an outrage, a violation of nature to do so. Through this group of humans the cosmos has achieved intelligence, has become aware of itself and is able to reflect on itself. Other groups have myths whereas this group has knowledge and science. It sees face-to-face. It masters history and becomes the conscious subject of world evolution.

(7) The cosmic hierarchy is not merely good for those on top but good for everyone. The hierarchy is not static but dynamic; it is not oppressive but just. It is a perfect meritocracy. Everyone has a chance to improve their lot, both individually and as societies and nations. Everyone can and should progress upward to greater material, intellectual and spiritual heights.

(8) Since the cosmic hierarchy is a good thing, however, its essential shape should be carefully preserved. Forces that disrupt it are forces of disorder, demonic forces. Such disruption is violence. Forces that preserve the order are divine. Such preservation may be forceful but it is by definition never violent.

(9) Those at the top may, and undoubtedly will, help those lower down - because they are well developed in compassion and beneficence. But they have no duty to help and, in fact, the best way they can help is to minister to their own desires, develop their own refinement, opulence and culture: in this way they show those lower down what the latter can become.

(10) Material, mental and spiritual (things) are convertible currencies. Those at the top of the hierarchy are well endowed with all these things and can magically convert anyone to the others. It may seem as if wisdom is diminishing when one establishes a think-tank and buys the needed wisdom. It may seem as if a crucial material substance (such as petroleum) is diminishing, but the excess of intelligence at the top can always be relied on to find more or to find substitutes. Thus apparent limitations in the material realm can always be replenished from the infinite intellectual and spiritual realm of the cosmic elite.



### 3. The Bodhisattva Metanarrative

In this section of the paper I am taking over the interpretive role from George Bush and Saddam Hussein. That is, they have given us narratives within which we are supposed to interpret certain events; I am proposing a narrative, the bodhisattva narrative, within which we can interpret certain other events. In both cases, story is introduced to give understanding and legitimacy to events that otherwise might appear ambiguous, disconnected. Story also functions to shape future action within the pattern it establishes. The mode in which I offer that my suggestions are, however, quite different from the mode in which Mr. Bush, for example, introduces his interpretation of Operation Desert Storm. I offer my interpretation in a spirit of dialogue, with neither overt force nor any special authority to make it stick. Mr. Bush offers his interpretation via an enormous apparatus of power that makes genuine dialogue impossible.

In helping people resist social, economic, political or cultural orders that are imposed on them, some of the most powerful narratives are old narratives. Christian liberation theology, for example, while rigorously up-to-date in its account of economic and political realities, bases itself on an old set of narratives. Similarly, indigenous peoples throughout the world, in their struggles for survival and self-determination, often combine a realistic and contemporary assessment of the situation with a rootedness in their traditional narratives. Traditional narratives work, in part, by allowing one some critical distance from the overwhelming contemporary narratives and visions, formulated by powerful groups and propagated widely and powerfully throughout the world by the mass media. That the bodhisattva narrative is old does not, therefore, make it irrelevant.

What I say here about the bodhisattva will be based on the Indian Mahāyāna tradition. This is not because I regard the traditions of other countries of Asia unimportant but because I know Indian Mahāyāna best. My account will be a general one and necessarily interpretive.

If it seems odd that the bodhisattva should be considered in relation to a world order, let us remember that the bodhisattva has always been conceived of in relation to an order. Whereas there is often, in Mahāyāna scripture, little direct discussion of the social, economic and political order, there is a good deal of description of the cosmic order within which human beings were assumed to live and act. This cosmic order, the essentials of which were adopted by Mahāyāna from Indian cosmology of the time, was structured as a vast hierarchy. It cannot be called a meritocracy, at least in its Buddhist form, because those at the top of the hierarchy do not really rule, but it is certainly a merit system. Beings performing meritorious deeds rise to the top in this system, existing as gods (devas) and enjoying all sorts of pleasures, while those producing less merit find themselves ranged at various levels in the order - possibly as humans, or as subhuman animals or



in the agony of one of the hells or purgatories. I have often wondered whether this grand system is not, at least in part, a symbolic representation of human life on earth, with its range of options from the most privileged who, like the Gods of the Thirty-Three, have only to conceive an idea in their minds in order to produce anything they may desire, down to the most deprived, who suffer from unrelieved hunger, thirst and torture. Whether this is so or not, it can be seen that this world merit system has implications of which we should be aware. It allows for the possibility of change - beings can make their own future through determined action - and has a principle of moral action (karma) built into it. At the same time, it can be a perfect forum for blaming the victim by excluding the possibility of innocent suffering and oppression and asserting that people get what they deserve.

In any case, this order was assumed in the early Mahāyāna tradition to be operative, and it was within it that the bodhisattva - both the literary figure populating the sūtras and actual aspirants who thought of themselves as bodhisattvas - had to formulate their actions. So what did the Mahāyāna thinkers do about this order? What, in their view, was the relationship of the bodhisattva to the order?

Har Dayal, in his 1932 book, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature*, says of the great bodhisattva of compassion, Avalokiteśvara:

As a bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara is the personification of Mercy. He abrogates and nullifies the old law of karma, as he visits the purgatory of Avīci and makes it a cool and pleasant place (*Kā. Vy.*, 6). He goes to the realm of the Pretas and gives them plenty of food and drink... In the purgatories, he creates a lake of honey and wonderful lotuses... In the country of Magadha, he finds that the people have become cannibals on account of a famine: he helps them by raining down water, rice, cereals, clothes ...<sup>13</sup>

Some will say that the text to which Dayal is here referring, the *Kāraṇavyūha*, is a late “Puranic” sūtra and not typical of Indian Mahāyāna. Yet I believe Dayal’s description of Avalokiteśvara’s abrogation and nullification of karma captures something that was crucial to the bodhisattva conception from the very beginning: the bodhisattva’s task is not to determine who among the starving deserve food but to give food to the starving. It is not the bodhisattva’s task to give beings what they deserve, no matter what criteria are used to determine this, but to give beings what they need.

The bodhisattva, in short, is not content with the order and does not abide by its rules. In fact, if the rules and dynamics of this merit system

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<sup>13</sup> Har Dayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1932), 48-9.



were the ultimate good for living beings, there would be no need for the bodhisattva. There would be a need only for priests to sing the praises of the order and intellectuals to make it sound reasonable. The bodhisattva is an altogether different sort of being. The fundamental principles, according to which the bodhisattva acts are not produced by the order, do not sustain the order and, in fact, even violate it. The rules of the order do not represent the best there is in the universe or the best there is in living beings. These are enlightenment and compassion and the aspiration to bring them to perfection. Enlightenment goes beyond ordinary intelligence, and it works to take a being out of the system. Compassion, which results in gratuitous action on the behalf of others regardless of their merit, leads to a grand intrusion into the merit system. Formally, Mahāyāna keeps the merit system in place. Merit appears as a crucial dynamic of Mahāyāna. But it is redefined and, in the end, virtually exploded by the inherent logic of enlightenment and compassion.

The bodhisattva does not look to beings high in the merit system for teaching in enlightenment and compassion. In fact, there are in the Indian Buddhist tradition probably more stories about the compassion and wisdom of deer and monkeys than of the compassion and wisdom of the gods. These qualities come through struggle, pain and sacrifice, not through ease and pleasure, and they can be found in the lowliest of beings. And although the bodhisattva is described as regarding all beings as his or her children - an apparently paternalistic attitude, the bodhisattva is in the same breath described as regarding all beings as mother and father.<sup>14</sup> This is to say that the bodhisattva is prepared to learn from beings and does not regard them as inferior.

The bodhisattva's task is liberatory. Says the *Aśāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*: "The Bodhisattva has not abandoned all beings. He has made the special vows to set free all those beings."<sup>15</sup> Clearly, we are in the presence of another emancipation narrative. But it is very different from the national emancipation narratives seen earlier. The subjects (actors) are not nations; the dynamic is not competition, and not merit except in a very different sense; the goal is not dominance; and force is not an option. The essentials of this narrative can be given as follows.

In the vastness of immeasurable space, in time with neither beginning nor end, a living being has an aspiration, the aspiration to understand the condition of being-in-the-world and to be free of confusion and suffering. The aspiration is for the achievement of this understanding and freedom for

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<sup>14</sup> "He forms the notion that all beings, whether men or women, are his parents and children." Edward Conze, trans., *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines & Its Verse Summary* (*Aśāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā and Ratnaguḥṣasamcayagāthā*) (Bolinis: Four Seasons Foundation, 1973), 225.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.



self and for others; compassion is inherent in it. This aspiration is the “thought of enlightenment” (Skt., *bodhicitta*; Ch., *putixin*), the arising of which makes one a bodhisattva and makes bodhisattvic action possible. Standing in this aspiration a being is no longer imprisoned by the cosmic order. Though still subject, at least initially, to the basic rules of that order, this being has a new vision of, and insight into, the world, which engenders a purpose for living. Having this vision and insight, the bodhisattva is not utterly lost, not in a condition of pure wandering (Skt., *saṅsāra*). The bodhisattva makes a vow to attain the goals of understanding and freedom and to bring others to this goal, and further vows to establish, when enlightened, an environment, realm or condition of being (Buddha field; Skt., *Buddhakṣेत्रa*; Ch., *fojie*) in which beings will be sufficiently free from material want<sup>16</sup> to devote themselves to intellectual and spiritual cultivation. The bodhisattva then sets out on the difficult journey, which may take many, many lifetimes to complete, lifetimes full of struggle and conflict and the making of mistakes but which are given shape by the aspiration and the vow.

Note the relationship, in this narrative, of the bodhisattva’s pilgrimage to the cosmic order. The aspiration that sets the bodhisattva on the path does not come from the natural functioning of this order. It comes mysteriously,<sup>17</sup> usually through contact with another being who has had the aspiration and is living through or has fully realized its consequences. This lineage has nothing to do with traveling up and down the cosmic hierarchy. It is fundamentally outside the system.

Note also that the Buddha field is a startling intrusion into Indian cosmology: a condition of living outside the merit system, outside the cosmic order, and at the same time not a heaven granted by a divine being but a condition created by living beings through ceaseless struggle in the world of suffering. Like the whole bodhisattva narrative, the concept of the Buddha field is, of course, extremely idealistic, utopian. It shares the dangers and the possibilities of utopian programs. On the one hand there is the danger that the concept will lose all touch with reality, that the bodhisattva will become one who, horrified by the way the real world

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<sup>16</sup> “After I have won enlightenment, I will see to it that in my Buddha-field no such deserts exist, or are even conceivable. And I will bestow on all beings so much merit that they shall have the most excellent water ... after I have won enlightenment, in that Buddha-field there will be no foodless wastes, and none will be even conceivable ... after I have won full enlightenment, all beings in my Buddha-field shall not suffer from sickness, and shall not even know what it is.” *Ibid.*, 218-9.

<sup>17</sup> Pāntideva captures this sense of mystery thus: “As a blind man may obtain a jewel in a heap of dust, so, somehow, this Thought of Enlightenment has arisen even within me.” Marion Matics, trans. and intro., *Entering the Path of Enlightenment: The Bodhicaryāvatāra of the Buddhist Poet Pāntideva* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971), 155.



violates his or her ideas of how the world should be, retreats into a world of fantasy, deferring forever the attempt to build a more humane world. How long, after all, will it take us to become Buddhas so that we may bring this condition into being? On the other hand, the Buddha field can, like all utopias, set our minds free from the narrowness and compromise of our education and conditioning, and set our hearts free from pettiness and cynicism. It can be a powerful inspiration for social change, just as the concept of the Reign of God has become a powerful inspiration for social change in Christian liberation theology. It is up to us to determine how the Buddha field, and the whole bodhisattva metanarrative will be understood and acted on in our time.

#### **4. Bodhisattvic Action in the First World**

We have seen that the bodhisattva narrative prepares one for a mode of action that is not bound by a merit system, that it creates a space for action outside such an order. We must now ask: does real bodhisattvic action exist in the world today? More accurately, is there action that can without undue distortion be interpreted as bodhisattvic? What would such action look like? The New World Order may be presented through narrative, but itself partakes of the concrete world: can the same be said of bodhisattvic action or are we dealing here with ungrounded narrative, fantasy?

In responding to this question, I wish to refer to two incidents from the First World - from North America, in fact. I do not give North American examples because of a lack of available cases from elsewhere. The reverse would be closer to the truth: the First World, and North America specifically, is in such poor shape spiritually that one almost explodes with joy to see a bodhisattvic act. Although both of the actions referred to here took place slightly before the Gulf War, the order in place at the time was essentially the same as that continued, in somewhat more triumphal fashion, as the New World Order.

On September 1, 1987, a group of U.S. citizens sat down on the train track leading away from the Concord Naval Weapons Station in California.<sup>18</sup> They had learned that weapons from this station were being shipped to Central America for use by the "Contras" in killing Nicaraguan civilians. They intended to begin nonviolently blocking these shipments. One of the protesters, Brian Willson, had served with U.S. forces in Vietnam. Before he sat down on the tracks he said, pondering his role as member of the First World and his relationship to those in the Third World, and considering the danger to which he was exposing himself: "We are not worth more. They are not worth less." Then the munitions train approached.

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<sup>18</sup> The facts given here were obtained largely from unpublished sources, including discussions with Brian Wilson.



Although ample warning had been given of the protesters' presence on the tracks, the train did not stop. In fact, it accelerated towards the protesters. Brian Willson was run over, his skull fractured and his two legs severed below the knee.

When I first heard of this incident, I was not sure what to make of the protestor's actions. Was it provoked by madness, fanaticism or egotism? Now, having come in the intervening years to know Brian Willson, I choose to call it a bodhisattvic act. This does not mean that I am promoting Brian as a bodhisattva. I find it distracting, fruitless and even dangerous to get into discussions of who is and who is not a bodhisattva. But it can be useful, and maybe it is even essential if we are to ground the bodhisattva narrative, to find bodhisattvic acts. The act was bodhisattvic, it seems to me, in a classic sense. It involved risking everything for living beings. It meant regarding beings as sons and daughters, mothers and fathers. It concretized the Mahāyāna scriptural image of "the Bodhisattva, sacrificing hands and feet" (*bodhisattvo hastapādān parityajan*).<sup>19</sup> Brian's act harmonized with his word. "We are not worth more. They are not worth less." This word and this act, it seems to me, are the political expression in the current world order of the fundamental Mahāyāna principle of "the equality of the other and of the self" (*pariṇāmanasamatā*).<sup>20</sup> As Pāntideva says, "Another's sorrow is to be destroyed by me because it is sorrow like my own sorrow."<sup>21</sup> That it went against the wisdom of the world means nothing, for, as the *Aśāhāsrikā* says, "As contrary to the ways of the whole world is this dharma demonstrated."<sup>22</sup>

On November 20, 1989, a young Canadian woman named Karen Ridd, working in El Salvador with Peace Brigades International, was captured by the Salvadoran National Guard.<sup>23</sup> This was during an intense phase of the civil war and people were being killed by the hundreds. She was transferred to the infamous Treasury Police, and when she was led, handcuffed and blindfolded, into prison she could hear around her the cries of people being tortured. With her was a co-worker from Peace Brigades, a Latin American woman named Marcela Rodriquez. As a North American, with her white

<sup>19</sup> Cecil Bendall and W. H. D. Rouse, trans., *Pikāśamuccaya: A Compendium of Buddhist Doctrine*, compiled by Pāntideva (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971), 26. For the Sanskrit, see P. L. Vaidya, ed., *Pikāśamuccaya of Pāntideva* (Darbhanga: Mithila Inst., 1961), 17.

<sup>20</sup> Matics, 202. For the Sanskrit, see L. de la Vallee Poussin, ed., *Prajñākaramati's Commentary to the Bodhicaryāvatāra of Pāntideva* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1901), 327.

<sup>21</sup> Matics, 202.

<sup>22</sup> Conze, 192.

<sup>23</sup> A brief written account of this incident in Ms. Ridd's words can be found in *Peace Magazine* (published in Toronto by the Canadian Disarmament Information Service) 6.2 (April, 1990).



skin and blond hair, and as a Canadian with Canadian officials working on her case, Karen found herself, after six hours of interrogation, being set free. But Marcela had had no such luck. The last time Karen had seen her friend, Marcela was standing with her face to the wall, still handcuffed and blindfolded. Karen knew that Marcela, as a Latin American, was in great danger; and, in fact, Marcela had by this time already been threatened with rape, electrocution, and suffocation with the *capucha* (a hood filled with lime and placed over the head). So Karen refused to leave the prison. She told prison officials she wished to be put back in detention. After some confusion, they complied. And Karen stayed until Marcela was set free.

In this case I did not have to ask myself whether the act was crazy or fanatical, because I had already met Karen in El Salvador and I had a good idea of the sort of person she was. I felt confident calling the act bodhisattvic. Like Brian's, it was based on the perception that, "We are not worth more. They are not worth less."

In the *Bodhicarvāvatāra*, Pāntideva says: "There is certainly no accomplishment, no Buddhahood, or even happiness in the realms of rebirth, for the one who does not exchange his own happiness for the sorrow of another."<sup>24</sup> He refers to the exchange of self and other as the "supreme mystery"<sup>25</sup> of the bodhisattva's path. This mystery belongs to a lineage outside the dominant North American order.<sup>26</sup> It has not come forth from that order. It violates the fundamental principle of this order, almost never taught to us directly but taught indirectly from our childhood: "We (in the First World) are worth more. They (in the other two Worlds) are worth less." Being worth less, when designated as enemies, be slaughtered in the night from Apache attack helicopters. Both Brian and Karen nullified this principle. And in nullifying it, they deepened their own insight and freedom.

I do not wish to be understood as urging everyone to dramatic acts such as the two I have described, or as saying that individual heroism is the path that will lead us out of the New World Order. No doubt we shall need quiet, persistent, un-dramatic action done on a day-to-day basis in cooperation with others (the sort of action, by the way, that Brian and Karen are currently involved in). But there are times when a stark symbol is needed.

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<sup>24</sup> Matics, 205.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

<sup>26</sup> I realize that this is a complex issue. I do not wish to oversimplify by implying that there is a single "order" in North America within which people outside the First World are devalued. There are important elements in the political and cultural traditions of North Americans that tend toward the valuing of all human beings as equal. Unfortunately, these elements are, in my view, under systematic attack by contrary forces in the political and cultural orders and, strikingly, in the dominant economic order. Furthermore, I hold that there is an element of mystery in the transmission of the principle of the equality of self and other. I do not believe any order whatsoever can ensure that this principle is instilled in people.



And if the bombing of Iraq is the symbol of the New World Order, we are permitted to have our moments of drama.

I also do not want to be understood as making Brian and Karen honorary Buddhists - though I doubt if they would mind. A Buddhist action and a bodhisattvic action are two different things. Karen is the daughter of a Christian minister and, no doubt, has Christian spirituality as one of the bases for her action. Brian has several different sources of spiritual inspiration. This does not matter. The lineage I am talking about is not and cannot be captured by any institution or tradition. We should not be depressed by this. We should celebrate it. The custodians of the New World Order will have a hard time tracking down the sources of bodhisattvic action, for they cannot be recognized by a sign.

### 5. Choosing Our Stories

To show that narrative has been used, as in the Gulf War, to legitimate a set of actions is not automatically to prove the set of actions wrong. We all use narrative to interpret our world and there is no reason that we should not. But in choosing our stories, we should keep three questions in mind: Is the narrative respectful of the truth? Is there a sound connection between the narrative and the action that it is supposed to explain or legitimize? Is the narrative a worthy one for human beings?

(1) Stories that capture the imagination and energy of large numbers of people usually contain some elements of truth. This is certainly the case for the Gulf War narratives. Iraqi armed forces *did* invade Kuwait; they did pillage, kill and torture. A story that incorporates these facts is certainly not all false. And, on the other side, the al-Sabah family *is* extraordinarily wealthy and invests its wealth in such a way as to benefit the industrialized world and increase its strength and dominance rather than in ways that would benefit the Arab world. A narrative that incorporates these facts is not entirely without foundation in reality. Yet each narrative fails to do justice to the complicated truth of the situation. Each story not only omits truth but incorporates lies.

(2) Quite apart from the truth or falsity of a narrative or set of narratives, we must be attentive to the relation between story and act. There is frequently a point of mystification where the story ends and the action begins. It is true that Iraqi armed forces invaded Kuwait and caused great suffering. I also assume that this should be unacceptable to the world community. It does not follow from this that one is justified in invading Iraq, causing twenty to fifty times more casualties than the original invasion.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> This estimate is extremely conservative and is based on claims of 2000-5000 Kuwaitis killed during the Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait and 100,000 Iraqis killed during the invasion of Iraq. These are figures that became rather



Narratives that legitimize are dangerous if we are unable to distinguish what they do from what they do not legitimize.

(3) A community should subject its narratives to scrutiny, asking whether or not they are worthy of the values of the community. Is the central national narrative of the United States really a worthy narrative for Americans, or for human beings generally? I do not believe so. I believe that it has caused enough damage and that Americans should find another story.

As I hope that it be clear, the bodhisattva narrative is entirely different from, and often at odds with, a “karmic” world narrative, that is, a picture of the world as a hierarchical merit system. Even if the New World Order comes into being as a “fair” merit system - which, unfortunately, there is no reason to believe it will - it can never be a parent of bodhisattvic action. This action belongs to a separate lineage.

I believe there is as great a thirst metanarrative, and that the question is not whether or not there will be metanarrative but what the accepted ones will be. Will they be grounded in reality or fantasy? Will they be worthy of our commitment or will they betray us to the unworthy? Will they draw us toward morality, centeredness and wisdom or will they draw us towards the perfection of brutality, the perfection of dissipated consciousness and the perfection of stupidity? These are the questions that we face in the New World Order.

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standard during the war, though the figure of 100,000 was never anything more than a guess. A Greenpeace-sponsored study by Peter Bahouth and William Arkin reported in late May 1991, somewhat higher figures for casualties in the invasion of Iraq (*The Globe and Mail*, May 30, 1991, A 16). The report by the Harvard team, after extensive field work in Iraq, will be released soon, and indications are that it will add enormous numbers of indirect casualties to the figures for the invasion of Iraq.



## **CHAPTER 15**

### **TOWARD THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINE OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

Tadashige Takamura

#### **1. Introduction**

In this paper, I would like to make a plea for the establishment of a fundamental doctrine of human rights, referring to some recent research on this subject. Especially, I would like to focus on the way that Buddhism can contribute to the establishment of this fundamental doctrine. In that sense, this paper aims at evaluating the relationship between human rights and Buddhism.

I would like to suggest that the Buddhist view on life and human beings can make a great contribution to the establishment of the fundamental doctrine of human rights. In other words, I believe that Buddhist thought can provide us with an excellent means to investigate and analyze the latest problems concerning human rights.

In order to verify the statement just mentioned, I methodologically refer to Karel Vasak's concept of "The Third Generation of Human Rights," which provides original and up-to-date research on this subject.

Fortunately, the latest trends of our age seem to indicate an increasing emphasis on respect for and protection of human rights, which are in my opinion the most crucial issues in this decade preceding the dawning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This shows that people are yearning for a new age of humanism.

#### **2. Human Rights as the Key Concept**

In June 1991, Apartheid was abolished. This is certainly a decisive victory in the fight for human rights. But we should also be aware that this doesn't necessarily mean that circumstances for human rights, from the



global point of view, have been completely improved. There are still many problems concerning human rights that need to be solved on our planet and the victory in South Africa is only the starting point of the “Age of Human Rights.”

When we take a look at the dramatic events that shook the world in 1989 and 1990, we can see a characteristic trend clearly emerging. Revolutions in Eastern Europe, racial disturbances in the Soviet Union, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the unification of Germany, nuclear disarmament treaties between East and West, the World Summit Conference on economic matters, etc. Those events reflect the people’s objection to, or rather rejection of the political and military confrontations that have characterized the international society since World War II. In other words, people regard such confrontations as meaningless, and they are yearning for an economically and culturally stable existence. Indeed, those reformations are the materialization of the sincere cry of the people for a more humane life.

Since the late 1980s, many factors have been on the rise, which hinder the improvement of human rights. These include environmental destruction, economic gaps, poverty and injustice, and the threat of nuclear war. “Structural violence”, as Johan Galtung advocates, is prevailing among human beings, regardless of the economic status of countries and classes. In that sense, it is clear that immediate solutions to the problems of human rights are required.

By the way, how have the problems of human rights been dealt with since World War II? We may identify two points. First, human rights in the fifties, sixties and seventies were used merely as a means for justifying ideologies and second, human rights have easily been violated under the name of peace and development since the onset of the 1980s. Referring to those two points, I would like to show what is the main problem in the basic attitude toward human rights.

## **2.1. Human Rights as a Purpose**

After World War II, the international society was faced with the “Cold War” dividing the United States and the Soviet Union, each camp claiming that its own political and economic system was absolute. Other ideologies were totally excluded, and this was actually a structural oppression of human rights. This is only one example showing how human rights have been a means for ideologies and political systems until the 1970s. But human rights should always be the main purpose of any endeavor. That is why the idea of “human rights as a purpose” is essential.



## 2.2. Peace and Development for Human Rights

In the 1980s, the threat of nuclear war and the economic gap between the North and the South became the central issues among nations. The theme of peace, development and human rights was often used in the context of international society. The theme itself is quite important and we should strive for its actualization as we advance toward the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

But there is one point that we should pay attention to. Peace, development and human rights should not be dealt with equally or individually. What I mean is that human rights should be given top priority. If “peace” comes first, the expansion of armaments will be possible under the name of peace, and assistance to the third world might turn into a means to win the arms race. Ultimately, “peace” could be a cause for threatening or hindering human rights.

And if “development” is considered our final purpose, it often leads to environmental destruction or to some “development-oriented” political system such as the authoritarianism of development. It is well known that sudden modernization in the third world sometimes destroys people’s social life and causes them to lose their own identity as well. That is why we should also be aware of the fact that random development causes critical violations of human rights.

To sum up, I do not believe that peace, development and human rights should be given equal attention. I hope that it is now clear that human rights should be given the absolute priority. Peace and development must carry the idea of human rights. This reminds me of those three words that symbolize the spirit of the French Revolution: “liberty”, “equality” and “fraternity.”<sup>1</sup> In fact, those three words should not have been emphasized equally, but “fraternity” should have been fundamental. During the French Revolution, however, “liberty” and “equality” preceded “fraternity”. If we agree that politics and society after the French Revolution were not stable and did not meet people’s expectations, it is mostly because the value of “fraternity” was neglected. Similarly, among “peace,” “development” and “human rights,” “human rights” should be fundamental.<sup>2</sup>

## 3. Third Generation of Human Rights

Needless to say, human rights are the inherent rights that every human being naturally possesses. No one can violate them. They are truly natural rights. Today’s political and social systems have been formed in order to find better means to protect human rights. Karel Vasak, formerly Director

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Baroin, *La Force de L'Amour* (Paris: Editions Odile Jacob, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> Sakamoto Yoshikazu, Professor of Meiji Gakuin University, also points out this problem. See Sakamoto’s *Chikyū jidai no kokusai seiji* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1990), 241-265.



of the UNESCO Division of Human Rights and Peace, provides an up-to-date description of the problems of human rights in his address: “For the Third Generation of Human Rights” (*Pour les droits de l’homme de la troisième génération*).<sup>3</sup> Some have said that his doctrine on human rights reflects the straight demands from the third world countries which became independent from the industrialized nations after World War II. A quite original and modern concept of human rights is also developed: he advocates a new type of thought on human rights, such as is demanded by the people on a global level, referring to recent transitions in the idea of human rights.

In the address, the transition is explained as follows:

“The first generation of human rights.” Those human rights were established at the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century as a universal principle, which secures legal and political freedom. Anyone is entitled to be attributed those rights, so they are also called “attributed rights” (*droits attributs*). Those rights have mainly been obtained from the state by opposing it. That is to say, they were directed at the protection of the basic civil rights of the individual *vis-a-vis* the authority of the state.

“The second generation of human rights.” We can see examples in the Mexican Revolution and especially in the Russian Revolution at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Those rights aim at economic, social, and cultural equality, the provision of which can be required from the State. We also call them “the rights of requirement.”

Both generations of rights have their origin in Western rationalism and have been formed in relation to sovereign states or nation states. In other words, human rights were only protected legally, organically, economically, and physically within the framework of the sovereign state. The political history of Western Europe during the past one hundred years can be seen as the process of the birth and development of the sovereign states. It is natural that the idea of human rights was also influenced by the definition of the sovereign states.

But in the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the definition and function of the sovereign states have gradually been changed and the sovereign states have developed much closer relationships with each other, to such a degree that we now speak of the “international society.” As a result, concepts of human rights that were prevalent during the above-mentioned “first and second generations” are no longer valid. For example, problems such as economic differences between nations, poverty, population increase, food shortage,

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<sup>3</sup> Philip Alston, “A Third Generation of Solidarity Rights: Progressive Development or Obfuscation of International Human Rights Law?” *Netherlands International Law Review*, 29: 309. See the opening address of Karel Vasak at the tenth annual Study Conference of the Strasburg International Human Rights Research Institute, “*Pour les droits de l’homme de la troisième generation: les droits de solidarite.*”



environmental destruction and the threat of nuclear war are rampant today. Old ideas about human rights did not take those problems into account and therefore a “third generation of human rights” can now be perceived.

Vasak calls the old idea “the classic human rights” and he lays stress on the fact that human rights are not a static concept nor a universal value but a value we dynamically attain. That is why he has developed the concept of “the third generation of human rights,” which is composed of the following five rights: first, the right to development (*droit au développement*); second, the right to peace (*droit à la paix*); third, the right to a clean environment (*droit à l’environnement*); fourth, the right to ownership of the common heritage of mankind (*droit de propriété sur le patrimoine commun de l’humanité*); and finally, the right to communicate (*droit de communiquer*).

These five rights had never been classified as human rights. Vasak claims that these are quite new rights that can oppose the authority of the states, and at the same time one can require these rights from the states. But these rights cannot be attained unless all the actors in the social arena such as individuals, states, official and private organizations as well as the international society participate with the spirit of solidarity. Therefore, the rights to solidarity (*droits de solidarité*) are based on these five rights. Considering the current global problems that threaten the human right to live (such as wars, environmental problems, food shortage and population increase), it is obvious that all the actors should cooperate and unite in order to protect human rights.

#### 4. Evaluation of the Doctrine “Third Generation of Human Rights”

“The third generation of human rights” could be a highly valuable concept in the sense that it provides a new point of view which conforms to the needs of the new age. But of course there are criticisms of that idea being presented, which I show as follows:

First, who are the people entitled to (*titulaire*) those human rights? Are they individuals or groups? In that sense, the concept of opposability (*opposabilité*) is also unclear. To whom should we oppose and from whom should we require these rights? Are “*titulaire*” and the “*opposabilité*” identical?<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, even “the first and second generations of human rights” do not seem to have already been realized. Besides, there is also a doubt that if we label “the third generation of human rights” (a concept which is ambiguous and merely desired) as “rights,” the definition of human rights would be inflated and as a result, the importance of human rights would become rather diluted.

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<sup>4</sup> For example, Dominique Rousseau, professor of Montpellier University, criticized this idea. As for it, see “Les droits de l’homme de la troisième generation, Droit constitutionnel et droits de l’homme.” *Economica* (1989): 125 ff.



The counterarguments against the above-mentioned criticisms have been justly expressed and I will mention them here, if only briefly. The first argument is that the first and second generations of human rights (the so-called classical idea) were also merely a desire and their “*opposabilité*” was ambiguous too, when they first appeared. In later years, they have gradually been defined. Certainly, “the third generation of human rights” is, at this stage, only a type of declaration, but they are nevertheless human rights in the-making.

The second argument is that “the third generation of human rights” will not dilute the definition of human rights but rather refine and systematize it referring to the developmental processes of human rights seen from the historical point of view.

Here I will present two points that indicate how “the third generation of human rights” relates to important matters in modern society.

First of all, they include “the right to solidarity.” The classical human rights of the first and second generations mainly deal with individual rights, whereas the third generation of human rights, while still dealing with individual rights, emphasizes the rights of groups or organizations. Since to exercise one’s rights in society means to relate to others unless one leads an isolated existence, the aspect of rights for groups is necessary. It is important that “the third generation of human rights,” in the complicated human society and also in the international society that is getting more and more interdependent, claims that the essence of human rights does not merely mean “freedom for individuals” but also “freedom of relationships.”

Secondly, “the right to development” to which Vasak refers means partly the economical development of the state and partly, Vasak adds, the development of people’s personal potential. In other words, to protect human rights is to secure the opportunity for self-fulfillment.<sup>5</sup> To create political, economic, cultural and social conditions which enable us to use our abilities satisfactorily is, in fact, to secure “the right to development.” It protects human rights in the true sense of the word.<sup>6</sup>

Thus the third generation of human rights calls for human rights to be considered as they ought to be, from the global standpoint - beyond the framework of individuals and states - and also from the standpoint of the development of one’s personal potential, which was not included in the old conception of human rights. But the third generation of human rights still concentrates also on the analysis of the surface of human rights, and the

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<sup>5</sup> Johan Galtung pointed out this concept.

<sup>6</sup> In 1986, the General Assembly of the United Nations accepted the Right to Development as a human right, and it adopted Declaration on the Right to Development. But there are many criticism of the Right to Development. The main point of critics is that the Right to Development is not legal right in the strict meaning. However, we can say that the Right to Development is Development as an Emerging Human Rights.



imminent aspects of human rights have not been fully delved into yet. In other words, the third generation of human rights does not deal with what the basic index for determining what makes human rights meaningful is nor deal with how we should understand the essence of human rights. How do we understand human nature and human life? This should be the central issue in discussing human rights, if we are to make human rights more universal and systematic. Indeed, that question is the common idea underlying all kinds of human rights. In that sense, I would like to introduce the Buddhist view of life and human beings here, which is to be of help toward the clarification of the basic idea of human rights.

## **5. The Buddhist View on Human Rights**

Buddhist thought has formed a magnificent view of human beings and life. It also seems to be applicable to the fundamental doctrine of modern human rights. I will briefly consider that point from five different angles.

### **5.1. The Dignity of Life**

Buddhism explains that all humans possess the Buddha nature. The Buddha nature is the Buddha's life, meaning a life of the highest value. The Buddha does not mean some special existence which is far away from human beings but the value of the greatest treasure which everyone has within his or her own life. Therefore, the life of human beings should be respected to the greatest extent, and the value of life itself is the most important. Fundamental to human rights is the dignity of human life.

### **5.2. Equality**

That everyone has the Buddha nature within one's own life means that we are all equal. Human beings should be equally respected regardless of race, nationality, sex and social status. It is Buddhism that claims absolute equality for all people. There is a Buddhist expression that "the inherent dignity of one person serves as an example of all. " This means that all human beings should be regarded as equal. A thorough search into the depth of life itself leads one to realize the absolute equality and sanctity of all human beings. In short, it explains the principle of "inner universalism."<sup>7</sup> Because of "inner universalism," all the people are universally equal regardless of race, nationality, sex or class. The idea of equality is the nucleus of human rights.

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<sup>7</sup> As for this point, refer to the proposals of SGI President Ikeda Daisaku in the *Seikyō*

*News Paper*, January 26, 1989. Ikeda Daisaku, *Aratana ningen shugi e* (Tokyo: Dai San Bunmeisha, 1991).



### 5.3. Nonviolence

Since Buddhism emphasizes the dignity of life in all people, it is naturally related to the idea of nonviolence. In the *Lotus Sūtra*, there appears the term “Jōfukyō (Skt., Sadāparibhūta) Bodhisattva,” which means “to never despise”. Even when proud and boastful people denounced the bodhisattva, struck him with their staffs and pelted him with stones, he still refused to despise them, believing that to belittle them would be to belittle the Buddha. In other words, “Jōfukyō” means to respect human beings and their lives as the highest value. People persecuted Jōfukyō with every kind of violence but Jōfukyō’s belief that all people have the Buddha nature was unshakable, and he never despised others. It demonstrates an attitude toward the dignity of life based on faith in nonviolence. The Buddhist spirit is to fight against violence with faith in nonviolence and without compromise. To respect human rights is to exclude violence absolutely.

### 5.4. Self-Restraint

Another Buddhist concept is the idea of “*engi*”. “En” means relation or connection, and in Buddhist thought, all phenomena are caused by “en.” All phenomena such as social or natural phenomena are related to each other, and moreover, are related to the life of the cosmos. The Buddhist view on life is in fact that human beings, nature, the environment and the cosmos exist in harmony as a total system. “En” is also divided into “*jun-en*” and “*gyaku-en*.” *Jun-en* is a peaceful, friendly relation and *gyaku-en* is a hostile relation. Buddhism explains both relations as “en.” That is to say that whether it is peaceful or hostile, *en* is *en*, nothing else. Therefore, a hostile relation in the present stage will not last forever, but it can change into a peaceful and friendly one in the future. Consequently, the present confrontation is understood to be only the process toward relations of a higher level. In a more profound sense, it teaches that it is necessary to perceive the positive as well as the negative in others, and to perceive both the positive and negative sides in oneself. Taking the Buddhist perspective then allows one to see oneself objectively and avoid self-righteousness, which unilaterally regards others as the negative and oneself as the positive. In Buddhism, there is no fixed concept of the duality of good and evil that we encounter in Western philosophy. Everything is understood through the idea of coexistence. A multiple, pluralistic, fluid, progressive and total view, not a monolithic one, will be necessary for the future of human rights.

### 5.5. Self-fulfillment

There is also the Buddhist principle of “*kai-ji-go-nyū*” which means to teach that all people are equally entitled to develop their own potential and



personality to the utmost. It means not only to teach this principle, but also to help everyone realize that fact, and moreover help everyone to use one's abilities. In other words, it is self-fulfillment. Buddhism teaches both that life deserves the highest respect and that the real dignity of life is realized only when the conditions necessary for everyone to live a humane life are satisfied. Buddhism is the practical principle that helps human beings to become most human. Lost identities can be regained, too. Respect for human rights is not just a slogan, but a value principle which must be actualized.

These are five characteristics of the Buddhist view of life and human beings. Each is an important condition to help human beings to be truly human. The Buddhist way of understanding human beings fully takes into account the relationships between human beings, and moreover it says that human beings, nature and the cosmos (universe) are closely linked together. It might be necessary to establish these ideas on human life and beings as the foundation of human rights in order to establish the universal principle of human rights, and to spread this principle in our global society.

#### **6. For the Spiritual Uplifting of the Respect for Human Rights**

Finally, I would like to suggest some measures that might be implemented in order to spread the idea of respect for human rights, and establish it in the international society.

First is to establish a "Universal Charter of Human Rights" (tentative name). Needless to say, there is already a "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" and "International Covenants of Human Rights" to protect human rights, and they are of deep significance. These Declaration and Covenants include only the first and second generations of human rights, but the viewpoint of the third generation of human rights is not included yet. They also fail to address the role of NGOs, the threat posed by nuclear weapons and environmental destruction. That is why I suggest establishing a "Universal Charter of Human Rights" to protect all the people from the global threats that I have described in this paper.<sup>8</sup>

Second is to hold a "United Nations Special Session on Human Rights." In the 1980s, a series of UN Special Session on Disarmament (SSD) were held and the fact that they functioned to a certain degree as a brake on the arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union is fresh in our memory. Similarly, I would like to suggest holding a Special Session on Human Rights and promoting a campaign for the protection of human rights. And to make the campaign lasting, I also suggest that the Session resolve to take the following measures.

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Tabata Shigejiro, *Kokusaika jidai no ninken mondai* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1988).



1. The establishment of a “UN Conference on the Security of Human Rights.”
2. The preparation of an educational text on human rights.
3. The establishment of the “Memorial Museum for Human Rights” and the holding of exhibitions.
4. The establishment of a “Computer Network Center” for the protection of human rights.

Third is the establishment of a “Human Rights Protection Fund.” It takes an enormous amount of money to protect and campaign for human rights. Of course, domestic matters should be solved by individual countries, but there are also many problems which should be solved internationally. I propose the establishment of the above-mentioned fund as the means providing economic support for human rights. For example, the United Nations might assess a certain amount of money from each of its member nations in accordance with the size of their respective GNP. Especially it is desirable that armaments and defense expenditures be reduced so that the amount saved might be invested in the fund.

Fourth is the establishment of regional organizations for the security of human rights. Certainly, protection of human rights by a global organization such as the United Nations is essential, but at the same time we should not fail to notice the importance of creating campaigns at the regional or local levels. A carefully thought-out campaign for human rights conforming to each regional circumstance might be conducted by establishing organizations for the security of international human rights regionally, by continent, for example. These organizations might exert a great influence. For these reasons, it is highly regrettable that the Treaty on Asian Human Rights has not yet been concluded. Let us entertain the greatest hopes for the earliest conclusion of such a treaty.

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## CHAPTER 16

### LANGUAGE AND PEACE: THE EARLY BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE

David J. Kalupahana

During the early part of this century a Western student of Buddhism and a professor of philosophy who made a special study of the peaceful spread of Buddhism throughout Asia made the following observation:

I refer to its (Buddhism's) remarkable elasticity and adaptability. Wherever Buddhism has gone it has manifested this characteristic, and manifested it in a superlative and unique degree. I do not think there is another religion that possesses so much of it. Buddhism has been emphatically a missionary religion. Its transplanting to new lands has been accomplished never through conquest or through migration but solely by the spread of ideas. Yet almost everywhere it has gone it has so completely adapted itself to the new people and the new land as to become practically a national religion. This has been partly due to the tolerance and liberality of its thought, to which I have already referred, a tolerance that it has exhibited both within and without. With the most extremely rare exceptions, Buddhism has held no heresy trials and has carried no persecutions. With a daring catholicity that approaches foolhardiness it has recognized every form of rival as a possessor of some degree of truth.<sup>1</sup>

Even though similar sentiments have been expressed by many historians of Buddhism, no attempt has yet been made to examine the theoretical underpinnings of an enormously significant practical achievement. As such, the practical achievements of Buddhism not only in its survival in hostile environments but also in its continuous expansion have remained a mystery to the historian. The need to examine the philosophical foundation of peaceful coexistence and critical tolerance has never been so urgent than at the present time because of the new drama being staged in the global political arena where smaller groups are seeking

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<sup>1</sup> J. B. Pratt, *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism* (London: Macmillan, 1928), 719.



their identities in terms of ethnic and linguistic considerations. Ironically peace has become a greater issue in recent times than it has been even during the decades of the cold war. The present paper is devoted to an examination of the philosophical foundation that made Buddhism the most peaceful missionary religion in the world.

The systematic philosophers have devoted themselves to critical reflection on the problems of life and presented systems of ideas that are internally consistent and coherent. The American pragmatist, William James, discussing the problem of rationality, raised the following questions and provided answers.

What is the task that philosophers set themselves to perform; and why do they philosophize at all? Almost every one will immediately reply: They desire to attain a conception of the frame of things which shall on the whole be more rational than that somewhat chaotic view which everyone by nature carries about with him under his hat. But suppose this rational conception attained, how is the philosopher to recognize it for what it is, and not let it slip through ignorance? The only answer can be that he will recognize its rationality as he recognizes everything else, by certain subjective marks with which it affects him. When he gets the marks, he may know that he has got the rationality. What then are the marks? A strong feeling of ease, peace and rest is one of them. A transition from a state of puzzle and perplexity to rational comprehension is full of lively relief and pleasure.<sup>2</sup>

Almost every philosopher, after he has completed formulating his system of thought, may experience this sentiment of rationality. The sense of peace achieved as a result of attaining harmony within one's own system of thought could be short-lived, especially when one discovers that there are others who hold views different from his own. This is often followed by a feeling of frustration. Rarely do we find a philosopher, after enjoying this sentiment of rationality, proceeding to examine the manner in which his system of thought could remain alongside of theories formulated by other philosophers without coming into conflict with them. The main reason for this conflict is the absoluteness with which a philosopher holds on to his system considering it to be the truth and nothing but the truth. In other words, the sentiment of rationality itself can induce dogmatic slumber, especially when the philosopher has come to the conclusion that he has resolved all the riddles of existence.

The present paper is devoted to an examination of the manner in which the Buddha, after formulating his own understanding of the nature of existence with its own internal consistency and harmony, tried to achieve

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<sup>2</sup> William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, ed. F. Burkhardt, et. al. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979), 57.



peace or harmony in relation to theories and views different from his own without coming into conflict with them.

It may be remembered that before setting out to explain to others whatever truth he had discovered, the Buddha is said to have spent several weeks consolidating his insights into the nature of existence, which he formulated as the principle of dependent arising (*pa iccasamuppāda*), and enjoying the bliss of freedom. The bliss of freedom was the result of his overcoming not only of the emotionally defiling tendencies such as greed (*lobha*) and hatred (*dosa*) but also of intellectual confusion (*moha*), the latter being the consequence of the endless speculative theories (*di hi*) prevalent during his day.<sup>3</sup> It is also interesting to note that at the end of that period he was feeling uncomfortable about preaching especially because he felt that his views would come into conflict with the prevalent theories which most people clung to with dogmatic fervor (*ālaya*). Overcoming his reluctance through his moral concerns (symbolized in the form of a request by Brahmā Sahaṅpati),<sup>4</sup> the Buddha stood up to the challenge by finding a way to achieve peace and harmony in the context of conflicting views.

Considering the Buddha's emphasis on the "middle path" (*majjhima pa ipadā*) that avoided extreme or polar standpoints, whether these pertained to epistemology, ontology ethics or philosophy of language, it seems that there was no need for what may be considered internal harmony.

In epistemology, the Buddha avoided the extremes of absolute certainty sought for by the substantialist thinkers, and absolute skepticism advocated by the skeptics. In the area of ontology, he renounced speculation regarding the bi-polar opposites, namely, existence (*atthitā*) and non-existence (*n' atthitā*). While the former is looked upon as leading to eternalism (*sassata*), its opposite non-existence (*n' atthitā*) is said to contribute to the belief in annihilation (*uccheda*).<sup>5</sup> The principle of "dependent arising" (*pa iccasamuppāda*) is therefore not one that is suggested as a metaphysical principle to integrate bi-polar opposites. Rather it is an extension of the empirical relations among events (*pa iccasamuppāna dhamma*).<sup>6</sup> This philosophical middle path embodied in the "Discourse to Kaccāyana" (*Kaccāyanagotta-sutta*) has been highlighted in recent discussions of Buddhism.<sup>7</sup> Until then the middle path that was known to scholars is the practical one enunciated in his very first discourse to the world, namely, the "Discourse on the establishment of the principle of righteousness" (*Dhamma-cakka-ppavattana-sutta*).<sup>8</sup> This is the ethical middle path that

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<sup>3</sup> *Majjhima-nikāya*, 1.160 ff.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.168-169.

<sup>5</sup> *Saṅgutta-nikāya*, 2.17.

<sup>6</sup> *Saṅgutta-nikāya*, 2.25.

<sup>7</sup> *Saṅgutta-nikāya*, 2.16-7.

<sup>8</sup> *Saṅgutta-nikāya*, 5.420-4.



avoids the two extreme forms of behavior, namely, self-indulgence (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*) and self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*).

Even though internal harmony was not an issue for the Buddha because of his adoption of a middle standpoint in the sphere of ontology and ethics, external harmony did pose formidable problems. How could the Buddha proceed to expound his views without coming into conflict with the philosophers and religious teachers who held views different from his own? Was it possible to formulate a middle path, comparable to the one with which he achieved internal harmony, in order to eliminate conflicts and bring about external harmony? There was no difficulty in claiming that he gained vision (*cakkhu*), insight (*ñāṇa*), wisdom (*paññā*), knowledge (*vijjā*) and illumination (*āloka*) with regard to things previously unheard of (*pubbe ananussuta*).<sup>9</sup> Indeed, it was that very knowledge and insight that enabled him to adopt a middle path. Yet, formulating any theory on the basis of that understanding, he could not argue: “This alone is true; everything else is false” (*idam eva saccaṃ, moghaṃ aññaṃ*),<sup>10</sup> for that would mean not only a return to the absolute perspectives which he renounced earlier but also unavoidable conflict with other views.

The middle path that actually paved the way for external harmony is embodied in a little known discourse, namely, the “Discourse on the analysis of peace” (*Araṇṇavihāra-sutta*).<sup>11</sup> Here we quote in full the brief statement on the analysis of peace (*araṇṇa*) with which the discourse begins and which is then examined in greater detail.

You should not be intent on the happiness of sense pleasures which is low, vulgar, individualist, ignoble and unfruitful; neither should you be intent on the practice of self-mortification which is painful, ignoble and unfruitful. Without approaching these two extremes, the Tathāgata has realized this middle path which produces vision and knowledge, and which leads to appeasement, higher knowledge, enlightenment and freedom.

One should know approval and one should know disapproval, and having known approval and having known disapproval, one should neither approve nor disapprove... one should simply discourse on the *dhamma*. One should know how to judge happiness; having known how to judge happiness, one should be intent on inward happiness. One should not utter secret speech; face to face one should not deprecate another. One should speak quite slowly, not hurriedly. One should not commit oneself to the

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<sup>9</sup> *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, 5.422.

<sup>10</sup> *Majjhima-nikāya*, 3.235.

<sup>11</sup> *Majjhima-nikāya*, 3.230-7.



dialect of a country; and one should not transgress common parlance. This is the exposition of non-conflict (*araḥsa*).<sup>12</sup>

The above statement will appear almost meaningless unless we are to keep in mind the intention of the discourse, that is, avoiding conflict with views that are opposed to the Buddha's own. The analysis begins with the middle path relating to the moral life that, as mentioned earlier, is embodied in the Buddha's first discourse to the world. History of philosophy in any part of the world bears testimony to the fact that conflicts were more often associated with judgments relating to good and bad or right and wrong. This awareness may have prompted the Buddha to begin the discourse with a statement about the moral philosophy he himself advocated. If it was assumed that the moral philosophy advocated by the Buddha is the ultimate philosophy and that every other philosophy that has ever appeared in the world is absolutely mistaken, conflict is inevitable. Hence the Buddha's advice that follows: "One should know approval and one should know disapproval." "Approval" (*ussādana*) is not simply the recognition of relevance or the pragmatic value of a theory, but raising it to the highest level as embodying the ultimate truth (*parama* 眞).<sup>13</sup> Hence, the Chinese translation of *ussādana* as "praising."<sup>14</sup> Similarly, "disapproval" (*apasādana*) is the condemnation of a theory as being absolute falsehood. The Chinese translation reads it "blaming."<sup>15</sup> In the *Sutta-nipāta*, the Buddha has repeatedly rejected both attitudes as leading to conflict (*kalaha*, *vivāda*).<sup>16</sup> Even though he spoke of freedom (*nibbāna*) as the ultimate goal (*paramattha*), he was reluctant to admit absolute truths or absolute falsehoods. The distinction he made was between truth (*sacca*) and confusion (*musā*).<sup>17</sup> Approval and disapproval are generally dominated by excessive prejudice, not empirical evidence. Empirical evidence will not be of much use if one were to seek the establishment of a theory as being either absolutely true or absolutely false. It is in contexts where empirical evidence is lacking that a stronger element of prejudice can enter into one's decisions regarding what is true and false.

<sup>12</sup> *Majjhima-nikāya*, 3.230.

<sup>13</sup> *Sutta-nipāta*, 796-803.

<sup>14</sup> *Zhong ahan jing*, 3.1508, T.1.701c.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> See the discourses included in the *Atthaka-vagga*, especially, *Du hatthaka*, *Suddhatthaka*, *Paramatthaka*, *Kalahavivāda*, *Cūṭṭhavyūha* and *Mahāvvyūha*.

<sup>17</sup> In general, the terms *sacca* and *musā* are used to refer to contraries in the sense of truth and confusion, respectively. However, when the reference is to bipolar opposition or contradiction, the terms *sacca* and *micchā* are employed. The former pair is used when describing empirical events, situations, things or phenomena. The latter is strictly confined to the purely logical statements, as at *Saṅgutta-nikāya*, 4.299.



Thus, the first step in the direction of avoiding conflict is abstaining from any prejudiced approval or disapproval. This would mean confining oneself to what is empirically available; hence the Buddha's statement that one should simply discourse on the *dhmma*, that is, speak of what is available in experience.

An appeal to experience may not be a very endearing proposition for some human beings. The Buddha, who propounded a radical non-substantialism, did not uphold the view that all human beings are born equal in every way. He recognized a diversity in relation to the faculties or capabilities (*indriya-vemattatā*),<sup>18</sup> to inclinations and desires (*chandarāga-vemattatā*),<sup>19</sup> leading to what human beings can achieve (*phala-bala-vemattatā*),<sup>20</sup> ultimately contributing to diversity among human beings themselves (*puggala-vemattatā*).<sup>21</sup> Recognizing this diversity among human beings, the Buddha was not willing to impose his ideas on everyone, to convert everyone to his way of thinking. However, he realized the need for a criterion on the basis of which a person could act, even if the other party is not willing to accept the usefulness or appropriateness of what he is advocating. Happiness proved to be the most important criterion for acting morally, for he believed that all beings, whether human or non-human, craved for happiness and recoiled from pain (*sukhakamā...dukkhapa ikkūlā*).<sup>22</sup> For this reason, his search for peace or non-conflict is focused on the determination or judgment regarding happiness (*sukhavinicchaya*). His advice in the discourse is to initiate this inquiry, not in a remote place, but within oneself (*ajjhata* 𑖦). In other words, he was not looking for some abstract concept of happiness that every human being ought to embody in himself. On the contrary, the more empirical method of judging happiness is in relation to oneself and then extending it to others. It is possible to argue that this sounds like moral chaos where anything goes. However, on the basis of his own experience, he has already indicated that extreme forms of behavior such as self-indulgence are low, vulgar, individualist, ignoble and unfruitful, and self-mortification is painful, ignoble and unfruitful. Happiness is therefore an experience that avoids both excessive possession and deprivation, gluttony and starvation. There would be no better place to verify this experience than in oneself.

The next most important stage in the process of eliminating conflict pertains to the manner in which the above experiences are communicated, and this involves the phenomenon of language. If experience is not without a tinge of haziness, so is conception through which it is expressed. This

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<sup>18</sup> *Majjhima-nikāya*, 1.453.

<sup>19</sup> *Sa 𑖦utta-nikāya*, 3.101.

<sup>20</sup> *Sa 𑖦utta-nikāya*, 5.200.

<sup>21</sup> *Majjhima-nikāya*, 1.494; see also, *Sa 𑖦utta-nikāya*, 2.21; *Sutta-nipāta*, 102.

<sup>22</sup> *Sa 𑖦utta-nikāya*, 5.353.



would mean that both experience and its expression, namely, language cannot be absolutely precise. First, the overestimation of clarity and precision in experience, and the failure to express such clarity and precision in linguistic terms have contributed to theories of ineffability. Secondly, with the assumed failure of language, there is a tendency either to construct a special linguistic medium intelligible to a select few or to impart instruction in secrecy. The Both tendencies have played a significant role in the so-called mystical traditions.

For the Buddha, language is a public phenomenon. However, communication through language may be public or private. The Buddha, as a verificationist, sees no difficulty with public communication, for if someone were to speak falsehood in public, there is a strong possibility that sooner or later that person will be exposed. The problem lies primarily with secret speech (*rahovāda*) that can often bring about conflict among human beings. Being a non-absolutist, the Buddha's advice regarding secret speech takes three different forms. First, secret speech can involve the false (*abhūta^ ataccha^*) and unfruitful (*anattasa^hita^*). If possible (*sasakka^*) such secret speech should not be uttered. Secondly, secret speech may pertain to what is true, yet unfruitful. Within this category it is possible to include the so-called metaphysical views which are very appealing to many, but which lead to endless conflicts,<sup>23</sup> hence unfruitful. The Buddha's advice is to train oneself not to utter such speech. Unlike the former, these are supposed to be truths, hence easily adhered to. For this reason, it requires some training or discipline (*sikkh□*) on the part of the individual to avoid such speech. Thirdly, there may be secret speech relating to what is true and useful, and the pragmatist Buddha argues that these may be uttered only when the person knows it is the appropriate time (*kālaññu*). These same attitudes are to be adopted with regard to speaking vexatious things in the very presence of the person to whom they are addressed.

A good communicator is one who makes himself clearly understood by his listeners. One way of achieving this is by speaking quite slowly, not hurriedly. Speaking hurriedly, one hurts oneself physically and mentally, and also renders one's speech unintelligible to the listener. Lack of good communication is more often a reason for conflict among human beings. Hence the Buddha concerns even with regard to minute details like the manner of speaking.

Finally, we come to the most significant analysis of the means of communication, namely, language itself. The philosophy of language embodied in the brief statement quoted earlier, and which was subsequently elaborated by the Buddha, is not simply a pragmatic ploy in order to achieve harmony and peace. It is one that is presented after a careful

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<sup>23</sup> William James, *Pragmatism*, ed. F. Burkhardt, et. al. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975), 27-8.



analysis of the nature of human experience, conception, reference and expression. The brief statement reads thus:

One should not commit oneself to the dialect of a country; one should not transgress common parlance.<sup>24</sup>

Its elaboration is presented in the following paragraph:

When it is said: “One should not commit oneself to the dialect of a country; one should not transgress common parlance,” in reference to what is it said? What, monks, is commitment to the dialect of a country, and what is transgression of common parlance? Herein, monks, in different countries this same thing (probably referring to the bowl he was carrying with him) is recognized as *pāti*,... as *patta*,... as *vittha*,... as *sarāva*,... as *dhāropa*,... as *po<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>a*,... as *pisīla*. Thus, when they recognize it in different countries as such and such, so does a person refer to it while adhering and committing oneself to each [concept] saying: “This alone is true; everything else is false.” Such is the commitment to the dialect of a country, and the transgression of common parlance. What, monks, is the non-commitment to the dialect of a country, and the non-transgression of common parlance? In this case, monks, in different countries this same thing is recognized as *pāti*, . . . as *patta*, . . . as *vittha*, . . . as *sarāva*, . . . as *dhāropa*,... as *pona*,... as *pisīla*. Thus, when they recognize it in different countries as such and such, so does a person refer to it without adhering and committing himself to it saying: “These venerable ones refer to it as such and such in this context. Thus, monks, is the non-commitment to the dialect of a country and the non-transgression of common parlance. When it is said: “One should not commit oneself to the dialect of a country, and one should not transgress common parlance,” it is said in reference to this.<sup>25</sup>


What does the Buddha mean by commitment to (*abhinivesa*) and transgression (*atisāra*) of language? How is it that these lead to conflict? A commitment to a language represents a desire on the part of the language-user to express with absolute precision whatever he takes to be a veridical experience. A similar desire on the part of the Brahmanical thinkers gradually energized the process that led to the construction of an artificial language that came to be called Sanskrit, “[well] constructed.” This process was initiated before the time of the Buddha, as is evident from the popularity of the six-fold discipline: phonetics (*llikā*), ritual (*kalpa*), grammar (*vyākaraṇa*), etymology (*nirukti*), metrics (*chanda*) and

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<sup>24</sup> *Majjhima-nikāya*, 2.230.

<sup>25</sup> *Majjhima-nikāya*, 3.234-5.



astronomy (*jyoti* )<sup>26</sup>, some of which are mentioned in the Buddha's discourses. The culmination of this process of constructing a language of precision was reached after the Buddha, and is embodied in the works of Pāṇini (5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.). When the philosopher proceeded to express what he considers to be the absolute truth in an equally precise language, all other languages used by the ordinary people came to be looked upon as the primitive or the vulgar (*prakṛta*). This inevitably gave rise to conflict not only among the philosophers who held different views about truth and reality, but also among social classes some of which were prohibited from using this highly respected language through fear that it would be polluted. When the Buddha utilized a series of dialectical variants such as *pṛti*, *patta*, *vittha*, *sarva*, *dhropa*, *poṣa* and *pisṛa*, all referring to an object like a "bowl" which serves different functions, for example, as a utensil for collecting food or for eating or for drinking, if someone were to pick up one of these terms, say *pṛti* (which would imply a utensil for eating, not for collecting food or for drinking), and insist that it is the one and only term for "bowl," he will be compelled to provide an exclusive meaning by arguing that *pṛti* is a non-*patta*, non-*vittha*, etc. This would be an extremely arbitrary meaning that deprives the object referred to by the term *pṛti* from serving any other function. Philosophically this would be what is called an essentialist enterprise. It goes against not only experience but also current usage (*vohra*) that constitutes the life-blood of language. A person dogmatically holding on to such a view inevitably comes into conflict with another person who holds a different view. It is in this form of commitment (*abhinivesa*) that deprives language of its flexibility that the Buddha perceives a danger.

On the contrary, it is possible to take the seven terms (*pṛti*, *patta*, etc.) as synonyms and overemphasize them as synonymy or commonality (*samāñña*) to the complete neglect of their particularities represented by their functions. This again is what the Buddha referred to as over-extending or transgressing (*atisāra*) of common usage. With such transgression, words used in language are deprived of any concrete meaning. Language thus turns out to be an utterly inadequate means of expressing even veridical experiences.

Avoiding these two extremes of commitment (*abhinivesa*) and transgression (*atisāra*), the Buddha argues for the pragmatic value of language, retaining its flexibility in order to express equally flexible experiences. Such an understanding may prevent the Buddha or his disciples from conflicting with the world, especially with those who are upholding different views or perspectives and more importantly between people who speak different languages. However, there is no guarantee that

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<sup>26</sup> See M. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1972), vol. I, 268-89.



the rest of the world, at least those who uphold absolutistic views regarding experience and language will not conflict with the Buddha and his disciples. This realization was what prompted the Buddha to say: “Monks, I do not conflict with the world; the world conflicts with me” (*nāha bhikkhave lokena vivadamī, loko ca mayā vivadati*).<sup>27</sup>

### Conflicts within the Buddhist Tradition

The Buddha did not recommend the adoption of an “official language” in the matter of disseminating his ideas. In fact he encouraged the utilization of one’s own idiom when studying the Buddha-word.<sup>28</sup> The result is that the Buddha’s teachings came to be preserved in a dozen of Asian languages. However, as time elapsed, the some of the Buddhist philosophers were engaging themselves in metaphysical and absolutistic speculations that eventually destroyed the internal harmony so carefully worked out by the Buddha. The Sarvāstivāda and Sautrāntika metaphysicians promulgated substantialist and essentialist theories that finally gave rise to absolutism and transcendence. In addition, they also delighted in traversing what the Buddha criticized as the road to conflict and strife, namely, praising one’s own view as the best and the ultimate and condemning the views of others as being inferior. The Mahāyānists branded the Theravāda as the “inferior” (*hīna*) vehicle,<sup>29</sup> while the Theravādins characterized the Mahāyāna as the “heretical view” (*vetullavāda*).<sup>30</sup> And finally, they ignored the most significant advice of the Buddha relating to the attitude one should adopt in regard to the means of human communication, namely, language. This latter was most noticeable in the Theravāda canon, was elevated to the status of the “foundational language” (*mūlabhāsā*).<sup>31</sup>

While prominent Buddhist philosophers like Moggalīputta-tissa, Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu and Dignāga appeared at different times in order to resurrect the spirit of the original teachings of the Buddha, the Buddhist tradition has not been endowed with any such authoritative personality for several centuries. The unfortunate result is the continuation of conflicts within the Buddhist tradition as well as between Buddhists and other religious traditions. These conflicts are not merely the result of each religious tradition upholding its own doctrine as the ultimate solution to the human predicament, but also the consequence of ignoring the philosophy of language enunciated by the Buddha.

<sup>27</sup> *Saṅgutta-nikāya*, 3.138.

<sup>28</sup> *Vinaya Piṭṭaka*, 2.139.

<sup>29</sup> See Chapter 4 (*Adhimukti-pariccheda*) in *Saddharmapuṣṭika-sūtra*.

<sup>30</sup> *Mahāvamsa*, 36.41.

<sup>31</sup> *Saddhammasaṅgaha* in *Journal of the Pali Text Society* (1890): 55-7.



Let us take a look at some of the conflicts in the modern world. The relationship between ethnicity and language is rather close especially because language is the means of communication within a group of humans living together in close proximity. The English language has come to be a sort of “universal” language not because it has been proven to be superior to any other language in the world in terms of its clarity of expression but rather because of a historical accident. When the British Mahārāj was ruling the colonies, he imposed his language on his subject so long as the latter wanted to communicate with him. He was not the least interested in the language of his subject. Nor was he overly enthusiastic about providing opportunities for the subject to learn either the English language or the subject’s own language. In most cases he left that to the missionaries who followed on his heels. The missionary schools located primarily in the major cities naturally focused their attention on the teaching of the former. With the dismantling of the British Empire and the departure of the British Mahārāj, the colonies were thus left with an English-speaking elitist minority and a non-English-speaking majority. (To some extent the American colonies were an exception since they were colonized by the English-speaking conquerors themselves.) Seeds of conflict were already sown. In the South-East Asian region the only country that did not come under British rule, namely, Thailand, has not experienced the vexing linguistic problems the British colonies faced. Nationalism came to be the unifying factor in each colony. Divergent linguistic groups joined hands in friendship to compel the Mahārāj to leave. That friendship was rather short-lived. The influence of the British political system founded upon the Utilitarian philosophy that recognized the majority-minority distinction had already entered the local cultural, social and political consciousness. Yet, the newly constituted two groups, the majority and the minority, lived in harmony learning each other’s language whenever there was a need to communicate with the other. Regretfully when the dust was settling down, the majority-minority distinction came into prominence providing a new criterion of identity, namely, language. Instead of looking upon language as a means of communication, each tended to elevate its own language to the status of an ultimate reality, hence superior to any other. It is this perspective that spelled disaster for the nations which were at first united against a foreign Mahārāj. The earlier conflicts in the Indian continent after the declaration of Hindi as the “official language” have been followed by even more violent conflicts in the island nation of Sri Lanka, especially after the imposition of Sinhala as the “official language.” The Tamil minority who were mostly Hindus could not renounce the absolutist philosophy of language that is the foundation of Hindu philosophy. In fact, if they were in the majority they would not have hesitated a moment to impose such condition. However, the imposition was orchestrated by a political figure who was nurtured in the Christian tradition and who had embraced Buddhism subsequently. What is regrettable is that the Buddha’s



philosophy of language was forgotten even by the leading Buddhist scholars that there was no one to provide leadership to a movement which could not dampen the call for an “official language,” a call which was based purely on political strategy. Even though at the present moment there are virtually three official languages, Sinhala, Tamil and English, the spark was already ignited and the fire continues to burn unabated. In conclusion, it may be stated that the United States of America that has so far not faced any divisions on a linguistic basic is now being threatened with possible conflicts as a result of the calls for an “official language.”







## **CHAPTER 17**

### **THE APPROACHES OF THE BUDDHA AND GANDHI TOWARDS RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE**

**K.S. Vimala Devi**

Religion is an extraordinarily interesting side of humanity, providing even very useful insights into the vicissitudes of human life, society and history. It has also been the epicenter of the very existence of man. Arnold Toynbee succinctly explained the position, "I have come back to a belief that religion holds the key to the mystery of existence..." It may also be remembered that religions have also contributed to some of the biggest wars and conflicts that rendered several thousand people dead, homeless and maimed in different parts of the world. The great religions, which have been the fountainheads from which flowed the clarion, call for social and religious awakening in the past have lost their preeminence and a certain decay is discernible now. The contemporary decay of religion is not an isolated phenomenon, confined to a restricted domain distinct from a secular domain. It is part of a fundamental change of point of view in relation to the nature of man and of the universe. The newly emerged view point is anti-traditional, progressive, humanist, rationalist, materialist, experimental, individualist, egalitarian, free-thinking and intensely sentimental. There is no denying of the fact that such a point of view has always existed in one form or another. What we see is its dominance now practically world-wide and in control of almost every domain of human life and thought.

The question, "Given the fact that I belong to a particular religion, what should be my attitude to another or another's religion?" has always troubled modern man and it is of extraordinary importance for the possibility of civilized life.

Three principal lines of thought connected with the concept of coexistence of religions could be of relevance here. They are (1) a vaguely relativistic conception of the interrelationship between religions; (2) a



reduction of the sphere of religion to the private and the inner; and (3) the hope that with the spread of the so-called “scientific temper” all religions will in any case die a natural death. Let us examine these positions a little more.

The idea of relativism has gained a certain amount of intellectual respectability in recent times mainly through the efforts of the academic discipline of anthropology. The phenomenon is also a feeble and somewhat self-deluding attempt on the part of western intellectuals, who are concerned with the study of “other societies.” It appears relativism whether cultural, moral or religious is born of confusion.

There is a general tendency on the part of the practitioners of one religion to criticize and condemn practices of another religion as “superstitious,” “immoral,” “animistic” and so on. Such criticism very often arises from misconceptions generated by assumptions of superiority of one’s own religion and its practices.

One’s religion is very often treated as an important aspect of one’s inner or private life. It is viewed as a potential source of one’s “inner” strength, “spiritual joy” and harmony. “Inner” in this sense means “divorced altogether from man’s social life.” And understood in this way, the religion soon comes to be identified with what is sometimes called “religious behavior,” i.e., performance of rituals, prayer and meditation and so on.

The element of trust in this “inner world” theory is that one’s religion is not something that one makes a public show. But this of course has nothing to do with the alleged divorce between man’s religion and his social life. As a matter of general belief, the dichotomy that has frequently been made between man’s inner (mental and spiritual) and outer life suffers from grave social difficulties. But in the case of religion, the mistake is so obvious that it is a wonder that it has been made at all and made with such persistence. As has been pointed out by many scholars, spirituality is undoubtedly something that man achieves within himself; but this “within” is as though nothing unless it manifests itself without.

The third line of thought believes that all religions are basically irrational; some may be more irrational than others; but since, irrationality is an essential part of the stuff of religion, the “scientific mind” looks at them with equal intellectual disfavor. This “scientific spirit” will hopefully continue to spread among mankind and with this the fundamental irrationality will show itself with increasing clarity; and thus it is argued that we with one day see the complete disappearance of the phenomenon of religion from the face of this earth. The charge of irrationality is leveled against two things; (1) what may be called religious discourse and (2) religious activities, e.g., rituals and so on.

The argument that religious beliefs are self-contradictory arises almost invariably from an inadequate as well as a distorted understanding of religious concepts. A careful study of the different religions would show



that the theory of the presence of self-contradictory assumptions in every religion is not substantiated.

This again takes one to the question “what ought to be my attitude to another’s religion?”

All religions of the world believe in promoting universal love, compassion, brotherhood, unity and amity among all human beings. This positive role of religion is not highlighted by all religious leaders in their preaching to their followers. They should also come together on the same platform to work for unity and peace. All religions should realize that what is required now is concerted action for preventing war, promoting peace and generating a new hope in the fear-stricken world of today.

The Buddha who opened a new vista in religious co-existence provides an answer to the dilemma that we face now. *Duhham, Duhham, Sarvam duhham*, the Buddha said. How did his message spread?

Buddhism spread over the whole of Asia without shedding a single drop of blood. The German scholar Dr. Winternitz believes that the conquest of human souls all over Asia by Buddhism is the only conquest of the spirit without violence in all history. The brotherhood of Buddhists is one of the great unifying forces of the world. Buddhism may as well provide a powerful corrective by upholding spiritual values that have always withstood the onslaughts of materialism. Gandhi wrote, “the Buddha’s teaching like his heart was all expanding and all-embracing and so it has survived his own body and swept across the face of the earth.”

The Buddha insisted on right action, genuine morality and love for humanity. Every individual has in him the potentiality and the possibility of securing the highest enlightenment through disciplined devotion in the pursuit of truth. Mahātmā Gandhi’s understanding of the essential teachings of Buddhism was very close. He wrote, “the Buddha’s whole soul rose in mighty indignation against the belief that a being called God required for his satisfaction the living blood of animals who were his own creation. He, therefore, reinstated God in the right place and dethroned the usurper who for the time-being seemed to occupy the whole throne. He emphasized and declared the eternal and unalterable existence of the moral Government of this universe. He unhesitatingly said that the Law was God himself. God’s laws are eternal and unalterable and not separate from God himself. It is an indispensable condition of this very perfection. And, hence the great confusion that the Buddha disbelieved in God and simply believed in the moral Law.” Let us remember the following in our understanding of Buddhism:

1. Buddhism defines that the life in each individual human being is of supreme value and reaffirms respect for the dignity of life that is of the highest value.



2. The supreme goal of Buddhism is the attainment of the state of Buddhahood or enlightenment by each individual. However this enlightenment is not to be regarded as a mere self-realization on the part of any one person, but rather something attainable by all.
3. It may be noted that Buddhism recognizes no 'soul or an absolute God.' It teaches that all human beings possess a precious inherent Buddha nature at the very core of their lives. Any thing which is harmful to human life is inconsistent with Buddhism, hence Buddhism's emphasis on the establishment of a non-violent environment.

It also teaches that life should never be utilized as a device for achieving personal, political or other goals. Life is an objective in itself. Consequently, Buddhism emphasizes the importance of non-violence not only as an objective but also as a means.

Like the Buddha, Mahātmā Gandhi integrated religion with the problems of daily life. Gandhi believed in a philosophy of life-affirmation and emphasized ethical values for dynamic fulfillment of life. He evolved a synthesis between his faith in God, his ethical action and the building up of a life here and now. He believed in Truth as God and said that the *Summun Bonum* of life lay in God realization. To realize God, one has to find Him in His vast and wonderful creation. This requires the practice of morality and ethics that consist in fighting against untruth in the world. All that we do in this world must be based on truth and nonviolence. Our economics, politics and our worldly activities would be integrated with our spiritual activity to realize truth in life.

Religion according to Gandhi meant an inner awakening. It is this awakening that made Gandhi fight the crudities of religion like untouchability, animal sacrifice and other meaningless institutions that had become part and parcel of religious practice. It is this awakening that made Gandhi see the truth in every religion and proclaim his ideal of "*Sarve Dharma Samanathwa*." He wrote,

Let me explain what I mean by religion. It is not the Hindu religion which I certainly prize above all other religions, but the religion which transcends Hinduism, which changes one's very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within. It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, known its maker and appreciated the true correspondence between the maker and itself.

The concept of *Sarva Dharma Samanathwa* has given us the key to the understanding of Gandhi's religion. His ultimate aim was to make religion dynamically operative in human life. He thought that if religions competed



with each other to annex votaries, it led to the disruptions of their religious spirit. He never swore by rituals and dogmas. He, therefore, was quite certain that the biggest challenge to religions was the need to undergo self-purification. Religion would be most potent when it would have the courage and sincerity for self-purification.

Gandhi believed in the dynamics of prayer that according to him was the very soul and essence of religion. Gandhi prayed every morning and evening, and according to him, the prayer was a longing of the soul and a call to heart-searching and self-purification and a preparation to share the sufferings of our fellow beings however they happened to be.

Gandhi tried to place body and mind at the service of God and to efface his ego and vanity by surrendering himself to God and doing His will and His work. He placed his success and failure at the feet of God and remained unattached to the fruits of his actions. This was Gandhi's way of realizing God.

Gandhi believed in the philosophy of renunciation in action as described in the *Gīta*. The *Gīta* says "Do your work be allotted, renounce its fruit to be detached and don't have a desire for reward." Renunciation for Gandhi was not keeping away from the world or no salvation a matter of the next world. True renunciation is action without selfish motives and true salvation is liberation from the bondage of selfish desires and possessions that fetter and torment man.

Gandhi believed in the three process of integration in religion, (1) the integration of personality which reconciles the individual to his own nature, (2) integration with his fellow men and (3) integration with God, the supreme Spirit. *Gīta* refers to this triple process of integration, *yagya*, *dana* and *tapas* and exhorts everyone to practice the necessary disciplines to build up personality, to create a new social order based on equality and to establish God as the central fact of life. Gandhi put into practice with meticulous care this spiritual program of integrating all aspects of life.

Gandhi believed that education without the study of religions is incomplete. He considered that it is not only a legitimate intellectual pursuit but also a vital aspect of human culture and civilization. In this context it may be of interest to examine the following proposal that Prof. N. Radhakrishnan circulated during the international year of peace for the consideration of religious leaders and educationists:

1. Promotion of right understanding of religion and stressing the common core of all religions.
2. Adopting educational measures for promoting inter-religious unity which may include prayer, meditation, imparting of moral education, establishment of inter-religious groups and stressing the importance of sharing and communion both at the formal and non-formal levels.



3. Organizing international youth camps and exchange programs affording opportunities to youth from different countries for staying together and working together, animated by the spirit of the basic unity of all religions.
4. Taking steps to see that the mass media are not used to promote communal hatred and inter-religious feuds and to use the force of religion to combat violence promoted by abuses of alcohol and improper use of drugs.
5. Enlisting the cooperation of all sections of the society for carrying out these programs. Special emphasis may be laid on the role of religious leaders, teachers and parents, scientists, journalists, youth, women and voluntary organizations so that religious leaders should realize that their duty is to stress the positive role of religion for promoting peace; (a) Science have to be persuaded not to produce lethal weapons but to educate people regarding the positive and constructive use of science and scientific inventions; (b) Journalists should make an attempt to stress the positive role of religion and to highlight constructive efforts made by organizations and others in promoting harmony and goodwill instead of going after sensational news; and (c) Women and women's organizations have to play a very important and specific role in promoting peace. They can do this by educating children at home as also by participating in all programs, especially those meant to give an idea of the havoc wrought by war. They should also lend strong support to protests against the misuse of the mass media.
6. Text-books should be carefully selected in schools and colleges. Books containing negative ideas that militate against religious harmony should be discarded and only these with positive integrating ideas should be encouraged.
7. Good books from different religions in one language may be translated into other languages.
8. Study of comparative religions may be introduced in the curricula at all levels.
9. Research on comparative religions may be promoted, research projects which come under this umbrella be suitably assisted.
10. Lectures may be arranged and symposia and seminars be held frequently on religious faiths and strengthening of secularism.
11. Steps to celebrate all religious festivals by all sections together may be thought about. Exchange of gifts, mutual invitations and visits during important religious festivals may be encouraged.
12. The activities of Youth Movements like the Shanti Sena of the Gandhigram Rural Institute in Tamilnadu in India and the Shanti Vahini of the G.R. Institute of Nonviolence in Kerala that strive to promote religious tolerance and training youth in non-violence



may be studied and if possible, similar efforts may be initiated on a larger basis.

13. Youth camps should be organized in summer vacations on an inter-state basis. Attendance at any one of such camps may be suitably recognized.
14. Sports and games will help greatly to bring about emotional integration of people. Hence, they should be encouraged. Greater emphasis should be given to organize such activities on inter-state basis.
15. Inter religious prayers may be organized, if feasible in universities and colleges in which songs from different religions may be sung and passages from different scriptures read.
16. The students may be encouraged to visit different places of worship of all religions. These should be accompanied by due explanations of special features.
17. Discussions, debates, and group singings that bring the students closer physically and emotionally and thus help to understand each other better should be encouraged in educational institutions.
18. Group singings have become almost a rare phenomenon. Singing together brings people together. Hence group singing should be arranged.
19. Efforts to offer courses / programs on inter-religious, inter-communal harmony should be arranged.
20. A new type of education is needed for developing a better integrating learner by revision of courses of study and formulation of schemes of national education, from the lowest to the highest, with the purpose of promoting study of other religions.
21. Establishment of combating the ideas that militate against religious tolerance.
22. Insistence of norms or codes of conduct for religious head, for parents, for teachers, for students, for members of political parties, and, indeed for citizens of every class for promotion of all ideas which produce unities amidst diversities in religion and culture.







## CHAPTER 18

### BUDDHISM: THE MESSENGER OF PEACE, CONTACT AND UNDERSTANDING

Jiwen Du & Baoxu Zhao

There is an old saying in China, “reviewing the past helps one to understand the present” (Confucius, *The Analects*). What can Buddhism do today? And how to do it? Reviewing the past of Buddhism may shed light on the questions that we want to answer.

#### 1

In the ancient Orient, peoples were separated and ill-informed, and many segregated countries were nearly inaccessible. In such a state of isolation, the contact and intercourse between them depended to a great extent on trade economically and on Buddhism spiritually and culturally.

Buddhism came into being in ancient India in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. Thereafter it burst out of the confines of India and found its way into other countries along two distinct lines. One is the Southern Buddhism or so-called Hīnayāna Buddhism, which was founded in Ceylon / Sri Lanka and later became the religious belief of the people in Southeast Asia. The other is the Northern Buddhism, or namely Mahāyāna Buddhism, believed by peoples in West, Central and East Asia (including China). Buddhism was introduced to Vietnam in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E., to Korean peninsula in the 4<sup>th</sup> century and to Japan in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Tibetan Buddhism (Lamaism) grew very popular in the regions where Tibet-Mongolians and other nationalities live in compact communities. The population that has converted to Buddhism is quite large.

The propagation of Buddhism resulted directly in increasing interactions and communications among the related countries and regions, improvement of their mutual contact and mutual understanding, and it brought about an alternative culture to the local civilizations. Therefore, it enriched and nurtured the social lives of the various nations. *The Stories*



*from the West*, written in the 4<sup>th</sup> century by Daoan, a very famous Chinese monk, was the first book dedicated to description of the human geographic features of Central Asia and ancient India. The sources of the book came from the monks who had been to those areas. Now, the book is still a very important literature in studying the ancient history of the Orient. Just like the discovery of the New World by Columbus, the great significance of the mutual discoveries of those Asian countries provoked by Buddhism cannot be underestimated.

For China as an example, since the 2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E., Buddhist monks from the ancient countries such as Parthia, Indo-Scythia, Sogdia, India, and Gandhara brought with them the unfamiliar religious and cultural messages of the West. From the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, many Chinese monks started rushing westward in search of Buddhist Dharma, both by land and by sea. They introduced and translated a lot of Buddhist sūtras and other scriptures and canons. According to *Kaiyuan shijiao-lu* (the authoritative catalogue of Buddhist translations in China compiled by Zhisheng in the Kaiyuan era of Tang Dynasty), there had already been 176 translators of great celebrity by the early Tang Dynasty. More than 1,000 books and 54,048 volumes of the Buddhist sūtras and scriptures were introduced into Tibet, and most of them were translations. These books were talking not only the societies and thoughts of ancient India, but also religion and philosophies of ancient Persia and Greece. The religious contact, and the translation and teaching of the Buddhist sūtras and doctrines widened the horizon of the Chinese people, stimulated their thinking and replenished their knowledge. In return, the Chinese civilization was also disseminated into the West. For instance, *Dasheng yizhang* (Essays on the Meaning of Mahāyāna) and *Dasheng qixin-lun* (Treatise on the Awakening of Faith) written by Chinese Buddhists were translated into the Turk and Sanskrit languages, too. As we know now, Confucianism and Taoist scriptures and magic were spread into Central Asia partly through Buddhism. It may be said that in ancient times the Western countries knew China mainly from wandering Buddhist monks.

Since its entrance into China, Buddhism has been playing a critical role in harmonizing social relations. It is well-known that China was experiencing protracted social and political turbulence and even torn by wars when it began to be exposed to Buddhism. At that time, Buddhism prevailed in different dynasties and nationalities in the capacity of “renunciation” and “*lokottara*” (the transcendental), functioning as a very important tie that maintained close relationship between the peoples and dynasties and linked the feelings among them. Because of advocating the doctrine of ahimsa (non-violence), Buddhism contributed very much to the pacification and reunification in China during the Sui and Tang dynasties. As Buddhism developed in China, an important social stratum, the Buddhist monkhood emerged. It recruited many pacifists, deserters of military service, the destitute and homeless masses, and even some literati. In this way, it



protected these people, mitigated social contradictions and kept human relations in balance. It is quite clear that Buddhism was a vital stabilizing factor in the Chinese history.

Of the three principal religions in the world, Buddhism is the only one that has never waged any kinds of religious war, for it always preaches in a peaceful way. Consequently, it played the role of friendship, mediation, and understanding in the intercourses among peoples and countries. In the early 5<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese Buddhist monk Faxian started his long journey westward from Chang'an. Having crossed the Pamir and traversed India, he finally arrived in Sri Lanka. He brought with him the messages of China and the friendship of its people. Having studied Buddhism in India and Sri Lanka for years, he returned home by sea, bringing back the messages of Sri Lanka and the friendship of the local people. Even today, as the symbol of the Sino-Ceylonese friendship, Faxian is still remembered by the people of the two countries. In the middle 5<sup>th</sup> century, ten Ceylonese nuns headed by Kisara came to Nanjing, China, to teach the disciplines for nuns. Later, the Chinese monks and laymen built the famous Kisara Temple in memory of them. The contact and intercourse between China and India through Buddhism were even longer and more frequent. The early Buddhist doctrines in India, especially the later-emerged Madhyāmika and Yogācāra were taken as the theoretical origin of Chinese Buddhism. Chinese Buddhist master Xuanzang was the most outstanding of those Chinese who studied Buddhism abroad. In the early 7<sup>th</sup> century, he went to India and was accorded with courteous reception by King Rājaputra[[īlāditya and King Kumāra. He was highly venerated by the Tang Dynasty after he came back, and is still revered by the Chinese and Indian people today.

In addition, there are also numerous examples that illustrate the great contributions Buddhism has made to the Sino-Korean cultural exchanges and friendship of the peoples. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese Buddhist master Jianzhen made a hard journey eastward to Japan in order to propagate Buddhism. Saichō, Kūkai and other Japanese Buddhist monks also came to China to seek Dharma. These are much-told stories in the history of the Sino-Japanese relations. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century, an eminent Japanese monk established the Bodhima $\frac{1}{2}$ ā dedicated to Guanyin (Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva) on Mount Putuo in Zhejiang, China, which still attracts thousands of pilgrims every year. Korea used to be the "transfer station" on the way of the Buddhist exchange between China and Japan. In the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Korean Buddhist monks such as Woncheuk, Wonhyo and Uisang enjoyed a very high fame among Chinese Buddhists. In Sichuan, China, a Korean monk, Musang, founded a new sect Jingzhong (the Purified Masses) which belonged to Chan School. On Mt. Jiuhua in Anhui, China, another Korean monk, Jijang Gim became the incarnation of Kṛitigarbha. In fact, most of the Buddhist schools and sects in Japan and



Korea regard China as their birthplaces and have their own ancestor-halls in China.

Such stories are too many to tell. Nevertheless, the above-mentioned historical facts are clear enough to show how the expansion of Buddhism greatly stimulated the contacts and mutual understanding among the peoples and countries concerned. Buddhism, being a general carrier of culture, has also accelerated the cultural exchange in those regions.

As one of the Oriental religions and a special form of culture, Buddhism bears many differences with the Occidental tradition of religion and culture, and this is self-evident. In the modern age, the political and economic development resulted in the renaissance of Buddhism in the Oriental countries. Moreover, Buddhism has aroused the interest of the people in the Occident. Some of them have begun to study it, and even have been converted to it. Nowadays, religious tolerance and religious dialogue are becoming a global trend. Religious development in the contemporary era is characterized by a movement that Christianity comes eastward and Buddhism goes westward; and in the evolution their mutual understanding and mutual respect coincide with the mutual infiltration. It is quite apparent that Buddhism is a messenger of peace and friendship and a positive element in the self-development of the related nations.

## 2

Why can Buddhism undertake the historical mission of peace, contact and understanding? Why has Buddhism persisted for more than two thousand years? The reasons are multi-fold. But what merits our special attention is: Buddhism has many advantageous elements in its creed such as prolonged and universal adaptability and capability to survive. Here, we will only make three points briefly.

First is the idea of “*Pusa-xing*” (the Path of Bodhisattva, or Bodhisattvaśāstra). There is a very important concept in Buddhism, that is, “the difficulty of human life”. Since it is absolutely no easy thing for human beings to live in this world, one should be self-esteemed, self-possessed, and also respect others. One should cultivate perfection in various merits and virtues by relieving others from pain and sufferings. Morally speaking, that is to “do all the goods, and avoid all the evils” which we refer to as the doctrine of “egoism through altruism”. Those who believe in the doctrine are Bodhisattvas and those practices directed by the doctrine are following the Path of Bodhisattva.

Many *Jākata* tales are pregnant with the idea of “*pusa-xing*” such as the selfless donation of Sudhana, the sacrifice of Prince Mahāsattva to a hungry tiger, etc. All these practices can be generalized and abstracted as the principle of “Buddhist compassion” which requires Buddhists to do mercy to human beings and act for the welfare of others. Many social ideals grew



out of the principle. For instance, Kang Senghui, a Sogdian-Chinese monk, once advocated to establish a kingdom that would follow *pusa-xing* where there would be no weapons, no prisons and no tyranny and where people would no longer live in hunger and cold.

Second is the conception of *upek* ㄣ̄ (Equality). Buddhism lays great stress on the likeness of all living beings and the equality of all Buddhist schools and sects. It wants all the people to be equally treated without discrimination. In the *Diamond Sūtra*, Buddhists are asked not to be too particular about the gender of male or female because men and women are held to be equal by Buddhism. According to a story in *Tan jing* (the *Platform Sūtra*), in the initial interview, Hongren, the Fifth Chinese Chan Patriarch, tried to discourage Huineng, his future spiritual successor, by saying that southerners did not possess the Buddha-nature. Huineng replied that so far as the Buddha-nature was concerned, there was no distinction between northerners and southerners. To put it in modern terms, all human beings are equal, regardless of their countries, nationalities, races, sexes, ages and religious beliefs. This conception of equality makes it possible for Buddhism to be free of bias and prejudice, and easy to keep an objective position beyond the rights and wrongs of the interested parties. This accounts for the reason why Buddhism is widely accepted by various countries, nationalities, social classes, and groups and for the reason why Buddhism has become the medium that introduces peace, contact, and understanding.

Third is the orientation of “humanization”. The nature of *pusa-xing* is the humanization of Buddhism, that is to say, Buddhism concerns itself for human happiness and human liberation (*mok* ㄣ̄). According to the *Wisdom Sūtra*, those people who are willing to follow *pusa-xing* must make a vow in the following way, “I am obligated to serve as the bridge for the people from all directions and let all of them tread over me to get salvaged.” That is the guiding principle of the humanization orientation of Buddhism.

With the guiding principle as a starting point, Buddhism has put forward the idea of *upāya*, that is, some kind of specific means of salvation. So far as Chinese Buddhism is concerned, there are two cults the Pure Land (*sukhāvatī*) and the Maitreya Buddha. Pure Land used to be quite popular. The two cults solace people with ideals and encourage them to do good as much as possible in this world. Yet, the Pure Land can only come true in the other world. Nevertheless, some Chinese Buddhist thinkers pointed out that “the polluted land” could be turned into “the Pure Land” and that “the Pure Land” which completely belongs to this world could be established through the transformation of “the polluted land.” Many Buddhist monks and laymen have made great efforts in order to fulfill the transformation. Accordingly, they concerned themselves for all the affairs of human beings, ranging from such important problems as the stability of a state and the concord of nations to trifling matters such as discords among family



members, and sorrows and sufferings of individuals. It is this orientation of humanization that has very much strengthened the adaptability of Buddhism and its influence both in the Orient and the Occident.

### 3

The traditional Chinese society has witnessed the positive function that Buddhism performed in maintaining harmony and consensus of the society domestically and in promoting cultural interaction and exchange internationally. In modern times, traditional societies have passed away and Buddhism is still gaining its momentum. In fact, Buddhism is rejuvenating in the process of modernization in some Buddhist countries and regions such as Japan, Thailand, and “the Four Little Dragons”. The spirit of Buddhism is becoming accommodated with the spirit of modernity, thus makes development be smooth and balanced and keeps a society be stable and harmonious. Not surprisingly, Buddhism, inaugurated by the Buddha more than two thousand years ago, can even help to comfort today’s lonely average souls and relieve the anomie in post-industrial societies (for example, the work done by D.T. Suzuki and E. Fromm).

As we might have seen, with the evolution of human civilization, more and more people have been further attached to Buddhism rather than detached from it. Buddhism serves not only as a bridge that leads us to enlightenment, salvation and nirvana, but also as a messenger that brings us peace, understanding and development. The vitality of Buddhism lies in its spirit of *maitrī-karuṇā* (compassion), *upekṣā* (equality) and humanization which is one of the ingredients of the *Zeitgeist* indispensable to the contemporary world.



## **CHAPTER 19**

### **PUTTING BUDDHIST IDEAS INTO SOCIAL PRACTICE FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE: THE TRUTH OF THE CONVENTIONAL**

Jamie Hubbard

Although the logic of basic Buddhist teachings not merely allows but more positively demands social awareness, because of the focus on individual realization, political notions such as peace and justice have not often been raised in the tradition. This is discussed in terms of the socialization of the Buddhist practitioner, the origins of the Mahāyāna and the bodhisattva ideal, and the doctrinal emphasis on ultimate truths. In contrast to this the path for the layperson is presented in order to suggest that, although engaged Buddhism has often looked to the ultimate ideals of the Buddhist tradition for understanding its own engagement, attention to the truth of the conventional and its fruits (karma) might provide a more viable base for Buddhist social activism.

#### **1. Introduction**

As I write this, much of the world seems to be in a euphoria of peace, Japanese tourists returning home with pieces of the Berlin Wall as souvenirs, the two Koreas, joining with Pacific ocean nations and Eastern European republics freed from the shackles of foreign rule as the newest nations represented in the United Nations, and the majority of the world feels that not only great military victory was achieved in the Gulf war, but a moral victory and coming together of the world for a common good was attained as well. And, indeed, we should not belittle these amazing events of our time. Yet neither should we forget the continued horror of war, crimes against humanity, genocide, wholesale slaughter of entire species (incredibly, the complete elimination of 4,000 to 6,000 species, “lineages of



ancient beings,” every year<sup>1</sup>), the tens of thousands of children estimated to die every single day of malnutrition-related disease, crippling deficit spending by virtually every nation on earth in place of basic social services, the continued attack on women throughout the world, the universe-wide destruction of the environment through pollution, deforestation, toxic dumping, and nuclear testing, and on and on.

But, I am preaching to the converted. No doubt all of us here are acutely aware of these and other problems, are motivated to do something about it, and further, seek to find the base for our activism within the Buddhist tradition. Perhaps also many of us, confronted or living with the many nightmares of our modern world, are not surprised by the often-horrific results of the drives that seem to rule the modern world. What is surprising, however, is the total devastation and chaos one finds within the traditionally Buddhist cultures, such that some twenty years ago a journalist called Buddhism “a faith in flames.”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, surveying the Buddhist cultures of the world, we are confronted with a litany of continuing or very recent horrors. The communal violence of India and Sri Lanka, so often related to religious ethnicity, the tragic fate of Buddhist socialism in Cambodia and Burma, Buddhist intolerance for Muslims in Thailand, the devastation of Buddhist Tibet, China, and Mongolia, and the scandals that seem to be so common in Japanese and American Buddhist communities all belie romantic notions of the superiority of Buddhist social and political models. In good conscience we cannot say that Buddhism has served modernity well, and, given the almost complete devastation of the Buddhist monastic tradition in the past one-hundred years, we certainly cannot say that modernity has served Buddhism well. I think it is significant that one of the major efforts of engaged Buddhists is to provide educational opportunities for Buddhist monks and nuns (the main area in which I try to lend assistance), including instruction in the dharma!

Although we can complain that this is because modernity is a disease of the West inflicted upon traditional cultures, the fact is that Buddhist cultures have never been the idyllic bastion of the “traditional” that many would have us believe - Buddhist cultures too have had their fair share of human-inflicted disaster, and, as in the West, not infrequently under the banner of religious ideals (do Buddhists in Thailand have the right of conscientious objection to military service?) I think the reason for this is simply that Buddhism has always emphasized the deconstruction of the individual as

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<sup>1</sup> E. O. Wilson, *Scientific American* (September, 1989), cited in Ty Cashman, “Buddhism and The Great Dying,” *Buddhist Peace Fellowship Newsletter* (Spring, 1991): 38.

<sup>2</sup> Jerrold L. Schecter, *New Face of the Buddha: Buddhism and Political Power in Southeast Asia* (London: Gollancz, 1967).



the path to awakening rather than a similar deconstruction of the social or political world.<sup>3</sup>

Let me then begin with an observation perversely contrary to the topic at hand: the way that Buddhism has traditionally attempted to solve human suffering is through the conscious rejection of social ordering, and that it is in that mode that Buddhism has the most to offer the modern world; historically, it is when Buddhism functions a-socially (that is, focusing on the individual) that it has done the best job of enhancing rather than diminishing social justice. There is not time enough to cover all of the issues that are involved in this discussion, but let me set aside some issues from the start. First, I assure you that this is not the naive Weber-esque view that Asian religions in general or Buddhism in particular are world-denying; I am also fully aware of the actual involvement of the traditional saṅgha in most all aspects of local community. In fact, when it comes to Buddhist social involvement, I am rather upbeat about the efforts of the last decade or so. Buddhists everywhere are involved in projects of every sort, from letter-writing campaigns on behalf of jailed Tibetan nuns to day-care centers for Japanese women in the *mizu shōbai* business (bar hostesses and the like) to meditation programs in American prisons, and on and on. Related to this, I take very seriously the notion that every aspect of our existence is rife with political / ideological (social) import (which is, after all, only a statement of *pratītya-samutpāda* with specific political reference). I am also not advocating the (to me) ludicrous view that meditation is actually “doing” something to ease social ills. Rather, I wholeheartedly endorse the emphasis on individual self-realization in the Buddhist tradition, and simply observe that the creation of institutional opportunities for de-ordering the social self is what the Buddhist tradition does best, but when that institution ventures explicitly into the social / political arena, it stumbles more than advances.

## 2. The Impulse to Practice: Breaking with the Social

### 2.1. Renunciation

It is well known that Buddhism is chiefly concerned with salvation, which in turn focuses the tradition on nirvana as defining the “good,” the *summum bonum* to which all proximate ends are aligned. This provides one framework in which the a-social tendencies of the tradition can be discussed. In many ways, the very beginnings of Buddhism are bound to an a-social or individual message. Historically speaking, we should not lose sight of the

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<sup>3</sup> See the *Dalai Lama, a Policy of Kindness : An Anthology of Writings by and about the Dalai Lama*, compiled and edited by Sidney Piburn, in which the Dalai Lama, for example, has often noted that Buddhist inner science is based on actual observation and experimentation, while its “external science” is not.



fact that Pākṣyamuni's movement arose in the context of the *[[rama]½a*, usually understood as a movement away from socially construed religious notions of the *dharma* of the village to individual knowledge (*jñāna*) found in the forest, away from the society. Within the Buddhist tradition, this message is conveyed in stories sure to inculcate the idea that taking up the Buddhist path involves serious breaks with socially accepted norms of behavior. Perhaps the most obvious example of this tension between social and individual responsibility is the story of the Buddha's own decision to leave the princely life of the palace and the opposition of his family. The *Buddhacarita* very movingly describes for us the young prince's growing restiveness and ultimate disenchantment with his royal life. This disenchantment gives rise to an intense wish for an understanding of the "meaning of life" and suffering within the world. At this point he goes to his father, the king, and presents his decision to leave the palace. Parents, anxious to protect their children and transmit to them their own values and religious understandings, easily sympathize with the king's exhortations to his son regarding family and social obligations to protect and nourish those under his protection - after all, the young prince was married and next in line to take up the duties of the kingdom. Serious religious seekers, however, impatient to come to an understanding of the world on their own terms, can equally identify with the prince, who tells his father of an even higher, more pressing duty - a more ultimate aim to fulfill.<sup>4</sup> So strong is his motivation that he disobeys his father's final refusal and departs in the dark of the night, symbolic of both the difficulty of the decision and the strength of resolve needed to carry it forward. This break with society's norms figures to this day in ordination rites, which, as in all such ritual, signify the end of life in one social context and re-birth in another.

This story recounts a scene not too different from that still played out today as daughters and sons announced their intention to leave for India or a Zen monastery. Recently, one of my students asked me to meet her parents to discuss her upcoming trip to India to study Tibetan Buddhism. Her parents were very positive about her trip, but nonetheless had a number of genuine concerns for her safety and so wanted her to join a group or study tour. She refused, having already self-designed her own "personal" agenda, and after a bit of tussle back and forth concluded the conversation by saying,

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<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to note that the *Buddhacarita* (trans. E. H. Johnston, Rpt., New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1978) puts the renunciation of the prince in terms of his desire for *dharma*, the non-Buddhist notion of which is, of course, exactly what the young man was rejecting (his father accordingly calls Siddhartha's intentions "*non-dharma*," (69). "Social ethics" is often given as the best rendering of this non-Buddhist use of *dharma*. So, in order to justify the prince's abandoning of his family, the writers are careful to tell us, "Understand therefore... that my departure from here is connected with *dharma* for the *benefit of the world*." (77) (adapted, emphasis added).



“Well, it doesn’t make any difference what you want - I’ll go if I want!” At the moment it was clear that she was not acting out of any disinterested or lofty spiritual realization, yet I could not but help compare her attitude to that of the young Pākya prince. Today, of course, we applaud the future Buddha’s noble intention, seeing that it was for the benefit of all humanity, the culmination of aeons of practice - but this remains only an after-the-fact judgment. Considering the untold numbers of women and children abandoned everyday in the modern world by men under the guise of “finding themselves” in one fashion or another, I know that, in the same situation, I could no more approve of the young prince’s conduct than did his father.

For any who choose to break with a tradition handed down from past generations there is naturally a sense of violating the social norms, which very awareness serves, ironically, to enhance the importance of the decision.<sup>5</sup> Breaking with what is seen as the stultifying norms of society is a well-known component of the sociology of the religious avocation in both the academic and the religious literature, and the latter in particular often contains warnings that social ostracism may well be the price of following the truth (the gospel of Luke, for example, or the Bodhisattva Sadāparibhūta in the *Lotus Sūtra*). To break with one’s tradition involves a strong and public demonstration of belief and practice. Further, the break often involves an explicit turning from belief in the viability of social and political solutions, as is the case with many Westerners who have “turned East” in the past thirty years. This break with social norms is even more conspicuous if the religious values that a person takes up are not those of the culturally dominant religious matrix of the society in which they live and work. Thus, for example, virtually all non-ethnic Buddhists in the West have broken with their inherited traditions by taking up the teachings and practice of Buddhism. The hue and cry over religious cults, brainwashing, and “de-programming” are a well-known indication of the suspicion with which different religious practices are held in America. Of course, in contemporary America being overtly religious, committing oneself totally and openly to a life dedicated to religious ideals, is not a path that is generally accepted even within the context of socially established churches.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps little has changed in this regard since the time of Prince Siddhārtha.

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<sup>5</sup> This is well-attested in Japan, where many have left their family-centered Buddhist denominations in order to join, as an individual act of choice (the original meaning of “heresy”, one of the many new religious movements).

<sup>6</sup> I have frequently surveyed my students on this subject, and the response is virtually always the same, i.e., they doubt if their parents would approve of their devoting themselves full time to any religious activity, in any denomination or tradition.



## 2.2. The Mahāyāna and the Bodhisattva Ideal

Although the non-Mahāyāna is often said to be focused on the renunciant, isn't the Mahāyāna, the "Great Vehicle," aimed at the broad nexus of society? What about the compassionate desire of the bodhisattva, often mentioned in the context of Buddhist social commitment? Upon investigation, the generally accepted notion that, out of compassion for living beings, the bodhisattva postpones her own enlightenment until all have entered nirvana, thus lingering to aid the world of suffering humanity, turns out to be rather inaccurate, logically, practically and historically. Logically, the idea of all beings mutually postponing Buddhahood until everybody else is enlightened is obviously incoherent (nobody could ever attain enlightenment); it would also render the Buddha selfish for actually having attained enlightenment instead of waiting! Practically speaking, the Mahāyāna follower does strive for the full enlightenment of Buddhahood so as to be most effective in her or his compassionate activity (one example that comes readily to mind is Dharmākara - Amida Buddha - the efficacy of whose vows depends on his attainment of enlightenment just as his enlightenment depends on fulfilling them). With the denial of Pākyamuni's final nirvana (e.g., the *Lotus Sūtra*), the continued compassionate activity of the fully enlightened Buddha is assured even after enlightenment, and there is no need for "postponing" anything. Historically, in terms of the beginnings of the Mahāyāna, contemporary research seems to debunk the notion that it arose from the broad social matrix of the laity; rather the institutional and doctrinal focus of the early Mahāyāna, like the Theravāda today, was the renunciant.<sup>7</sup> In any case, we should also remember that the superior gift of the bodhisattva (*dāna*, the first of the Six Perfections) is dharma-teaching rather than economic aid.

The rejection of the social matrix (family, work and government) by the Buddhist practitioner is of course related first and foremost to the Buddhist goal of enlightenment, and thereby includes as well the rejection of the social goals. Buddhism is not ultimately about *artha* (secular attainments), and the move out of society is primarily a practical rather than a logical denial. Thus the practice of Vimalakīrti can also be upheld as an ideal, and family life affirmed as the locus of practice rather than denied. For those whose equanimity is not equal to Vimalakīrti, however, Buddhism has always recommended severing social ties as the most effective means to the goal, and it has always seen that goal as more important than preservation of society.<sup>8</sup> Rather than attempt to force

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<sup>7</sup> Paul Harrison, "Who Gets to Ride in the Mahāyāna" in *JIAS*, 10.1 (1987); Gregory Shopen's studies on the origins of the Mahāyāna also indicate the need to correct past assessments.

<sup>8</sup> We should also remember that action and its fruits (*kamma* / *phala*) have traditionally been construed as individual rather than group or shared/transferred, as



Buddhism away from that understanding, it is the genius of the Buddhist tradition, to my mind, that it has continuously rejected the tyranny of the social in favor of the liberation of the individual. Thus Nāgārjuna, for example, after instructing the king in a variety of “enlightened” approaches to sovereignty, concludes, “But enlightened rule is difficult, due to the un-enlightenment of the world; so it is better you renounce the world for the sake of true glory.”<sup>9</sup>

### 3. Doctrinal Considerations

#### 3.1. Buddhism and History

The dominant paradigm in religious studies today is thoroughly the historicist one, that is, locating the religious in its historical setting, together with all of the social and political specificity of that setting. It is the same orientation, often Marxist in origin that underpins contemporary Christian social activism from Niebuhr onwards, as it does much of the theoretical deconstruction of gender and other structural biases so common to the

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the very first verses of the *Dhammapada* tells us: “All that we are is the result of what we have thought: we are founded on our thoughts, we are made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage. . . . If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him.” See also Potter, *Karma and Rebirth: Post Classical Developments* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986), 110. Further, inasmuch it is “the destruction of the factor of karma (*kammaniddānasamkhaya*) that leads to *nibbāna*” (Bruce Mathews, “Post-Classical Developments in the Concepts of Karma and Rebirth in Theravāda Buddhism,” in *Karma and Rebirth*, 138, n. 13), we could also resurrect the old argument that Buddhism, like the other Indian traditions of its day, was fundamentally concerned with putting an end to becoming rather than prolonging the process any further, a more fundamental form of anti-social behavior (Obeyesekere, “Rebirth Eschatology and its Transformations,” in *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions*, 148 ff). This insight is well known to Western Buddhism: “If you are trying to attain enlightenment, you are creating and being driven by karma, and you are wasting your time on your black cushion.” Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind* (New York: Weatherhill, 1970), 99.

<sup>9</sup> Robert A. F. Thurman, “Nāgārjuna’s Guidelines for Buddhist Social Action,” in *The Eastern Buddhist*, 16-1 (Spring, 1983): 31; see also Robert A. F. Thurman, “Nāgārjuna’s Guidelines for Buddhist Social Action,” in *The Path of Compassion* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1988), 121. Thurman notes, “More than two thirds of the [*Jewel Garland of Royal*] *Counsels* contain personal instructions on the core insight of individualism, namely subjective and objective selflessnesses. This type of instruction is called the teaching of ‘transcendence’ (*niḥreyasa*), the *summum bonum*.” (122). See also *Nāgārjuna’s Letter to King Gautamiputra*, trans. Ven. Lozang Jamspal, Ven. Nga Wang Samten Chopel, and Peter Della Santina (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1978).



Western academy today. This historicist criticism is largely a product of the post-Enlightenment West, informed as well by a teleological / eschatological orientation and the importance of specific historical revelation to the religious version of that paradigm (exodus, Jesus Christ, Mohammed). The Buddhist tradition, on the other hand, may be said to be either a-historical or possibly even anti-historical. Roger Corless has recently written,

Change, for Buddhism, is a primary characteristic of cyclic existence (*saṃsāra*), and history is just a lot of change. All that we can say about history, Buddhistically, is that as time goes on, we get more of it... [History is] a Western, post-Christian, academic discipline, [which] is non-Buddhist, even anti-Buddhist.<sup>10</sup>

In terms of a-historical tendencies, we need simply to remind ourselves that Buddhist truth, the nature of things (defined as orderliness of causality, *dharmatā*) will remain the same whether the Tathāgatas arise or do not arise.<sup>11</sup> Anti-historical tendencies are also evident if we look at the dominant Buddhist theories of time. We can primarily identify two strands, of which one, the cosmic, deals in terms of *kalpas* as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, and is of such vast scope that humanity is dwarfed entirely, and the other, more specific, which is a theory of decay. Whereas the former case may tend to see any change as change for the worse and thus tend towards the status quo,<sup>12</sup> the latter case, mostly familiar in East Asian traditions of *mofo* (*mappō*), led to a radical shift in the understanding of human potential for any sort of beneficial conduct at the conventional, karmic level and the subsequent rejection of social-temporal distinctions.<sup>13</sup> It should also be noted that both of these views of history, if existentially

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<sup>10</sup> Roger Corless, *The Vision of Buddhism* (New York: Paragon House, 1989), xix-xx.

<sup>11</sup> *The Book of the Kindred Sayings* (London: PTS, 1982), part 2, p. 21.

<sup>12</sup> Jan Nattier, "The Meanings of the Maitreya Myth," in Alan Sponberg and Helen Hardacre, eds., *Maitreya, The Future Buddha* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 27; Jan Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1991): 8-26, 137.

<sup>13</sup> In the modern context, for example, Tanabe Hajime follows the teachings of Shinran and sees evil as "a negative determination of our being itself that lies at the foundation of human existence in general." (*Philosophy as Metanoetics*, 4). "The tenacity of egoity [which] can never be avoided in any act brought about directly by will. This is our radical evil." (*Philosophy as Metanoetics*, 188) The Sect of the Three Stages, on the other hand, focused on the immanence of the Buddha within each living being and so organized an institution of charitable social welfare, which was finally closed by the government amid charges of fraud and stealing by the monks in charge. In either case, however, it is quite clear that the "constitutive evil" is existential rather than historical.



significant, are empirically false and thus hardly a good starting place for the sort of historical awareness demanded by social advocacy. Though the Buddhist deconstruction of the individual self is well-formulated, the same cannot be said of its deconstruction of the historicity of cultural, ethnic, racial or institutional phenomena. For example, it is remarkable that throughout Asia the primary Buddhist response to modernity has been that of nationalism, attempting to unite the people in ancient alignments against Western imperialism, including Shaku Soen's ideological support of imperialist Japan in Manchuria, the "Chinese Buddhist," a warplane paid for by Buddhist temples during the Korean war, and the ethnic nationalism of Buddhist politics in Sri Lanka. For the most part, Buddhism has yet to come to grips with the modern notion of the state as a fictive grouping of peoples within largely artificial boundaries, preferring instead traditional ethnic or tribal models of *rāja-dharma* and *Buddha-dharma*.

### 3.2. Disjunction of the Ultimate

In addition to the pragmatic need for an environment conducive to spiritual practice, the lack of compelling interest in the social is seen in another area that has historically kept the Buddhist tradition, especially in East Asia, from developing the sort of socio-ethical awareness we are today addressing. That is, though the common person in the world of action (*karma*) is motivated by cumulative gain, the ultimate fruit of the Buddhist is often seen as precisely unconditioned, uncreated, and irreducible, or, more positively, always present and therefore never "gained." After all, no matter the questions of old age, sickness and death that initially motivated Siddhārtha as a young prince, Pākyamuni, as the Buddha, did get old, sick and dead. The kind of goal-oriented behavior of society cannot speak to the ultimate concern of enlightenment. Ueda

Yoshifumi, for example, has written convincingly that Buddhism is not essentially concerned with the kind of utility that drove Siddhārtha but eluded Pākyamuni:

Utility value is that which is meaningful for people - that which enriches and enhances human life ... Truth value, in contrast, focuses on the ultimate end, the elemental meaning, of human life ... Buddhism's true significance is lost when it is regarded exclusively from this aspect of utility value ... another common argument centering on utility value is the role of religion in an ethical life ... Buddhism does not neglect the moral life but its primary concern is with the truth value of religion... Whatever is useful for good health, high position and wealth may be considered good, but Buddhism penetrates these desirable goals and forces us to ask:



What is the purpose of life when we have health, position and wealth...  
The essence of Buddhism cannot be grasped in terms of its usefulness.<sup>14</sup>

Surely this was the case with the young prince, who had health, position and wealth, yet in that lifestyle had not vanquished suffering; after enlightenment, though suffering was extinguished, he died. As Ueda indicates, this logic extends beyond personal gain and embraces the social as well, and thus there are many serious practitioners who, with good reason, assert, “My practice has nothing at all to do with social justice, ethics or politics!”

### 3.3. Relativism

A similar emphasis on the ultimate truths over the relative that has long figured in the Buddhist tradition is the attitude towards language and philosophy. Teachings are ultimately seen to be a means to the end (liberation), the pointing finger rather than that which is pointed to, the raft to be abandoned. It is well-known that the Buddha tailored his teachings to his audience. In the later traditions this developed into the idea of *upāya* or skillful means, and it is often stated that all the Buddha’s teachings are skillful means, manifestations of his enlightened compassion uniquely fashioned to resonate with each living being in precisely the manner appropriate for their spiritual development. Thus for many the teachings are given “mere” relative value, value that can only be determined by the individual and her particular needs, devoid of external reference. The validity of the Buddhist tradition is thereby deconstructed, especially delightful for indicating how Buddhism has always preceded Western philosophical developments by millennia. Unless a person is a fully enlightened Buddha with knowledge of the needs and predicting of all living beings, how can they know what is right for somebody else? How can anybody but a Buddha prescribe social remedies?<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ueda Yoshifumi, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: An Approach to its Essence* (adapted from the Japanese by Taitetsu Unno, Los Angeles: Pure Land Publications, 1989), 5-11.

<sup>15</sup> There is great wisdom in the notion that only the enlightened can truly help another. Many of us have no doubt tasted the soured fruits of our own well-intentioned efforts (interference) on the behalf of others as often as the spoiled products of our self-interested efforts. On the other hand, I have little doubt that those with whom I don’t agree with on social and political issues really believe, as do we, that they are working for the best interests of all. It is no wonder that “finding myself” grew out of frustration with social / political solutions.



### 3.4. *Upāya* as Social and Cultural Relativism

It is no wonder, then, that many students of Buddhism, eager to escape the history of a Western colonial past and fed by the post-modern mood of deconstruction and erasure, see in the teaching of *upāya* a doctrine which affirms a kind of religious or philosophical relativism, i.e., “It [any given religious teaching] may be OK for me, but I can’t say anything about what is true for you.” This denial of any notion of relative or conventional value, while comforting in some sense, leads to a form of cultural and religious relativism that precludes any form of propagation of the teachings as reminiscent of Western missionary activity, replete with the negative association of colonialism, or, in a more contemporary idiom, intellectual imperialism. The emphasis on individual realization combined with an antagonistic attitude towards tradition and the doctrine that embodies tradition is well-known, for example, in the Chan school (“If you meet the Buddha, kill him”).<sup>16</sup>

Given the overwhelming emphasis within the tradition on the ultimate fruit of liberation and the concomitant doctrinal ultimacy, it is no wonder that these are the ideas most often broached in the literature of engaged Buddhism. *Prajñā*, the Buddha-nature of all sentient beings, emptiness, radical inter-penetration of all phenomena and the like are usually the concepts sought as the basis for our practice within the world. Negatively, it is said that emptiness deconstructs gender and other discriminations; positively, Buddha-nature affirms the equality and dignity not only of all beings but the natural world as well. I feel that this is a difficult approach for the simple reason that to identify *mahākaruṇā* as the implementation or outflow of *prajñā* is to identify it as the domain of the Buddha, the “outflow” of the pure *dharmadhātu* (*viṣuddha-dharmadhātu-ni yandatva*). To validate or implement practice (applied social ethics) based on wisdom leaves the vast majority of beings with nothing to do, no guidelines for behavior - it is as if the Christian tradition were to say

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<sup>16</sup> We should note that in spite of this rhetoric the Chan tradition is also well-known for its dogged adherence to ritualized tradition, emphasis on lineage and the like. Similarly, the tradition exhibits a double standard in many places regarding the validity of scripture. For example, the Theravāda tradition has long affirmed that “the authoritative teaching, the words of the Buddha as they had been passed down from generation to generation (*pariyatti*), and not practice (*pa ipatti*) formed the basis” of Pāṇinīyāsi’s instruction, and the True Dharma will not disappear so long as the former persists (John Ross Carter, *Dhamma: Western Academic and Sinhalese Buddhist Interpretations* (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1978), 131-132); Jose Cabezon has noted that even in formal Tibetan debate scripture is an oft-resorted to form of proof in spite of the dominant Buddhist rhetoric which rejects scripture as a valid means of cognition (Jose Ignacio Cabezon, “Pāṇinīyāsi: The Question of Scripture as Proof in Mahāyāna Buddhism,” paper read at the 1988 AAR).



“morality is only possible for God.” This is reflected in the phrases like “the politics of enlightenment” and “the politics of *prajñā*,” both of which reflect the priority of wisdom as the necessarily basis of compassion. Two of the favorite stories used to recount the importance and reality of this world are the Ten Ox-herding Pictures, especially the final picture, “Entering the Market With Bliss-Bestowing Hands” and the Chan anecdote to the effect of “before enlightenment, rivers and mountains, during the experience of wisdom no rivers and mountains; after enlightenment simply rivers and mountains.” The task of social activism, of course, is to elaborate practices for beings prior to their experience of wisdom, to save the planet even before the attainment of wisdom. For both myself and others, I am interested in the “politics of the ignorant”; I am quite confident that the enlightened will do just fine.<sup>17</sup>

#### 4. A Conventional Basis for Buddhist Social Involvement

This, of course, is not the entire picture. Buddhism, in spite of its overwhelming (and laudable, in my view) rejection of the process of social ordering is yet simultaneously and inextricably entwined in the social and political matrix of any particular historical period. Further, the Buddhist individual must make decisions about her life within that matrix, and hopefully the practices that aim to individual liberation will provide relevant guidelines for those decisions. Even Nāgārjuna, in the example above, did actually give practical worldly advice to the king. It is my contention that Buddhist teachings do give such guidelines, but in a form that has not been sufficiently emphasized (i.e., the truth of the conventional), and that, without such a basis, those cultures such as Japan and much of the Western world that have moved into the immobility of the deconstructed, death-of-everything phase of post-modernity have no hope whatsoever of finding any basis for positive social action, Buddhist or otherwise. In what follows, then, I will broadly sketch the dominant understanding of lay

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<sup>17</sup> Combined with a disjunctive understanding of utility and truth mentioned above this leads to a particularly paralyzing understanding of Buddhism and society. The erasure of gender and race differences is not conducive to addressing real inequalities born of conventional difference. This problem is receiving significant attention these days, but is beyond the scope of this presentation. See Ōgishi Aiko, Minamoto Junko, and Yamashita Akiko, *Seisabetsu suru Bukkyō* [Buddhism as a Promoter of Gender Discrimination] (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1990); Hakamaya Noriaki, *Hongaku shiso hihan* [Critique of the Idea of Original Enlightenment] (Tokyo: Daizō Shuppan, 1989); *Hihan Bukkyō* [Critical Buddhism] (Tokyo: Daizō Shuppan, 1990); Paul Swanson, “Zen is Not Buddhism - Recent Japanese Critiques of Buddha-nature”, forthcoming; *Sabetsu* [Bias] (Special Issue of *Bukkyō*, 15); Jamie Hubbard, “Tanabe’s Metanoetics and Society: The Failure of Absolutism” in *The Religious Philosophy of Tanabe Hajime, The Metanoetic Imperative* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1990).



practice and then present what I feel to be the basis of the Buddhist person in society: *pratītyasamutpāda*, the discrimination of the phenomena so ordered, and the Buddhist ethical system which derives from this as based on karma.

#### 4.1. Future Gain (*vipāka*)

Basically the model is understood as follows: although *prajñā*, the wisdom or insight which is the key to nirvana and the Buddha's enlightened compassion, is best realized through the practices engaged in by the mendicant, it was seen that not everybody was suited to such a life.<sup>18</sup> For those whose circumstances (economic, social, intellectual, etc.) prohibited the life of a mendicant, there existed other practices which, though not as efficacious as those cultivated by the bhikkhu (but also not necessarily distinct from the practices of the bhikkhu), would nonetheless bring the practitioner favorable consequences (*vipāka*) in the future. It is instructive to note the general practices assigned to the householder and the retribution that attaches to those practices.

Examples of teachings directed to the householder may be found in various parts of the *Nikāya* and *Āgama* literature. The laity are instructed, for example, to observe the *pañca-ṭīla* (restraints against killing, stealing, sexual conduct, lying and alcohol), to develop "confidence" in the Three Jewels, to practice alms-giving (*dāna*) and to understand causality, including the Four Noble Truths, etc.<sup>19</sup> The well-known *Sigālovāda-sutta* is often quoted in relation to the duties of the householder.<sup>20</sup> In this work the Buddha is represented as giving instruction to a layman who has just finished his morning ritual of worshipping the six directions. The Buddha tells him that he should regard his parents, teachers, family, friends, servants and *ṭīla* as the six directions, and proceeds to tell him how to honor those relations so as to gain 'victory' in this world as well as a heavenly rebirth. The *sutta* then sets out four moral precepts (relating to killing, stealing, sexual misconduct and lying), four circumstances leading

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<sup>18</sup> Although the laity could partake to varying degrees in the practices generally enjoined to the renunciant, it was nonetheless recognized that daily occupations were a hindrance: "A householder's work I will also tell you, how a Sravaka is to act to be a good one; for that complete Bhikkhu-dhamma cannot be carried out by one who is taken up by (worldly) occupations." V. Fausboll, trans., *Sutta-nipāta, SBE*, vol. X (Rpt. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1973), 65.

<sup>19</sup> The teachings concerning refuge in the Three Jewels and the various formulations of the four, five, eight, or ten precepts which make up the practice of *ṭīla* are well documented and do not warrant further discussion here. Cf. Etienne Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien* (Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, 1958), 74 ff.

<sup>20</sup> *Dialogues of the Buddha*, Part 3, trans. T. W. and C. A. F. Rhys Davids (London: PTS, 1965).



to bad actions (desire, aversion, delusion and fear), and six opportunities for loss of property. There are many other places in the Pali canon where the Buddha speaks of the joys, delights and security of lawfully attained wealth and fame as well as the virtues of thrift and generosity as a means of attaining wealth and the subsequent need to protect it from those who would harm him (including natural calamities, thieves and even the king!)<sup>21</sup> The emphasis on property and worldly rewards in these passages is noteworthy. However, in spite of the fact that even sophisticated practices such as understanding causality and developing wisdom were said to be part of the domain of the householder, it is well-known that the Buddha's teachings were adjusted to the level of person receiving them and this was particularly so when the recipient was a householder. For example, in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* the Buddha states that the desire to give 'gradual' or 'progressive' teachings (*anupubbikathā*, i.e., teachings which were appropriate to the hearer and could lead him / her to higher truths) was one of the five qualities one should have when instructing the laity.<sup>22</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that one of the most oft-used sayings with regard to the teaching and conversion of the laity involves the Buddha's exposition of a 'graduated' teaching:

Then Yasa, the young man of family ... approached the Lord; having approached, having greeted the Lord, he sat down at a respectful distance. As he was sitting down at a respectful distance, the Lord talked a progressive talk to Yasa, the young man of family, that is to say, talk on giving (*dāna*), talk on moral habit (*sīla*), talk on heaven (*sagga*), he explained the peril, the vanity, the depravity of pleasures of the senses and the advantage in renouncing them.<sup>23</sup>

Only after these teachings, when Yasa's mind was "free from obstacles," did the Buddha teach the Four Noble Truths. It is worth noting that here the "gradual path" refers not to the universal relativism of *upāya* discussed above, but to a pragmatic pedagogy.

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<sup>21</sup> *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, iv, 61-63. See *ibid.*, viii, 54 for a discussion of actions conducive to "the flowing away of amassed wealth." Geshe Darghey at the Tibetan Library and Archives in Dharamsala used to be fond of reminding his students that the reason the Sikhs were so wealthy ("You never see a Sikh beggar, do you?" he would ask) was because of their generosity. See also the *Cakkavattisīhanāda-sutta*, the *Aggaṇṇa-sutta*, and the *Kāśyapa-sutta* for discussions of the economic base of crime and social unrest.

<sup>22</sup> *Pañcaka-nipāta* in *The Book of the Gradual Sayings (Aṅguttara-nikāya)*, III, 183-184.

<sup>23</sup> *Mahavagga*, trans. I. B. Horner (London: Luzac & Company, 1951), 23; Cf. *Vinaya Texts*, Part I, trans. T. W. Rhys Davids and Hermann Oldenberg, *SBE*, Vol. , X III (Rpt., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1974), 104.



#### 4.2. Merit

Although other prescriptions of the layman's path are to be found throughout the canon, the main emphasis seems to have centered around belief in the Three Jewels, the practices of *śīla* and *dāna*, and the rewards generated thereby. These actions are usually referred to as *puñña-kiriya-vatthu*<sup>1/2</sup> or "merit-producing actions." "Merit" (Pali, *puñña*) is a rather ambiguous concept, and while it is of major importance in the lives of practicing Buddhists and always the focus of lay practice, it is not very clearly defined in the early texts, no doubt reflecting a monastic bias. The PTS dictionary defines *puñña* as ". . . merit, meritorious action, virtue. Always represented as foundation and, condition of heavenly rebirth & a future blissful state, the enjoyment (& duration) of which depends on the amount of merit accumulated in a former existence."<sup>24</sup> The fact that it is "always represented as the foundation of heavenly rebirth" means that accumulation of merit was mildly though not necessarily, opposed to the practices designed to take one out of the cycle of birth and death. Thus while the *Itivuttaka* states that the three practices of a monk are *śīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*; the next verse gives *dāna*, *śīla* and *bhāvanā* as the three "merit-producing actions" (*puñña-kiriya-vatthu*<sup>1/2</sup>) which cause favorable rebirth.<sup>25</sup> Further, although both *śīla* and *dāna* were cited as chief among meritorious practices<sup>26</sup> because the formulation of *śīla* is generally in negative terms (i.e., don't kill, don't lie, etc.) the emphasis that there is on the avoidance of de-merits rather than the accumulation of merit. Thus giving or offering was left as the most conspicuous means of gathering merit for the laity.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> PTS's *Pali-English Dictionary* (Surrey: PTS, 1923), Part V, 86.

<sup>25</sup> *Itivuttaka*, *op. cit.*, 154. Although *bhāvanā* is usually rendered "meditation," the translator states that in this context it means "causing to become or grow those good qualities not yet attained." *Itivuttaka*, *ibid.*, note 3. Cf. E. M. Hare, trans., *Aṅguttara-nikāya* (London: Luzac & Co., 1955), vol. 4, 165. Spiro, however, in his study of modern Burmese Buddhism, has rendered *bhāvanā* as "meditation," the meaning given to it today (Spiro, 94); it is interesting to note that he found that those laymen who do engage in meditation, a practice usually left to the monks, are often criticized as being arrogant (Spiro, 96).

<sup>26</sup> That *śīla* and *dāna* came to be the focus of lay practice is well attested to by modern studies of Buddhism in Theravadin countries and the writings of Theravadin masters. Spiro, *op. cit.*; Winston L. King, *In the Hope of Nibbāna* (LaSalle: Open Court, 1964), 54, 139 ff; H. Saddhatissa, *Buddhist Ethics* (New York: George Braziller, 1970), 116 ff; Sunthorn Na-Rangsi, *The Buddhist Concepts of Karma and Rebirth* (Bangkok: Mahāmakut Rajavidyalaya Press, 1976), 231 ff.

<sup>27</sup> In addition to the merit acquired through the practice of *dāna* (implicit in the term *puñña-kiriya-vatthu*<sup>1/2</sup>), the householder also received teachings of the Buddhist truths from the monks. Cf. the *Itivuttaka*, *op. cit.*, 193, *The Book of*



There are many places in the *Nikāyas* that speak of giving and the rewards to be gained thereby. The *Āguttara-nikāya*, for example, enumerates the eight rebirths: the wealthy, the Four Royal devas, devas of the Thirty, Yama devas, Tuṣṭita devas, etc.<sup>28</sup> Other benefits include the “eight yields,” i.e., faith in the Three Jewels and abandoning the five evil actions (killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and drinking).<sup>29</sup> The same collection of texts clearly shows the position of *dāna* with regard to prosperous and happy rebirths in the teaching to Sumanā, in which it speaks of the different rewards accorded disciples alike in faith, virtue and insight but who differ with regard to practice of *dāna*; the person who practices alms-giving surpasses the other in every state (i.e., when reborn a deva, a human, a monk, etc.) except that when they both reach the state of arhat, there is no difference, i.e., *it is within the realm of birth and death* that the benefits of giving are to be realized.<sup>30</sup> Further references to the rewards of giving may be found throughout the canon, especially in texts that were popular among the laity such as the *Jātaka* tales. In spite of the fact that the specifics of the teaching change, the general tenor of the message does not: it is a practice unequalled for gathering merit, which in turn guarantees the prosperity of the future existences.

One other point to note in our discussion of *dāna* is that it was taught that there exists a definite hierarchy of recipients of the act of *dāna*, and the higher the rank, the greater the accumulation of merit. The texts frequently use the phrase “the world’s unsurpassed field of merit” (*puñña-kkhetta*) when referring to monks in general and arhats in particular, again reflecting the “progressive” basis of the path.<sup>31</sup> One text tells of the successfully greater fruits of offering to the once-returner, non-returner, etc., up to the arhats and Buddhas; the greatest fruits come from achieving the thought of impermanence, indicative of the fact that although one might achieve great merit in the realm of *saṁsāra* through the path of *dāna*, of even greater value is the path which leads to nirvana.<sup>32</sup> This institutional relationship

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*Discipline, op. cit.*, vol. V, 206. Although these references are outweighed in number by references to material or heavenly rewards, the buy-sell nature of the transaction remains the same.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 3, 24.

<sup>31</sup> For example, see the *Āguttara-nikāya*, vol. 3, 103, 124, etc. The PTS’s *Pali-English Dictionary* (Surrey: Pali Text Society, 1923), Part V, defines *puñña-kkhetta* as “field of merit, especially of the *Saṅgha* or any holy personalities, doing good (lit., planting seeds of merit) to whom is a source of future compensation to the benefactor. Usually with adjective *anuttara* unsurpassed field of merit.” (87) Spiro has shown that this hierarchy is still quite operative in Burmese Buddhism today (106 ff).

<sup>32</sup> *Āguttara-nikāya*, Vol. 4, 264-265.



between the saṅgha and its lay supporters is very clearly brought out by the terms *upāsaka* and *bhikku*. The former term refers to “one who serves” while the latter term means “one who receives alms”; the contractual arrangement between the monks and the laity was established even in the terms used to refer to them.

Thus also it was never taught that the accumulation of merit, the goal of the laity, would, in and of itself, lead to nirvana. This is so because merit and the fruits of merit are a product of conditions and so, as with all other conditioned states, subject to the law of impermanence. In short, karma, whether good or bad, is still karma and thus ties one to the cycle of birth and rebirth. No matter how noble or heavenly the rebirth, rebirth means birth within the *gatis*, the vicious cycle of saṁsāra.<sup>33</sup> However, it was possible that the future rebirth would lead to the acquisition of circumstances favorable to the renunciation of the life of a householder and thus to the practices which would eventually lead to nirvana. It is, of course, a moot point as to whether the laity had this theoretical construct in mind when they considered the prospect of rebirth as a great king or powerful deva. What is important to note here is the exchange of gifts, material goods, for merit that would in turn bring he who possessed it rewards beyond his dreams. It was basically this doctrine that laid the groundwork for the economic development that is so distinctive a feature of Buddhist history.

Therefore, if the main thrust of the Buddhist tradition is de-construction of the socially ordered constructs of individual self through wisdom, the teachings for those not so engaged were rooted in exactly the expectation of worldly benefit (heavenly reward being “worldly” in this context). Yet today we often seem to assume that society will be able to drop their concerns for worldly benefit and personal gain and switch to such highly vaunted models as wisdom-based compassion, sufficiency or Schumacher-inspired “small is beautiful.” Unfortunately, most Buddhist-based development efforts along these lines seem to fail - the poor would rather sell their land to the Japanese for quick money or join a communist guerrilla unit. On the other hand, there is no question in my mind that it is precisely because the traditional Buddhist denominations in Japan have so completely ignored the realm of this world that the many new religious movements, with an emphasis on health, family harmony, financial success and the like,

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<sup>33</sup> This fact has led Spiro (*op. cit.*, 11- 13) to make a distinction between ‘nibbānic’ Buddhism

(normative soteriological Buddhism) and ‘kammatic’ Buddhism (non-normative soteriological Buddhism). However, as both are sanctioned within the scriptures as religiously valid practices, by his own definition both are equally ‘normative.’ This is obviously true if one considers that practice within Buddhism is more often than not conceived in terms of a path (*mārga*) system. It seems to me that an otherwise excellent discussion is marred by this attempt to categorize it in terms of ‘great tradition and little tradition.’



resonate so well for contemporary Japanese which the Zen and Pure Land traditions are seen as simply family customs which serve primarily for funerary rites. In another context I have discussed the attitude which pervades the conservative reaction of the traditional Buddhist denominations against the new religious movements of this century as “merely interested in worldly benefits,”<sup>34</sup> an assumption which betrays both a transcendent view of the Buddhist tradition. Although a neo-Weberian view might continue to see Asian religions as doctrinally and / or actually world-denying, the fact is that Buddhist doctrine has never denied the world, either metaphysically or institutionally.

Over the years there were significant developments in these ideas, notably the ability to transfer accumulated merit, the elevation of the status of *dāna* to the first of the perfections of the spiritual ideal (bodhisattva) and the accompanying re-evaluation of the importance of merit in his or her path as essential “equipment.”<sup>35</sup> In combination with the socially-oriented teachings of Confucianism, this did lend to Chinese Buddhism an orientation towards social welfare activities that continues to this day, as does the political involvement of the Chinese saṃgha.

## 5. Conclusions

I have argued that because the basic goal of Buddhism is individual self-realization, there is necessarily an a-social tendency throughout the tradition, logically, practically and in historical fact. The creation of institutional opportunities for re-structuring our social selves is a sublime contribution of the Buddhist tradition to society. For those who cannot leave society, however, the tradition presents opportunities that, while based on progression to that individually liberating goal, basically affirm an ethical system of rewards, a profit-motivation. It is in this that I find the best possible approach to the implementation of Buddhist values in the world. However, given the dominant focus on the individual, much more elaboration of this is needed if we are to talk of the Buddhist contribution to social, cultural, economic, ethnic and environmental betterment. Rather than trying to compete with the materialism of the Marxist traditions (an

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<sup>34</sup> Hubbard, “Pre-Modern, Modern, and Post-Modern: Doctrine in the Study of Japanese Buddhism,” in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, forthcoming.

<sup>35</sup> In the Mahāyāna tradition both are considered the “equipment of the bodhisattvas” (*puṣya-saṃbhāra* and *prajñā-saṃbhāra*) and one without the other is never considered full enlightenment. “The equipment of Bodhisattvas is unsurpassable excellences (*puṣya*, merit) and knowledge (*jñāna*); the former serve to make him rise in saṃsāra, the latter to pass through it without being emotionally and intellectually unbalanced. *Mahāyāna sūtrālaṅkāra*, XVIII, 39, quoted in Herbert Guenther, *Philosophy and Psychology in the Abhidharma* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1957), 236.



effort at accommodation that has failed tragically throughout Asia) or implement a Western brand of anti-business liberalism, I think we need to delve much deeper into the bedrock understanding of long-term, mutual benefiting. If this is in the form of “you scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours” self-interest (or, ecologically, “I’ll take care of the eco-system and you give me clean air to breath”) rather than enlightened altruism, than so be it. In line with these observations, I make the following suggestions.

1. *Pay attention to the truth of the conventional, especially prior to the experience of wisdom.* This is a complex subject, but basically I would argue that the truth of the conventional needs to be recognized on its own merits without recourse to ultimate fruits. It is only then that the intense investigations required for the solution of complex problems can begin.
2. *Focus on conditioned arising rather than emptiness.* Although most of us know of the famous equation of these two important ideas in Nāgārjuna, the fact is that (1) they are not equivalents but complements (or necessarily entailed, or some such) and therefore, (2) the attitude they engender is markedly different. Emptiness focuses on what doesn’t exist (all things are “empty” of independent or permanent existence), whereas conditioned arising concentrates on what does exist and how it comes into and passes out of existence (i. e., according to cause and condition). Although typically it is understood that the understanding of emptiness results in the awareness of infinitely conditioned arising (“truly empty, profoundly existent”), I think we would do better to remain focused on the latter as a base for social activism, extending rather our understanding of relation and the related rather than concentrating on what doesn’t exist.
3. *Recognize the power of accurate language and honed reasoning to be, in the end, the only way out of the deadening relativism of the post-modern, “I’m OK, you’re OK” syndrome.* I am not OK, I am ignorant and suffering, and likely you are too. Certainly the world is. Linguistic and intellectual ineffability (“the truth is beyond description or rational comprehension”) is usually nothing more than a sloppy way out for those who cannot or will not face the errors of their thinking. Critical discernment is imperative. Unless you are enlightened, be wary of such easy answers as “non-discrimination,” “non-conceptual” and “non-dual.” The Dalai Lama has often warned that it is better to be mistaken about conventional truths than off course with regard the ultimate.
4. *Turn the penetrating power of the Buddhist deconstruction of individual self onto cultural selves.* While recognizing the need for ethnic, cultural and class self-discovery, we must never forget the



Marxist lesson that we are, in fact, beings led by our social and cultural context, just as the Buddha taught that the ultimate dignity of humankind was that they were nonetheless not thereby trapped. The values that we bring to the engaged Buddhist movement, for example, are just as likely to be cast in terms of our particular historicity as those of the Japanese during the Heian period or WW II. It is comforting, of course, that these happen to be my values as well, but we cannot delude ourselves that we are acting out of a “free expression of the politics of *prajñā*.” The homogeneity of the values in this movement reflects largely the homogeneity of the non-ethnic American saṅgha - white, educated, liberal and middle-class (there is much greater diversity of opinion in the American ethnic Buddhist churches and the NSA). We need to understand our engagement as conditioned rather than pretend it to be the outflow of *prajñā*.

5. *Strive to understand the existentially positive valuation of the entire person in the Buddhist tradition, inclusive of defilements and physical existence.* That is, defilements, ignorance and the like are real in that they have causal efficacy which is daily demonstrated on the physical level. Salvation cannot be seen only in terms of a leap into unmediated True Self, it must include the physical as well, and it must speak to that existence prior to wisdom. This is particularly troublesome in those Buddhist traditions that speak of “inherently pure mind (*prakṛti-pariuddhicitta*),” “adventitious defilements (*āgantukakleṣa*),” and, ergo, non-attainment.
6. *Do not rest content with traditional answers.* This is perhaps one of the most difficult areas, for tradition is of course simultaneously the lineage of enlightenment at the same time as the encrusted trap of the familiar, the status quo. Given the poverty of the Buddhist analysis of the ideological bases of culture, for example, it does not surprise one that the Buddhist attitude toward sexuality and gender is largely based on a model of proprietary relationship, where property ownership provides the model for the description of proper relationship and sexuality alike. The opportunity for broken trust in such a situation is exactly that of the secular world. This must be firmly analyzed and discerned for what it is, and then rejected. Indeed, it seems to me that the most positive directions for social justice in the Buddhist world are coming from the many and varied women’s voices.
7. *Practice dāna of every sort.* Although historically the Chinese saṅgha criticized the notion of primarily giving to a saṅgha grown luxuriant and reversed the direction of *dāna*, today the saṅgha (outside of the West and Japan) is in truly dire straits. Supporting a nun’s education, or the teaching of Pali to a Khmer monk or



nutritional supplies for Tibetan monasteries is an important cause, as without these traditional foci of community entire cultures face destruction.

8. *Be extremely wary of institutional involvement.* Just what does non-establishment and non-interference (the clauses of separation of church and state) really mean for a Buddhist saṅgha? This might seem a question less difficult for Western communities, but it still raises fundamental questions. A subject for another time.

Although it is possibly only the activity of the Buddha that is totally selfless while fully engaged in the activity of social activism, the practice of each individual must also reflect their commitment to that activity at the stage of wisdom they have attained. The compassionate urge which is as much the nature of living beings as is their wisdom nature needs to be recognized and nurtured if the aspiration to liberation of suffering for all sentient beings is to come closer to realization. Whereas true compassion must ultimately be congruous with true wisdom, along the path the recognition of the conventional realities and conventional expressions of compassion must not be ignored.







## CHAPTER 20

### BUDDHISM FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THAI SOCIETY: AN ANALYSIS OF BUDDHADASA'S TEACHINGS

Suwanna Satha-Anand

#### 1. Introduction

One would imagine that, being a stronghold of Buddhism for the past 700 years, Thailand would be a natural arena of public debate on the relationship between Buddhism and social justice. However, upon closer scrutiny, one would see a very different picture. In traditional Thai society, *The Triphum* or *The Three Worlds*, which can practically be called the Bible of Thai society,<sup>1</sup> had offered a cosmological justification for a hierarchical social order, all in Buddhist terms. Buddhist concepts of *bun* and *baap* or *bun* and *karma* (merit-sin, merit-action) had been the cornerstone for any sense of justice in the personal and social order. In this scheme of meaning, the high status of a person in the social hierarchy is an indicator of his or her accumulated merit, while the low status of a person is an indicator of his or her accumulated bad karmas. This cosmology of meanings had served well in an absolute monarchical system wherein the highest point of power centered on the king who is supposed to have accumulated most merits in the realm. However, since the 1932 revolution, Thailand has adopted a democratic form of government with the king as symbolic head of state under the constitution. That political change, together with rapid economic developments in the past three decades, has given rise to a new social condition wherein the traditional Buddhist cosmology is making less and less sense. It is argued that these socio-political changes have given rise to

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<sup>1</sup> It should be stated here that although the Tripitaka should be the “Bible” for the Buddhists, it is perhaps the *Triphum* which carries the most significance for any explanation of Thai life.



the distinct formation of an urban middle class<sup>2</sup> who is quite different from the rural villagers whose worldview had been circumscribed by the traditional cosmology of *The Triphum* and thus its sense of “justice” within a hierarchical mode. It is the contention of this paper to demonstrate that in the modern context Buddhism as taught to the Thai people needs to revitalize its teachings so that it could be more supportive of social justice in the democratic sense. Moreover, democracy in Thai society, which in the past 60 years has been merely a political form of governing, is badly in need of a cultural basis that is more conducive to egalitarianism. This paper will focus on the idea of a modern Buddhist reformist monk, The Venerable Buddhadasa, who, since 1932, has been the foremost Buddhist thinker on doctrinal as well as on social issues for Thai society. He offers new interpretations of key Buddhist concepts that are more congruent with egalitarianism of the people, by the people and for the people. Let us investigate.

## 2. Graphic Image of Buddhist Social Hierarchy

Phraya Anuman Rajadhon, a Siamese sage, presented a graphic image of Buddhism and social hierarchy in one of his celebrated works *Nation, Religion and Culture* in the following.

In general, people all have their different castes, status, roles and beliefs that originate from different sources. In the religions sphere, if each and every one of the people knows well their status, roles and their corresponding duty, it can be said that the religion of their belief will live on and prosper. An analogy with a stūpa should be appropriate here. A stūpa has its base as the foundations, then higher up are the bell, the throne, the spirals and the stūpa bud. The highest point is the dewdrop. Although stūpas all have these different parts, it does not follow that all stūpas are alike. Take for example; they can have different shapes and sizes. A stūpa with great height needs a correspondingly deep and wide base. A stūpa with great height and small base cannot stand secure. A stūpa with only the top parts without a base cannot stand erect. But if a stūpa has only the base without the top parts, it would not be called a stūpa. People in general who are said to uphold the sane religion are also like this. In other words, there needs to be religion of the elite that can be compared to the top of a stūpa and religion of the people which can be compared to the base. When all these different parts exist in unity, religion can live on and prosper.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See a more detailed discussion of contemporary Buddhist scene in Thai society in Suwanna Satha-Anand, “Religious Movements in Contemporary Thailand Buddhist Struggles for Modern Relevance,” in *Asian Survey* (April 1990).

<sup>3</sup> Phraya Anuman Rajadhon, *Nation, Religion and Culture* (Bangkok: Bannakarn Publishing House, 2515), 291-292.



Although it is quite clear from the above passage that the topic under discussion is one of desirable harmonious co-existence between religion of the elite and religion of the people, with each being compared with different parts of a stūpa, it can also be said that this analogy of a stūpa can serve as a graphic image of the Thai social hierarchy. This latter association is particularly justified in the Thai historical context where religious teachings and socio-political explanations often coincide. The two sets of discourse intertwined in traditional society. Using this graphic image of a stūpa (or a pyramid shape) as representing the Thai social word, we can infer the following points.

- 1) Acceptance of status and roles of people from different hierarchical settings are central to the Thai understanding of a social order.
- 2) The concept of unity in the Thai context is not one of relationships between equal units who share the same ideas or operate under the same rule. Unity in this scheme of meaning is rather like something that originates from the same base, hierarchically ordered to the same highest point.
- 3) The center of a net of social relationships is the person who exists at the “dew drop” or at the highest position.<sup>4</sup>

These three implications from the graphic image fit very well with empirical studies carried out by several respected anthropologists who make the following observations, “the point here is that without the recognition of some sort of hierarchy, it would be very difficult, perhaps impossible for the Thai to perceive how social relations can be organized.”<sup>5</sup> Individuals are seen as either higher or lower, younger or older, weaker or stronger, subordinate or superior, senior or junior, richer or poorer, and rarely equal, in relation to one another.<sup>6</sup> In everyday conversation, Thai people normally use kinship terms such as “elder sister,” “younger brother,” “uncle,” “aunt,” “grandpa,” and “grandma,” to address other people who are not related by blood. All these terms reflect higher or lower status of the two parties having the conversation.

This practice of social relations that is essentially hierarchical is not supported merely by keen observations of anthropologists, it has been

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<sup>4</sup> This concept is also expressed in Suwanna Satha-Anand, “Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and the Future of Thai Culture,” in *Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University Journal*, 4-1 (January-April, 1991): 59.

<sup>5</sup> Chai Podisita, “Buddhism and Thai Worldview,” in *Traditional and Changing Thai World View* (Bangkok: Social Research Institute, Chulalongkorn University, 1985), 32.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.



traditionally stipulated in law. A most respected specialist on Thai culture and society, M. R. Akin Rabhibhatara offers an intriguing observation that the first historical evidences of the structure of Thai social hierarchy were the *Royal Decree on Civil and Provincial Rice Field Holders* under the Reign of King Boromtritoknart in the year 1991 - 2091 Buddhist Era. The important point is that since then, there have been several changes and developments on the original Royal Decree. But those changes have been geared towards adjustments to make the existing relationships between people of different classes more appropriate *rather than* changes of the original hierarchical structure.<sup>7</sup>

Several scholars who have carried out researches on the development of the Thai social structure by analyzing royal decrees and different laws have made the following conclusions. Since the Sukhothai Kingdom, the most exalted person in the Thai social structure has been the king who presides at the highest point of the social stūpa. At the lower levels are the royal family members, the court officials, the feudal lords, the serfs and the slaves. This feudal structure designates people to different status within the hierarchy that results in the fact that every man and woman in the society are allocated to exact status according to rules in the feudal system.<sup>8</sup> As time passes by, several positions are added to the traditional system, for example, the positions of *Phra*, *Luang*, and *Khun*. After the 1932 Revolution, this traditional feudal system gradually transforms itself into the present gigantic bureaucratic system, which is, again, essentially hierarchical.<sup>9</sup>

It is only natural that the highest point of the hierarchical system is the most emphasized. This is because, according to Hindu and Buddhist belief, the king is not simply the political leader but he is *both the state and society*.<sup>10</sup> According to this conception, the king is the center of the whole socio-political order, he presides at the highest point, and he is the mechanism of any movement and change. The prosperity or degeneration of the natural as well as the socio-cultural order is all up to his virtue or lack of it. In this sense, the virtues or quality of those who are under his rule or the codes of relationship among those ruled, are of secondary importance.

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<sup>7</sup> M. R. Akin Rabhibhatara, *Thai Society in Rattanakosin Period B.E. 2325-2416* (Bangkok: Foundation for Social and Humanities Text Books Project, 2518), 3-4.

<sup>8</sup> B. J. Terviel, "Formal Structures and Informal Rules: A Historical Perspective on Hierarchy, Bondage and The Patron-Client Relationship," in *Strategies and Structures in Thai Society* (Amsterdam: Anthropological-sociological Center, University of Amsterdam, 1984), 21.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-3.

<sup>10</sup> Sombat Chantornwong & Chaianan Samutawanijja, *Ideas on Politics and Thai Society* (Bangkok: Thai Khadi Research Institute, Thammasat University, 2523), 11.



If the above observations deserve serious consideration, doesn't it follow that under the modern context we are all badly in need of a new cultural orientation that can better serve a more egalitarian spirit? Isn't it time we seriously question the traditional sense of social justice as hierarchically designated? At this crucial point, it should be mentioned that in the same year of the 1932 revolution, there arose in Thai history a Buddhist forest temple in Southern Thailand whose founder Ven. Buddhadasa has paved new ways for the understanding of Thai Buddhism and most important of all, for a new association of Buddhism with democratic social ideals.

### 3. Buddhism as a Cultural Basis for Social Justice

According to a noted Thai scholar, Buddhadasa has been, since 1932, one of the most controversial opinion leaders in Thai society. He has received both high praises as well as negative criticisms.<sup>11</sup> Also, it is not surprising to see that his admirers are mostly progressive intellectuals while people who attack his ideas are those from the most conservative circle within the Buddhist order. Buddhadasa's life itself is a catalyst for reform.

Buddhadasa was born into a rural merchant family in 1906 in Surathani Province, Southern Thailand. Like any other Thai boy, he was ordained at 20 and soon realized his talents in teaching and preaching. Later, he came to Bangkok to sit in the Pali examination held annually in the capital city, only to fail the Grade 4 examination. That event was crucial to his monk career as well as to the modern history of Thai Buddhism because it was then that he decided to go back to his home town and practice dharma in the forest for he said, "A place to practice dharma is most important because we have to study dharma directly from nature."<sup>12</sup> That was the beginning of a lifelong search for the true Buddhist dharma. In May 1932, he founded *The Garden of Liberation (Suan Mokkhapalaram)* in Surathani and over the past 60 years, it has become one of the most important centers for the study and practice of Buddhism in contemporary Thailand. At age 85, he is active and regularly delivers mind-blowing sermons to those who care to listen. In the late 1980s, he received Honorary Doctorates from virtually all major universities in the realm, including the two Buddhist universities in Bangkok. His publications need a whole library to house, and the innovative quality of his works is even more impressive. His works have been translated into several European and Asian languages. He is sometimes called "Nāgārjuna" of Theravāda Buddhism. His teachings cover several major areas including Buddhist Theory of Language, Inter-Religious

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<sup>11</sup> Seri Pongpit, "Dharma and Politics: Buddhada and Thai Society" in *Thammasat University Journal* (March, 2524): 32.

<sup>12</sup> Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, *Ten Years in Suan Moke* (Bangkok: Pacarayasarn, 2527), 15-6.



Dialogues, Zen and Mahāyāna Buddhism and Socio-Political Treatises from Buddhist Perspectives.

However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze his thoughts or to evaluate his reformist role as a whole. I will attempt only to analyze some of his ideas that carry wide-ranging implications for the traditional understanding of the Thai social order and its accompanying sense of social justice.

It should be noted that all the three implications of the graphic image of the Thai social stūpa have been explained by traditional Buddhist concepts of *Chatipob* (life) and *bun-karma* (merit-demerit). It can be argued that these particular Buddhist concepts have been the major cornerstones that support the traditional social hierarchy. The accumulation of innumerable merits in past lives has been the justification for the highest status of the present life of the king. On the other hand, the accumulation of bad karmas in past lives has explained the present lives of sufferings of his royal subjects. This situation cannot be easily remedied for one to make numerous merits in order to create new conditions for better next lives. In this sense, the “present” life assumes the secondary significance as it is fatally conditioned by the weight of the past as well as the future. The traditional social hierarchy with its accompanying cultural justification has been most powerful in preserving the conservative aspects of Thai social life. Everybody is equal in his / her opportunity to better his / her life, the only condition is, one has to wait until one’s next life.

This traditional explanation of life through the concept of *chatipob* is radically re-oriented in Buddhadasa’s bold interpretation of the Buddhist doctrine of *pa iccasamuppāda* (Law of Dependent Origination) that lies at the basis of the traditional understanding of *chatipob*. He offers his analysis.

Now we have an even more serious problem, namely the problem that the law of *pa iccasamuppāda* as it is taught is not faithful to the original Pali scriptures, by which I mean the actual Buddha’s sayings in the *Sutta-pi aka*. The original scriptures said one thing, now people say that it means another thing. In the original Pali scriptures, the law of *pa iccasamuppāda* was meant to be a chain of continuum in which each chain consists of 11 factors. Now, people teach that these 11 factors cover through 3 *chatipobs*, that is, including the past and the future life. *When it is taught in this way, no practice can be effective*. In the original Pali scriptures, these 11 factors work continuously within a moment when passion (*kleḷḷa*) arises in a person. Therefore, it does not need 3 lives to cover this one instant event. It takes less than a lifetime. It takes less than a month or even less than a day. This means that it takes only the wink of an eye for *pa iccasamuppāda* to work one full circle. Sufferings have already arisen. If we teach it according to



the original scriptures, it will be very useful for it is directed towards our daily problems.<sup>13</sup>

He continues,

Now, the loss is enormous. *This is because we lost the freedom to control passion or karma* as they belong to different life time for all the time. This present life becomes a result, we become a result and sitting here becomes a result. But the causes of this result, namely, *karma* and *kleṭṭa*, exist in another life, either in past or in the next. Then *karma* and *kleṭṭa* in this life will take effect in the next life. It is of no use to us. We do not have the freedom to receive the fruits of our action in this very life. We can do nothing that will carry favorable results in this life. If it is explained in this way, creating karma in this life requires waiting for results in the next life. So, what is pleasant about it?"<sup>14</sup>

He then gives an explanation of *chatipob* to cover the present life time as follows:

The words *pob* and *chati* that mean birth or existence in the doctrine of *pa iccasamuppāda* do not mean maternal birth or birth from a mother's womb. It is a spiritual birth arising from false attachment (*upādāna*) that creates a sense of an "ego." That is "birth."<sup>15</sup>

This law of *pa iccasamuppāda* is a very complicated doctrine. Even Buddhaghosa himself pronounced humility when he attempted to explain it.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, it is a gross oversimplification to quote just a few passages from Buddhadasa's writings to make a point on this complicated issue. However, with full awareness of the limitations, I venture to argue that we can see quite clearly his insightful reading of this important doctrine. For him, to explain the process of suffering as covering 3 life spans is simply useless because it deprives us of the freedom to control passion and karma in this very life, which is the most important. His reading of the law of *pa iccasamuppāda* is, in effect, a radical return to the original Buddhist discourse to bear on the present life wherein each individual can verify his / her own experience. The explanation of "*chatipob*" as being real within the wink of an eye surely can give realistic dimension to Buddhist discourse. The time frame of the present life becomes the most important. If Buddhism offers the cessation of suffering, it should be effective within this lifetime as

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<sup>13</sup> Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, *What is Pa iccasamuppāda?* (Bangkok: Dharma-buja Publishing House, 2517), 11-2.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 73-6.



well, not just in the long past or in the far future. Man *does* have the freedom to control his karma and passion. In this way, the traditional concept of accumulation of merits across life times is downplayed.

Apart from Buddhadasa's radical reorientation of the concept of "*chatipob*," let us investigate another set of related key concept of merit or "*bun*" and wholesomeness (*ku//ala*). Here again, he offers a radical reading of these common words in the Thai Buddhist discourse.

I feel that we have committed great mistakes as far as the ideas of *bun* and *ku//ala* are concerned. In other words, we have identified the two words as one, thus creating great perplexity. (The word "*bun*" here indicates that which aims for rebirth, particularly a heavenly rebirth.) The word "*bun*" means to swell, to grow bigger like a balloon. (From now on, I will call it simply "balloon.") But the word "*ku//ala*" means to cut clear as in the case of cutting weeds to clear a land. Please think about it carefully. One word indicates swelling, growing bigger and it is called "*bun*". "*Ku//ala*" indicates cutting and brushing clear. These two words mean just the opposite. When we make them be identical, there will be no way to practice for the effect of clarity or *ku//ala* (wholesomeness). Take the act of giving for example. When a person gives away something or offers alms to the monk with the expectation for return, for love, for praise, or for rebirth in heaven, giving with this kind of motive is called *bun*. That is to say, it makes one's heart swell big with the hope to gain something of more value than one's investment. For example, you give one baht with the hope to buy heaven worth a million baht. This kind of expectation makes your heart swell big so it is like getting a balloon and not a cutting knife at all.<sup>17</sup>

According to Buddhadasa's reading, *bun* as an act of investment for a better future life is not the aim of Buddhism. An act of "merit" which is like putting money in a bank saving account cannot lead one to the state of wholesomeness. *Ku//ala* is an act of cutting clear passions and greed, not for increasing the chances of going to heaven in the next life. In this way, Buddhadasa, again, offers a strong critique of the most popular traditional method to "solve" the problem of sufferings in this life.

We have seen how Buddhadasa offers a critical analysis of the existing practice and understanding of life, merit and demerit, whose acceptance has been used to justify the Thai social hierarchy. These Buddhist concepts have been used to justify the differences in status among the Thai populace. Social justice has been explained in terms of personal merit or demerit. Moreover, the traditional "way-out" of this vicious cycle, namely, the

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<sup>17</sup> Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, *Mountains Obstructing Paths to Buddha Dharma* (Bangkok: Dharma-buja, 2526), 76-8. The word *dana* here is not clear whether it means giving alms to the monk or just giving anything to a person. So, I include both meanings in my translation here.



accumulation of merit through the act of alms giving, is played down by Buddhadasa. The traditional exit is not effective and it only leads to more delusion. If *chatipob* and *bun* karma are understood in this new sense, the theoretical foundation and justification for hierarchically ordered social world should also collapse.

Concerning the virtue of the king who presides at the top of the social stūpa, Buddhadasa has opened up new dimensions in understanding the *Ten Kingly Virtues*. This set of 10 virtues was traditionally an *exclusive* requirement of the king, who is the center of the state as well as the society. Virtues of the king are necessary not only because they provide legitimacy for his absolute power but also because they are the requirements for the whole society to survive. Buddhadasa offers his understanding by first, giving a list of the Ten Kingly Virtues, namely, (1) giving, (2) faithfulness, (3) sacrifice, (4) honesty, (5) gentleness, (6) diligence, (7) non-anger, (8) non-harming, (9) patience and (10) equanimity.<sup>18</sup> Then, he offers a bold suggestion.

*Although these virtues are called “dharma for the king,” the people, the subjects should be able to practice them as well. When these virtues are practiced by the people, opportunities and ease will arise creating a favorable condition wherein the king himself can practice these 10 kingly virtues. When that happens, the 10 kingly virtues will protect the country and the country will be filled with the 10 kingly virtues.*<sup>19</sup>

Buddhadasa is the first Theravāda thinker in Thai history who suggests that it is *the people* who should practice the Ten Kingly Virtues, creating a favorable condition wherein the king can practice them with ease. The fact that Buddhadasa emphasizes the necessity of virtues by the people indicates that he highlights the dharmic importance of the foundation of the stūpa instead of the traditional emphasis on the king on the top. This reorientation is equivalent to putting civil responsibility to the people. It is also an attempt to reject differentiation of virtues between the people and the king. All these have not been emphasized in traditional Thai Buddhist teachings.

#### 4. A Concluding Note

Buddhadasa's redirection of the Buddhist discourse is very radical in the Thai context for there has never been a Buddhist thinker in Thai history who attempts to put the Buddhist dharma first and foremost before the

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<sup>18</sup> This list is taken from M.R. Kukrit Pramoj's article "Thai Monarchy" in *Thai Characteristics* (Bangkok: The Bangkok Bank, 2525), 41.

<sup>19</sup> Buddhadasa Bhikkha, *Following His Royal Highness' Footsteps through the 10 Kingly Virtues* (Bangkok: Project for the Promotion of Following His Royal Highness' Footsteps in Celebration of His Royal Highness' 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday, 2532), 5.



existing power order. His direction of thinking, at the theoretical level, is a challenge to the *status quo* who had been extremely successful in imbuing the political order with cultural and religious aura. It is the democratic force in Thai society which lacks any cultural foundation. Buddhadasa's ideas are at once a critique and a bold proposal for Buddhists to think of a cultural and religious alternative that is more in support of an egalitarian spirit. A new sense of social justice where the question of justice has to be fought within this life; wherein merit is not something that can be "accumulated" to justify one's social status. This new sense of justice is based on the idea that all are equal in a society and share the same moral and civil responsibility. The socio-political order belongs to the people, not the people on the top of the pyramid. This can be the dawn of a new sense of more democratic social justice in Thai society.



## CHAPTER 21

### THE SERMON OF THE BUDDHA TO SPREAD THE DHARMA AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR PEACE

Padmanabh S. Jaini

1. Being a long-time student of Abhidharma, my first response to an invitation to participate in this Seminar on Buddhism and Leadership for Peace, was to see if peace (Skt., *ānti*; Pali, *santi*) was enumerated in the long lists of “dharma” found in that literature. I expected to find such a dharma included in the *saṅskāra-skandha*, together with such wholesome (*kuḷāla*) items as faith (*raddhā*), friendliness (*maitrī*), equanimity (*upekṣā*), and so forth. But somehow the word *ānti* was conspicuously absent there, a fact which seems to imply that “peace” for the Buddhists was not a compounded (*saṅskṛta*) factor, a mere concomitant of mind. Rather it belonged to the supra-mundane (*lokottara*) realm and indeed was employed as a synonym for the uncompounded (*asaṅskṛta*) dharma called Nirvāṇa, the very essence of the Buddha’s enlightenment, the ultimate goal of all aspiring Buddhists.

2. The Peace attained by the Buddha being Unconditioned is, of course, not the objective of those who have gathered here to devise a means of achieving “worldly” peace. But let it not be forgotten that the path that leads to the Buddha’s Peace is itself not Unconditioned, however sublime it may be. That path being conditioned is accessible to all and constitutes the most efficient means through which worldly peace, however transient, can be realized.

3. The word “peace” readily suggests to our mind its opposite, namely, “war,” and with it the complete spectrum of the dreadful events we have witnessed during this century alone: the two world wars, the holocaust, the atom bomb, and the cycles of minor but no less deadly local wars, to mention only a few. And naturally, Buddhists, similar to the followers of



other religions looking up to their scriptures, search their sacred texts for guidance in either containing or altogether preventing the eruption of these catastrophic events. But Buddhist texts seem to have little to offer for a seeker of an easy solution. The Buddhists being atheists cannot invoke a Creator God who, being considered the source of all, might be able to change the course of human actions through benevolent intervention. For the Buddhists everything that exists, namely, the world of sentient beings and the non-sentient forces of the universe, are without a beginning and interact endlessly, for better or for worse, by their own dynamics of interdependent causation. Any notion of a world order, therefore, which would be totally free from wars or other forms of destruction of which human beings are capable, would simply be a pious wish not to be indulged in too often.

4. One should therefore keep in mind that Buddhist texts simply ignore the issues of warfare, while they don't fail to inform us that even the Buddha was unable to prevent the destruction of his clansmen, the Pākṣyans, in a battle with their neighbors over the waters of a river that divided them. On the other hand, these texts never tired of describing the one battle, namely that of the Buddha, on the threshold of his enlightenment, with his ignorance and passions (*anuḥayas*), figuratively described as the triumph over the forces of Mara (*Māra-vijaya*). Later storytellers elaborated this victory of the Great Hero by invoking the Earth Goddess Dhāri<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>ī as a witness to this momentous event to receive, as it were, a share of the Buddha's "peace" for all mankind.

5. Our search for a "Buddhist leadership for Peace" should, therefore, properly start from the initial sermon of the Buddha instructing his first sixty disciples to spread the Dharma (Law). The *Dhammacakka-pavattana-sutta* (Turning of the Wheel of Law), the first sermon of the Buddha delivered in the Deer Park of Isipatana (Saranath) to the group of five monks, was followed by the ordination of fifty-five young men all of whom attained Arhatship within a short time. Tradition has preserved the following memorable words that the Buddha addressed to these sixty Arhats, free now to devote themselves entirely to the service of others:

I, monks, am free of all snares, both those of gods and those of men. And you, monks, are freed from all snares, both those of gods and those of men. Go now, monks, and wander for the welfare and happiness of many, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, welfare and happiness of gods and men ... Monks, teach Dharma which is good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the ending. Explain with the spirit and the letter, a holy life that is completely fulfilled and wholly pure. There are beings with little dust in their eyes, who not hearing Dharma, are decaying, (but)



if they are learners of Dharma, they will grow. And I, monks, will go along to Uruvela, to the Camp Township (*Senānigama*) to teach Dharma.<sup>1</sup>

6. Admittedly, we are not likely ever to meet the kind of Arhats to whom the Buddha addressed this sermon remarkable for its brevity and clarity. But the message transmitted through the line of disciples for mankind at large is that those - whether they be individuals or communities - who wish to follow the path of Peace must at least seek to be free from "the snares of gods and men." And these snares are none other than the most commonplace things of our day-to-day life, namely, the desires for what are considered pleasant sights, sounds, tastes, smells, things to touch, and lastly, ideas which provide entertainment to our restless minds. It is no secret that our thirst for the unlimited accumulation, refinement and consumption of these "pleasant" objects, legitimized in the name of "pursuit of happiness," has driven us to frequent economic warfare and to the brink of ecological disaster as well.

7. Only those who can escape these snares may move freely and become true "wanderers," an apt description of those who follow the Buddha's path. Although primarily used for renouncers, of the household life, the term "wanderer" may still be used to describe laypersons who have set voluntary limits on their accumulation of property and thus live contented with their neighbors. They might appear inactive to those who busy themselves in their interminable activities, but they are not passive, in as much as they strive energetically and mindfully to bring the message of the Buddha's peace to the doors of ordinary men and women.

8. Furthermore, as the Buddha showed by his own sublime example, Buddhist leaders are motivated by "compassion," an expression of friendliness which informs their actions. Ordinary people confuse happiness with the means of pleasures, but Buddhist leaders know how to combine happiness (*sukha*) with welfare (*hita*).

And aware of the unjust inequalities perpetrated by the privileged few (for example, the Brahmanical caste system in his times), the Buddha has explicitly stated that his missionaries should strive further for the benefit of "many" (*bahu-jana-hitāya*), i.e., for the vast majority of a given society, who are likely to be denied both happiness and welfare. The Buddhist concept of welfare, of course, is not limited to providing the essential needs of life, namely, food, shelter, medicine and so forth. Buddhist leaders, in addition, must instruct and educate others by setting themselves as examples in living a life pure and immaculate, free from the taints of attachment and aversion.

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<sup>1</sup> *Vinaya*, tr. I. B. Horner, *Book of Discipline, Mahavagga*, I, 28.



9. No excessive missionary zeal, however, is demanded of the preachers of the Buddha's path. This is evident from the fact that Buddhist missionaries never resorted to the strategies, often violent in nature, historically adopted by several proselytizing religions. This is due to the Buddhists' firm belief that the end does not justify the means: Peace cannot be attained by means contrary to that goal. The Buddha had stated in no uncertain terms that the Dharma his disciples preached must be "good in the beginning, in the middle, and in the ending." Moreover, they need to cultivate only those few whom the Buddha characterized as "those with little dust in their eyes," the true aspirants who are willing to hear and are waiting to walk that path.

10. The canonical story of venerable Puṇḍa beautifully illustrates the qualities of one who would tread as well as teach the path of the Buddha. The venerable Puṇḍa once came to see the Buddha and asked to be taught a "teaching in brief" so that "he might dwell solitary, earnest, ardent and aspiring." Their dialogue, appearing in the *Saṅgutta-nikāya*, may be abbreviated here:

"There are objects, Puñña, cognizable by the eye (and so forth, up to mind and mind-states), objects desirable, pleasant, delightful and dear, passion-fraught, inciting to lust. If a brother be enamored of such, if he welcomes them, persists in clinging to them, so enamored, so persisting and clinging to them, there comes a lure upon him. The arising of the lure, Puñña, is the arising of Suffering (*dukkha*)... If a brother be not enamored of such... thus not persisting in clinging to them, the lure comes to cease. The ceasing of the lure, Puñña, is the ceasing of suffering. So I declare. Now, Puñña, after being instructed by me with this teaching in brief, tell me in what district you will be dwelling."

"There is a district, lord, called Sunaparanta. That is where I shall be dwelling."

"Hotheaded, Puñña, are the men of Sunaparanta. Fierce, Puñña, are the men of Sunaparanta. If the men of Sunaparanta abuse and revile you, Puṇḍa, what will you think?"

"If the men of Sunaparanta abuse and revile me, lord, I shall feel thus of them: 'Kindly indeed are the men of Sunaparanta. Very kindly are the men of Sunaparanta in that they do not smite me a blow with their hands.' That is how it will be with me, then, O Exalted One. That is how it will be with me then, O Happy One."

"But if, Puñña, those men of Sunaparanta, smite you a blow with their hands, how will it be with you then, Puṇḍa?"

"Why in such case, lord, this is how it will be with me: 'Kindly indeed, very kindly are these men of Sunaparanta, in that they do not throw clods of earth at me...'"

"But suppose, Puñña, they throw clods at you. What then?"



“If they do so, lord, I shall think: ‘Kindly indeed, very kindly are these men of Sunaparanta, in that they do not beat me with a stick...’”

“But if they do beat you with a stick, Puñña. What then?”

“Then, lord, I shall think them kindly for not striking me with a sword...”

“But if they do, Puñña, what then?”

“I shall think them kindly, lord, for not slaying me with a sharp sword...”

“But suppose they do so slay you, Puñña.”

“Then, lord, I shall think: ‘There are disciples of that Exalted One who, when tormented by... body and life, have resort to stabbing themselves (contrary to the ordinances of *Vinaya*). Now I have come by a stabbing that I never sought.’ That is how it will be with me, O Exalted One. That is how it will be with me, O Happy One.”

“Well said! Well said, Puñña! Possessed of such self-control as this, you will be able to dwell in the district of the folk of Sunaparanta. So now, Puñña, do what you think it time for.”<sup>2</sup>

The sūtra tells us further that the venerable Puñña wandering on reached the district of Sunaparanta and stayed there for the rainy season. During that time he established in Dharma as many as five hundred devotees and in the same rainy season he became an Arhat and “Passed finally away.”

11. The above words of the Buddha, uttered to test the “self-control” of an ardent disciple, are indeed prophetic of an event that would take place after a lapse of some two thousand five hundred years. It is as if the Buddha had foreseen the tragic event of August 10, 1991 that befell a congregation of Buddhists - consisting of six monks, two novices and one nun - who offering neither provocation nor resistance were shot and killed in a temple near Phoenix (Arizona) by unknown assailants! We refrain from identifying the nationality of the victims or from speculating about the motives of the assailants, for the Buddha would have found these details of no consequence. He would no doubt have words to commend his disciples for so nobly adhering to the path of peace and for setting a shining example of “a holy life that is completely fulfilled.” But more importantly, he would have, in his infinite compassion, wanted to save the assailants by imparting to them that knowledge of Truths, by which they themselves would also find peace.

12. How does a Buddhist achieve the goal of bringing peace to a society that is prone to violence? We are not referring here only to the horrors of warfare but to the very culture of violence that pervades our society, regardless of the differences of religious orientation, standards of education, or of age group. According to a report (which appeared in the

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<sup>2</sup> Translation by F. L. Woodward and Rhys Davids, vol. IV, 1927, 34



*San Francisco Examiner* on Aug. 11<sup>th</sup>, 1991), “a record 23,438 people were murdered in the United States last year, most by guns and more than half by people they knew.” It should not be difficult to gather similar despairing statistics from other nations as well, whether in the East or in the West.

13. As an anonymous observer has acutely noted, “Today the men who shape and influence human consciousness are the terrorists!” The task of a concerned Buddhist must therefore be to educate society, especially the younger generation, who can still be influenced with wholesome thoughts and aspirations. Fortunately, Buddhists have at their disposal large collections of marvelous stories, illustrative of the noble career of a Bodhisattva. These are a most nourishing and engaging means of touching tender hearts and claiming them for such universal virtues as charity, patience, truthfulness, valor and wisdom. These were the stories of the past lives of the Buddha perfecting his bodhisattva career. The heroes of these fables were the fabulous “Bodhisattva” animals such as a monkey stretching its body to serve as a bridge, a rabbit jumping into fire as food for a hermit, a deer offering itself to a butcher to save the life of another deer, or an elephant jumping off a cliff to provide enough meat for a group of starving travelers lost in a forest. There was a time, not too distant in the past, when children in Buddhist countries heard these tales at bedtime from their grandmothers or saw them depicted on the temple walls. Sadly in our urbanized societies, there are no grandmothers living with their grandchildren to narrate these tales or schools interested in introducing them in their curriculum. But these fantastic stories of the ancient past have not lost their stimulating power and could still be a valuable resource for education as well as entertainment, especially in the hands of the media. These noble characters await the imagination of a creative artist, a Buddhist Walt Disney as it were, who can transform them into animated images on the screen to captivate both the young and the young at heart. In addition to being an act of true friendship, creating these images would also serve as effective antidotes to the horrifyingly violent figures to which children are being increasingly exposed in their most formative years.

14. It would indeed be too simplistic to believe that such stories alone could save a civilization ever more threatened by the forces of violence, springing from greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dveṣa*) and ignorance (*moha*), the three roots of evil (*akuḥāla-mūla*) as described in the Abhidharma. Eradication of large-scale violence, often justified in the name of self-interest, should still be possible if there is a realization by all nations of the futility of warfare, especially in the context of the horrors of nuclear weapons. History has fortunately preserved for us a shining example set by at least one great king of ancient India, the Emperor Aśoka (c. 260-232 B.C.). Having fought the most dreadful battle of his imperial career, he not



only repented his action but also publicly renounced the policy of armed confrontation forever. A true Buddhist at heart, Aśoka further proclaimed his adherence to the policy of Dharma-vijaya (Victory by Dharma or Righteousness), and thus paved for himself a most practical Bodhisattva path to realize the Māra-vijaya in future. The royal edict issued by him at the end of the hostilities in the province of Kaliṅga deserves our attention even after the lapse of two millennia:

When he had been consecrated for eight years, the Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi (Aśoka), conquered Kaliṅga. A thousand people were deported, a hundred hundreds and fifty thousand were killed and many times that number perished...

On conquering Kaliṅga, the Beloved of the Gods felt remorse, for, when an independent country is conquered with slaughter, death and deportation of the people, it is extremely grievous to the Beloved of the Gods, and weighs heavily on his mind. What is even more deplorable to the Beloved of the Gods, is that those who dwell there, whether brahmins, Kṣatriyas, or those of other sects, or householders... all suffer violence, murder and separation from their loved ones. This participation of all men in suffering weighs heavily on the mind of the Beloved of the Gods.

The Beloved of the Gods considers victory by Dharma (*Dharmavijaya*) to be the foremost victory... What is obtained by this is victory everywhere... This inscription of Dharma has been engraved so that any sons or great grandsons that I may have should not think of gaining new conquests, and in whatever victories they may gain [they] should be satisfied with patience and light punishment. They should only consider conquest by Dharma to be true conquest, and delight in Dharma should be their whole delight, for this is of value in both this world and the next.<sup>3</sup>

15. Examples, however noble, whether of the Buddha himself or of an ordinary human being like Aśoka, are still only lights to illumine a dark path leading to peace. In the doctrine of the Buddha each individual must tread that path for oneself, and this is achieved only by a constantly mindful reflection on one's acts as taught by the Buddha to his own son, the young venerable Rāhula.

Rāhula, when you come to want to do any deed of body, speech, or thought, you should reflect: Does it conduce to the harm of self, to the harm of others, to the harm of both? Is it wrong, productive of ill, ill in result? If you know that it does conduce to the harm of self, to the harm of

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<sup>3</sup> Romila Thapar, *Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 255-6.



others, or to the harm of both and that it is wrong, then, Rōhula, a deed such as this should not, as far as you are able, be done by you. You should hold back from it; you should confess it and disclose it so as to come to restraint in the future. But should you know, upon reflection, that a deed of body, speech, or thought that you come to want to do does not conduce to the harm of self, to the harm of others or to the harm of both and that it is right, productive of good, good in result, then, Rōhula, a deed such as this is to be done by you. As a result you may go along in joy and delight in training yourself day and night in states that are right.<sup>4</sup>

17. Peace within oneself is a prerequisite for peace in a community at large and it is indeed a vast project not to be accomplished within one lifetime. It will require as careful a planning and as resolute a commitment to pursue it, if not infinitely more, as is now bestowed by even the most technologically advanced nations on the projects of defense, resistance and confrontation. Peace on earth will not be possible, however, unless our commitment itself is infused with the indomitable spirit of a Bodhisattva as expressed in the following pledge:

Sentient beings are numberless  
 I vow to serve them  
 Desires are inexhaustible  
 I vow to put an end to them  
 The Dharmas are boundless  
 I vow to master them  
 The Buddha's Way is unsurpassable  
 I vow to attain it.

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<sup>4</sup> *Majjhima-nikāya*, I, 415; and A. K. Coomaraswamy & I. B. Horner, trans., *The Living Thoughts of the Buddha* (London: Cassell, 1948), 77.



## **CHAPTER 22**

### **BUDDHISM AND PEACE**

Jae-ryong Shim

#### **1. Preliminary Remarks**

1. Buddhism is said to be a religion of peace. When we look at the serene smile of the Buddha as he sits in the main hall of some remote mountain temple, we cannot help but feel that Buddhism is, indeed, a peaceful religion. Yet, it must be something more than the Buddha's peaceful countenance that unites the two concepts of Buddhism and peace. After all, if we look at other statues in Buddhism, for example, those found in Tibetan temples, we are awed by the terrifying appearance of the statues that look like great demons destroying the entire universe.

Man is a strange animal: he often praises peace, but then commits all sorts of violent atrocities in the name of peace. The Goddess of Peace often lies with the God of Destruction. Are man's original instincts directed towards peace or towards destruction? Are these the only two possibilities? At any rate, it would certainly be wrong to reach a conclusion about the peaceful nature of Buddhism through a superficial look at the peaceful countenance of the image of the Buddha. After all, any religions don't openly declare destruction and violence as ideals. So we must look for some particular characteristic of Buddhism, beyond the simple image of the Buddha, if we are to understand why Buddhism is considered to be a peaceful religion.

2. If we explain the term "Buddhism" literally, as referring to the teachings of the historical Buddha, the discussion becomes complicated. In the present paper, we will, therefore, divide our topic along three lines: religious or philosophical Buddhism, cultural Buddhism, and societal or institutional Buddhism.

At the religious or philosophical level, it is easy to say that Buddhism is, at least in its ideals, a peaceful religion. Yet, the picture changes when we consider the actual Buddhist cultures and institutions based on these ideals.



We are suddenly reminded of the fact that wars and persecutions have also occurred in Buddhist countries. Moreover, the tragedy of war and the continual flare-ups of violence are still occurring in Buddhist nations. Whether we look back at the wars between Japan and Korea's soldier monks, or consider the recent holocaust in the Southeast Asian countries of Vietnam and Cambodia, we find it difficult to make a simple connection between Buddhism and peace. Thus, our inquiry must be directed towards more specific considerations. What particular attitudes, practices and training undertaken by Buddhists or by Buddhist organizations contribute to peace? When we consider Buddhist theory and practice, is there a consistent view of peace which runs through Buddhist history and society, at all times and in all places? These questions form the basis for our discussion on peace and Buddhism.

3. In Buddhism, there are several terms denoting peace. "Non-violence" (*ahiṃsā*) is used to describe a specific form of training and practice, whereas *Nirvāṇa* is a normative idealistic concept.

In this paper, we will investigate and compare the fundamental ideas about peace in the different religious and philosophical traditions. In the Buddhist tradition, "non-violence (*ahiṃsā*)" and *Nirvāṇa* are undoubtedly the chief concepts used when discussing peace. Yet, a treatment of these concepts and their import would not be sufficient for a full treatment of the theme of peace in Buddhism. We would still have to somehow account for the discord and hatred arising in the hearts of Buddhists. We would still need to find a way to explain the incidence of violence and war in Buddhist societies.

Can Buddhism, peace, non-violence and war be placed on a continuum? If not, can Buddhism, peace and non-violence be placed in a category separate from violence, peace and other religions? We may be apt to think of Buddhism in this way, but is there a basis for such an idea? Below, we will look for the basis of such a distinction and we will determine whether such a distinction is valid.

A look at the traditional Indian ideas concerning peace will form the background for our discussion (2.1). The practice of non-violence and the concept denoting Buddhism's highest good, *Nirvāṇa*, will be contrasted with the ancient Indian tradition so as to bring out the unique character of the Buddhist position (2.2). We will reflect on the way in which such ideal practices and goals have actually appeared within each era and each society's history and culture (2.3). We will also consider what aspects of Buddhism can be applied within the modern era in order to promote peace and understanding (2.4).

In this way, the first half of this paper will deal with the concept of peace in Buddhism. In the second half, we will look at ways of applying



Buddhism's message of peace to our present situation. I hope to encourage all Buddhists and all others living in the modern world to make a strong commitment to the realization of peace.

## 2. Buddhism and Peace

### 2.1. The Traditional Indian Concept of Righteous War

Let us look at *Bhagavad Gīta*, India's classic on war and love, in order to ascertain the traditional Indian ideas concerning war and peace. The *Bhagavad Gīta* contains the dialogue between a member of the warrior caste named Arjuna and Kṛiṣṇa, a god. It teaches a world-view which has purportedly been the orthodox Indian view for thousands of years. The wisdom of India was originally gathered into one collection in which peace and war were advocated simultaneously. From this, two contradictory teachings appeared. Because of this, even experts have given conflicting explanations of classical Indian thought.<sup>1</sup> Most scholars have misunderstood the teachings of the *Gīta*, and have tended towards rigid explanations emphasizing one extreme or the other. For example, scholars such as Gandhi and Radhakrishnan have insisted that Kṛiṣṇa's strong advocacy of war is purely symbolic. They claim that the *Gīta*'s teaching never supported actual bloodshed or violent means. On the other hand, scholars such as Potter and Jayatilke have gone to the other extreme insisting that the *Gīta*'s words are to be understood in their literal sense: the *Gīta* advocated blind war. Accordingly, the *Gīta*'s philosophy is, in their opinion, a cold-hearted teaching that is to be rejected by all who have any sense of compassion.

In contrast to the above scholars, Professor Upadhyaya believes that if we correctly understand the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gīta*, we can discern a quest for peace that contains a conditional acceptance of war and violence, a qualified acceptance of war much like the medieval Western concept of a just war.<sup>2</sup> What is the actual teaching of the *Bhagavad Gīta* concerning war and peace?

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<sup>1</sup> K. N. Upadhyaya, "The *Bhagavad Gīta* on War and Peace," in the *Philosophy East and West*, 19-2 (April, 1969): A Special Issue on Violence and Non-violence East and West, 159-169.

<sup>2</sup> A war could be justified the so-called just one under some conditions. These conditions, with subsequent development in the Middle Ages, are the following: 1. The cause must be just. 2. The war must be declared and waged by a lawful authority. 3. War must be the only possible means of securing peace. 4. The right means must be employed in the conduct of war (no wanton disregard for life, respect for noncombatants). 5. There must be a reasonable hope of victory. 6. The good probably to be achieved by victory must outweigh the possible evil effects of the war (norm of proportionality). 7. War must be a last resort, only after all peaceful



The *Gīta*'s idea that war is to be carried out only when it is unavoidable is certainly akin to the medieval idea of a just war. However, in India and Europe, these ideas exist within a different context. The metaphysical premises are also different. At this point, let us take a look at the orthodox conception of righteous war (*dharmya yuddha*) as it is found in the *Bhagavad Gīta*.

First of all, we must understand the Indian word translated as "righteous" and "Dharma" is a complicated term that carries a different nuance within each of the philosophical systems of Indian religions. One would logically turn to the masters of Vedānta, a philosophical system that prides itself as the apex of "Hindu" thought, to see how the concept of a righteous war has been understood in the Indian tradition. However, the Vedāntist texts cast little light on the issue. Since the Vedāntists were chiefly concerned with providing a metaphysical doctrine aimed at achieving liberation, they never gave a concrete account of war and peace.

Even Paṇḍita, the great expounder of Vedānta, only gives a superficial treatment of the issue of righteous war when he says that "wars in defense of people" are acceptable. Rāmānuja remains content with a tautological, formal definition of righteous war, as "a war in keeping with justice." Let us now look at the basic structure of the *Gīta*'s idea of a righteous war.

First of all, we must understand that Arjuna, the main character in the *Gīta*, felt that killing was a sin, even if it meant killing someone who had done evil. Therefore, Kṛiṣṇa assured Arjuna that those who violate the law deserve to be killed without a second thought. Kṛiṣṇa gives a concrete description of evil: "committing arson, poisoning others, attacking people with weapons, seizing the goods of others, encroaching on another's property, and taking their women and children. Those who do these six things have committed evil." Kṛiṣṇa tells Arjuna that those who violate the law, whether they be teachers, children, old men or learned brahmins, deserve to be immediately killed. According to Kṛiṣṇa, killing such people is not a sin. If we look at the *Mahābhārata*, the story that forms the background of the *Gīta*, we note that the Kurava clan, which rose up against the Panda clan consisting of Arjuna and his brothers, had committed the six offenses mentioned above. Thus, Arjuna was fighting a righteous war in so far as his opponent had committed evil acts. In this way, righteousness, virtue, peace and war can all be considered compatible.

Secondly, a key element in the *Gīta*'s conception of righteous war is the attitude of the soldier as he goes to battle. The soldier must fight with a detached and dispassionate mind. If one carries out one's duty as a soldier, "Treat alike pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat and then get ready for the battle. Thus you shall not incur sin." (2: 38). Thus "even

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means have been exhausted." Paul T. Jersild and Dale A. Jonson, eds., *Moral Issues and Christian Response* (New York: Holt, Rinehardt and Winston, 1983), 263.



though he slays the whole world, he neither slays nor is he bound.” (18: 17). Such a teaching enables a soldier to be at peace with himself even though he engages in the most vicious sort of murder. Such an attitude is, of course, difficult for the amateur warrior. For this reason, mental cultivation stressing “yoga / karma, yoga throughout one’s activities” becomes important.

Thirdly, it must be kept in mind that the *Gīta* does not consider war and violence to be a normal activity. The *Gīta* claims that war is the means of last resort, to be used only in those extreme cases when all peaceful measures fail, or as a response to those who have committed gross atrocities.

The Western concept of just war is similar to points, one and three mentioned above, but it differs from the second point. In the *Gīta*, it is said that a soldier must perform his duty of killing with a detached cool objectivity. But why must one kill with a peaceful heart? There is certainly a deeper metaphysical basis for such an idea besides the superficial reasons listed above. The writer would like to suggest a fourth reason, not mentioned by Professor Upadhyaya, namely, India’s orthodox metaphysical theory concerning the three levels of existence. This world, where we live our lives, is not the ultimate, eternal, immortal atman or Brahman. The empirical realm where we live is characterized by the constant arising and falling away of phenomena. This ephemeral realm is not completely non-existent like a round square or a rabbit’s horn: nevertheless, it is not a constantly existing reality and thus lacks any ultimate meaning. Just as objects in a dream lack any ultimate significance, our empirical existence has no real meaning. If there is an absolute being who created this realm, it must be his will that man lives in this world. Thus, the meaning of life would have to be found outside of man in an absolute being. This being the case, man’s victories and defeats, his glory and disgrace, his joy and his suffering that arise from the disharmony and inequity separating men are really no problem at all. Killing and death are nothing more than a game in the eyes of an absolute being. However, one who does not recognize the absolute would necessarily have a completely different view of war and peace.

## 2.2. Buddhist Idea of Peace

Those who kill and those who are killed are, however, human beings, they are not mere shadows or phantoms. Buddhism affirms the present world in which people are born, live and die. Buddhism seeks an eternal peace, claiming that there is only one path leading to the realization of such peace. In the Pali version of the *Dhammapada* it is written that, “Hate is not overcome by hate; by love (*mettā*) alone is hate appeased. This is an eternal law.” (Verse 5 of the *Dhammapada*) Buddhist doctrine of peace is contained within this short quote from the Buddhist Canon. According to



the *Gīta*, Arjuna must participate in a war where he is to kill his own relatives. He must do so with a peaceful mind devoid of all feelings of enmity. He must massacre them as if they were mere phantoms. This constitutes his duty as a warrior. He needs not worry about dying since he will be reincarnated. The *Dhammapada*, on the other hand, focuses more on the universality of death. It encourages men to stop all of their disputes. “Some do not know that we must die here. Should there be others who know it to be so, conflicts come to be appeased. (*Dh.* 6)<sup>3</sup> The *Dhammapada* claims that a truly peaceful life, beneficial to both one’s self and others, is a virtuous life based on the middle way, a path that avoids the extremes of both pleasure and pain. “One should not neglect one’s own welfare through excessive altruism. Having understood one’s own welfare, one should be devoted to true welfare.” (166) Thus, the text says that even excessive altruism leads to conflict and it warns against senseless self-sacrifice. At any rate, Buddhism, which is to say, the Buddha’s teachings, tell us that it is possible to live a happy life in this world, and the teachings encourage us to live a life conducive to happiness and joy.

Let us, indeed, live in great happiness, peaceably among those who are in strife. Let us dwell peaceably among people who are in strife. (197)

Let us, indeed, live in great happiness, free from affliction among those who are afflicted. Let us dwell free from affliction among people who are afflicted. (198)

Let us, indeed, live in great happiness, free from anxiety among those who are anxious. Let us dwell free from anxiety among those who are anxious. (199)

We onto whom there is naught, let us, indeed, live in great happiness. Let us, like the radiant deities, subsist on joy. (200)

Those who believe that Buddhism is a pessimistic doctrine should take a close look at the above lines from the *Dhammapada*. Buddhism encourages us to live lives of joy and peace in this world. The reasons underlying the Buddhist view are readily apparent in the passage below:

The victor begets enmity. The vanquished dwells in sorrow. The tranquil person lives happily, abandoning both victory and defeat. (201)

The teachings of the *Gīta* aim to maintain peace through preservation of the world’s order (dharma). This is done in righteous wars where the

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<sup>3</sup> All quotations are from *A Path of Righteousness Dhammapada*, An Introductory Essay, together with the Pali text, English translation and Commentary by David J. Kalupahana (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986).



transgressors of the law are eradicated. In contrast to this, the *Dhammapada* teaches a path where one is to sincerely carry out one's work regardless of suffering, desire and hatred. In such a scheme, any happiness derived from victory or defeat is completely out of the question.

Let us now set aside our comparison of the Buddhist *Dhammapada* and the Hindu *Bhagavad Gīta*. We will now take a look at three aspects of peace in Buddhism. In addition, we will look at the negative factors to be eradicated, conflict and discord and the positive factors to be developed, peace and well-being as practical steps towards the realization of Buddhist ideals.

### 2.2.1. The Buddhist Concept of Peace

Buddhism describes peace within the context of a peaceful society, peaceful human relationships and a peaceful mind.

#### 2.2.1.1. A Peaceful Society

A peaceful society is a society where men live happily together. It is not merely a society where each man knows inner joy but a society where people come to know the joy of living together. According to Buddhism, such a society becomes possible when each individual's virtuous conduct coincides with a proper degree of wealth. One sūtra in the Pali Buddhist Canon, the *Āguttara-nikāya* (A. II.75), states that the society becomes morally upright and economically prosperous when the leader is righteous. The leader's virtue influences his ministers and this influence is then conveyed to the common people. Thus, all the people of the state achieve an upright society. Even nature agrees to help the crops by sending rain at the appropriate time. All the members of society, thus enjoying prosperity and peace under their righteous ruler, maintain the five precepts. The righteous leadership and economic stability of such a society fulfill the essential needs of the people. It also provides them with four additional kinds of joy.

Firstly, the joy of possession is not possible if one hits excessive desires. The more one has, the more one desires. Obviously, this sort of desire is insatiable. When one has an appropriate degree of wealth obtained through proper means, one comes to know the joy of possession.

Secondly, the joy of using one's wealth is the joy of correctly making use of the kind of wealth described above. Possessions only have value as a means to an end; in themselves, they do not provide ultimate happiness. It is said that one is rich to the degree that one spends, not to the degree that one earns. In the same way, the money used towards the happiness of both oneself and others becomes a source of joy. On the other hand, money hoarded becomes a source of misfortune and grief.



Thirdly, the joy of having no debts. One who is not only free from all financial debts but also performs all of one's duties and has no more debts to society, such a person cannot help but be happy.

Fourthly, the joy of having no faults. Only those who lead a righteous and virtuous life experience this joy.

A society with these four types of joy would have absolutely no problems. Just like in the old rustic odes of China, in a law-abiding society, all of the people leave their front gate wide open and the small children sit on their elders' laps. The small kids dance about providing amusement for all, and the people all lead a simple life. The peaceful society envisioned by Buddhism transcends the limited idea of peace as the mere lack of war. Buddhism claims that noble conduct promotes the quality of life and such conduct blooms into smiling flowers that permeate every corner of society.

#### **2.2.1.2. Peaceful Human Relationships**

As we saw above, the relationships between the members of a peaceful society are characterized by four types of moral behavior conducive to happiness. There must be friendliness (*mettā*), sharing in the suffering of others (*karuṇā*), sharing in the joy of others (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekṣā*), a mind that remains unmoved by pleasure and pain. These four mental states are called the "Four Boundless States." They constitute the fundamental attitude relating to Buddhist peace. What would happen if we were to be friendly towards everyone? If, in our words, actions and thoughts, we treated all people like a close friend, would discord and inequality exist? The Buddha's Dharma, as it appears in the *Dhammapada* verses cited above, is not so much a discussion of some esoteric, everlasting truth. On the contrary, it refers to natural, concrete principles that create harmony in human relationships. Let us share in the suffering of our neighbors, the sick, the handicapped, the poor and the anguished. At the same time, let us feel their joy as our own. How can life be only joy or only suffering? As fellow travelers on the road of life, let us develop a mind of equanimity. Let us have the courage to face both the good times and the bad.

If we could only develop one of boundless states, say friendliness, then our society and even the relationships between nations would immediately become peaceful.

#### **2.2.1.3. A Peaceful Heart**

The Buddha Dharma undoubtedly teaches about peace in society and peace between nations. Yet, the essential teachings of the Buddha are chiefly directed towards eternal peace achieved by training the mind of the individual. If a Buddhist disciple is not at peace himself, all of his attempts to cure the ills of his society or nation are ultimately doomed. The Buddhist



disciple must undergo training in accordance with the Eight-fold Path until his mind settles. A person who completes this training will have eliminated, once and for all, the three negative factors that poison consciousness, namely, desire, anger and ignorance. This unshakeable, peaceful mind is called Nirvāṇa (Pali, nibbāna) in Buddhism.

The Buddhist ideal of a peaceful society is a community that cultivates the Buddhist path in order to achieve the ultimate goal of Nirvāṇa. In such a society, each individual member diligently strives for peace. In order to provide a more detailed analysis of peace in Buddhism, we will now take a close look at some of the underlying assumptions within the Buddhist ideal of peace.

Firstly, a peaceful society provides for the basic needs of each member. Secondly, each man is responsible for the protection of the basic human rights of each other member. Thirdly, the ruler and the members of the administration possess dignity and virtue. Fourthly, each member has a job providing him with at least a minimal livelihood. Fifthly, each member of society takes it upon himself to keep at least the five basic precepts. Sixthly, each person, believing in the moral law of cause and effect, does not harm others, but rather helps others to lead a happier, fuller life.

Unfortunately, man rarely conforms to the ideal portrait sketched above. The Buddha observed reality with cool objectivity. He felt that it was essential to provide a pragmatic account of how peace is to be realized.

Hence, he gave a detailed analysis of the factors that hinder peace and provided a methodical plan for the gradual elimination of these factors. If there is any aspect of the Buddha's teachings particularly noteworthy for its contribution to our understanding of peace in society, it is Buddhism's precise analysis of the factors that are antithetical or inconsistent with peace.

### **2.2.2. A Buddhist Analysis of the Factors Inhibiting Peace**

The Buddhist texts unanimously agree that the pursuit of pleasure is the cause of competition and discord between people. Both individuals, in their pursuit of selfish pleasure, and groups, divided by their different ideas, engage in arguments, disputes and even killing.

Buddhism also cites excessive poverty as an environment giving rise to much of society's crime. When the number of the poor persons in a given society reaches its upper limit, theft becomes common, as it is no longer considered to be a shameful act. Thinking of only their own benefit, both thieves and law enforcement resort to the use of weapons. Human life becomes cheap as deception becomes common practice. In the end, the society crumbles. The Buddha said, "There is no ailment which is so difficult to bear as hunger." The proverb, "there are none who would not steal, after three days without food" is a truth in Buddhism, too. If the ruler



cannot provide his people with adequate employment, the crimes of the poor are sure to increase, leading to a state of violence and chaos.

Thirdly, dogmatic clinging to a particular point of view claiming that it alone is correct and all opposing views are wrong produces discord in society. When one attacks others claiming that one's own group has an exclusive monopoly on truth, the conflict often spills over ideological differences and thus leads even to war.

Fourthly, language differences can also cause social conflict particularly in multi-racial, multi-lingual societies. Group conflict often results when one language group insists that its language be the only one taught and used. Disagreement concerning language is particularly unfortunate since language is the means by which men communicate with one another. Language is the bowl holding man's thoughts and emotions. Thus, everyone must use language in order to share his thoughts and to approach truth.

Fifthly, if each member of society supposedly wants to live peacefully together with everyone else, why does social conflict arise so frequently? It seems that the biases of each society or race often arise from the society's habitual reaction to a given physical stimulus. Just as each individual responds differently to the same stimulus, each society has its own unique pattern of response. Thus, disagreement occurs between individuals and societies when they have a different response to a given stimulus. This disagreement, in turn, becomes the seed of conflict.

Sixthly, almost all of the holy men of each religion agree that excessive egotism is the source of conflict. This sentiment is expressed well in the first part of the *Dhammapada*. "He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me and he robbed me. In those who harbor such thoughts, hatred is not appeased." This kind of hatred occurs when one feels that one's ego has been wounded. The anguish involved in this hatred increases in proportion to the degree in which the ego has been encroached upon. A Brahman once approached the Buddha and poured out every form of insult. The Buddha serenely listened to all that the Brahman said and then asked him, "If a friend comes and gives a gift but one does not receive it, to whom does the gift belong?" The Brahman responded, "That's obvious! The friend must take it back with him." The Buddha then said, "In the same way, I choose to not accept the gift of your insults." To one who does not feel that "he abused me," that is, to one who has awakened and has gone beyond the limitations of the ego, conflict and discord cannot exist. In Buddhism, a realization of this principle is the essential road to peace. The factors inhibiting peace, on the other hand, are listed in the *Āṅguttara nikāya*. It is noteworthy that the ten factors listed ultimately refer to some form of egotism.

1-3. He did, does and will do me wrong.



- 4-6. He did, does and will do wrong to my loved ones.
- 7-9. He did, does and will do wrong to my enemies.
- 10. One gets angry without any apparent cause.

Except for the last factor, these factors all involve the hatred and subsequent discord that arise from the ego. The Buddhist teachings on pacifying the mind are actually nothing more than this realization: the source of all conflict ultimately stems from one's false sense of ego.

Lastly, the average person, unable to break free of the ego, lives believing that his mind and body unite to form an individual existence. To be more precise, the average person responds to the world and to other people believing that the sensations, thoughts, habits and consciousness that make up his mind combine with the body. These five conglomerations are thought to constitute a separate individual self. With this false sense of self, or ego, people live their lives constantly colliding with others. Within the prison of the ego, one can only see oneself, and moreover, the only road through which one can know others is by comparison based on the self or by deductive reasoning. It goes without saying that this manner of relating to others is complex and full of problems. Argument and discord exist whenever one is unable to break free of the confines of the ego and engage in authentic communication.

In short, a society will be characterized by conflict to the extent that it encourages a mistaken philosophy of life, that is, the view that the highest human good is to be found in the pursuit of greed and pleasure. In a society based on this false premise, people forfeit their humanity. Like a pack of starving wolves, they take up weapons and commit violent acts of terror. In an attempt to satiate their endless desires, they become slaves to materialism. They indulge in violence and aggression believing that this is man's original character. Buddhists maintain that there is still a Buddha nature buried deep within even the vilest human. The Buddhists endeavor to develop this nature by cultivating a mind full of compassion. Only such a path can promise peace for mankind.

At this point, before we look at a concrete Buddhist approach to peace, we should attempt to explain the occurrence of conflict and war within Buddhist societies throughout the history of Buddhism.

### **2.3. Why do Buddhist Societies have Wars?**

Trevor Ling has researched the dynamic relationship between Buddhism and Buddhist monarchies attempting to resist imperialism. Ling's research is chiefly focused on Southeast Asian countries such as Myanmar and Thailand. He concludes, "There is no correspondence between the state of war between nations and the dominance (or non-existence) of a particular



religious tradition.”<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to note that the traditional religious forms in Southeast Asia have contributed to the remarkably non-aggressive character of individual relationships. Even so, war in these countries is often extremely vicious. The Thai and Burmese tendency to avoid provocative behavior is based on the teachings of the Theravāda Buddhist Canon. In particular, the canonical teachings and the tradition of non-violence have had a profound influence on the ordinary Buddhist people in Southeast Asian countries. People do not directly confront others openly. Yet, it is possible for the people to find an indirect, limited outlet for their aggression in the form of gossip and slander. On the other hand, they might attempt to suppress their aggression. However, this mass of suppressed anger is allowed to burst forth uncontrollably during times of war. This is the explanation offered by some psychologists. This would explain why the armies in Buddhist countries are often timid in the face of danger, but are cruel when victorious. This might even help us understand, at least partially, the recent atrocities of the Khmer Rouge and Pol Pot in Cambodia.

On the other hand, how do Mahāyāna countries justify war? Scholars researching China and Japan all agree that the justification for war in these countries begins with the Mahāyāna ideal of the Bodhisattva. It is felt that a lesser evil is justifiable in getting rid of a greater evil. Therefore, a bodhisattva may transgress the major precept forbidding killing in order to save a greater number of sentient beings. Even if the bodhisattva falls into hell and suffers, he may kill evil men as a skillful means, regardless as to whether this be consistent with the correct way or the middle path. This justification of war using Mahāyāna Buddhism has even been employed recently. The paragraph below, written by a Chinese monk urging his countrymen to participate in the Korean War, appeared in the March 1951 edition of “Modern Buddhism.” One cannot help but wonder if the writer did not go too far in his manipulation of Buddhist ideals for the purposes of propaganda. Is what he said really consistent with the character of Buddhism?

The best way is to enter the Volunteer People’s Army For The Protection of Korea and the Repulsion of American Forces. As an incarnation of Pākyamuni’s compassion, one must stand up for all sentient beings. One must brave all difficulties. In order to save the people, one must truly develop the frame of mind necessary to kill the enemy. Liquidation of the imperialist Americans - the destroyers of peace - is an act of true loyalty to

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<sup>4</sup> *Buddhism, Imperialism and War: Burma and Thailand in Modern History* by Trevor Ling (London: George Allen & Unwin: 1979), 140. “The point to note is this: that the incidence of international warfare bears no positive correlation to the dominance, or absence, of any one religious tradition. The causes of international conflicts are to be found mainly in the realm of material interest... on account of territory, or the rights of subjects or commercial rivalry and so forth.”



the Buddhist doctrine. This path is beyond reproach and certainly leads to merit.<sup>5</sup>

We now must face the fact that there is not, nor ever has been, a Buddhist country able to serve as a perfect model for peace. This being the case, how are we to achieve peace from a Buddhist standpoint or from any standpoint?

#### **2.4. The Buddhist Way to Peace: the Complete Achievement of Non-violence and Non-killing**

In Buddhism, peace is promoted primarily through the practice of non-violence. Such a practice goes beyond the negative injunction against killing. Fully understood within the full context of Buddhism, non-violence refers to an upright lifestyle encompassing the positive practice of the five Buddhist precepts.

With this in mind, let us take another look at the five precepts: (1) Out of respect for the lives of all beings, I will not take life; (2) I will not even take that which is without life, if it is not given to me; (3) I will not follow my bodily desires so as to commit deviant acts; (4) I will not lie; and (5) I will not take any food or drink that makes me heedless. One cannot help feeling that world peace would not be far away if we were only able to voluntarily observe these precepts.

For an example of how the above rules are observed, let us look at the case of a Buddhist who is determined to keep the precept against the taking of life. At the practical level, the following criterion must be met before one can be said to have killed. Firstly, there must be a living being in the form of an animal or a human being. Secondly, one must realize that one's actions have some relationship to a particular living being. Thirdly, one must have the intention to kill. Fourthly, this intention to kill must be translated into an action employing a means sufficient to kill. Fifthly, the action must result in the actual loss of life.

The canonical texts list six methods of taking life: (1) killing with one's own hands; (2) causing another to kill by giving an order; (3) killing by shooting, pelting stones, sticks, etc; (4) killing by digging trenches, etc., and entrapping a being; (5) killing by the powers of occult means; and (6) killing by mantras, or occult sciences.<sup>6</sup>

As can be seen, Buddhism provides a detailed analysis of the various forms of violence. These concrete examples of actual violence, which indicate Buddhism's outright rejection of all forms of killing, help the Buddhist disciple to remain firm in his resolve to keep the precept against

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<sup>5</sup> See my article "Buddhist Studies in Modern China," from the *Dongyang ui jihye wa seon* (Seoul: 1990), 371.

<sup>6</sup> H. Saddhatissa, *Buddhist Ethics* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1970), 89ff.



the taking of life. Any Buddhist that aims to observe the above precepts would have to be a strict vegetarian. Nevertheless, vegetarianism, in itself, does not necessarily make one an advocate of peace. In the same way, strict adherence to the five precepts would probably not bring about world peace. Why is this?

If we reflect for a moment on the patterns of violence in society, we can see that Buddhism's program for peace has certain limitations. According to Professor Johan Galtung, a key figure in the establishment of peace studies, there are three types of violence: direct, structural and cultural. If we look at the detailed Buddhist analysis of violence discussed above, we see a preciseness comparable to that found in the legal language of modern law. To this extent, Buddhism deserves praise for its precise measures aimed at countering the direct manifestations of violence. However, Buddhism does not provide a thorough treatment of indirect or structural violence. How does Buddhism treat the case of a person who unwittingly faces death due to malnutrition? The second Buddhist precept against theft is open to the same criticism. Although Buddhism provides a restriction against directly stealing from an individual, it seems to neglect the process of exploitation that is structurally embedded within the differences between the "haves" and the "have nots." As mentioned above, there is also cultural violence. This refers to cultural forms that promote direct and/or structural violence. Buddhism clearly does not advocate violence. Yet, war and violence still exist in Buddhist countries.

Modern Buddhists are increasingly becoming aware of their shortcomings. They have offered many suggestions on how to promote peace. Most Buddhists accept the conclusions coming out of peace studies. At the same time, they emphasize the need for a particular lifestyle like the one presented in Buddhism. Lily de Silva, for instance, at a meeting between Buddhists and Christians at the Christian Academy in 1989, gave a basic outline of the Buddhist program for peace as follows. We may as well listen carefully to what she recommended.

1. Create public awareness of the positive advantages of reducing the consumption of meat, alcohol and tobacco.
2. Restore feminine dignity by stopping the cheap display of the female anatomy as a sex symbol.
3. Create public awareness of the grave dangers of sex and violence in films, T. V. and other mass media.
4. Work towards the restoration of the traditional sex mores as they are conducive to better health, lasting happiness, emotional security and the nurture of well-adjusted children.
5. Rescue society from the tyranny of advertisement.
6. Discourage single parent families.
7. Work towards creating a better public opinion regarding the rights of the child and the obligations of the parents to provide him with a happy and secure home.



8. Popularize non-violent toys.
9. Design and popularize children's indoor games to inculcate human values in young minds - games such as Ludo, Snakes and Ladders could be suitably revised.
10. Produce children's story-books embodying ethical principles and human values.
11. Popularize themes from religious literature of the world that are relevant to modern times.
12. Explore ways and means of promoting human rights better.
13. Enforce equal payment for equal work without sex discrimination.
14. Show the disadvantage of a material philosophy of life.
15. Popularize the idea of improving the quality of life.
16. Publish biographies of great people whose characters are model.
17. Create public awareness of the value of conservation of nature.
18. Popularize meditation techniques for better mental health to build defenses of peace in the human mind.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Lily de Silva, "Insights from the Teachings of the Buddha for Promoting Justice and Peace in the Modern World," in *Dialogue New Series*, 16-1.2.3 (Jan. – Dec., 1989): 37-58.







## CHAPTER 23

### THE IMPERATIVE OF THE PRACTICE OF *Ahiṁsā* TODAY: A GANDHIAN PERSPECTIVE

N. Radhakrishnan

In the *Praṇāyāga* *hāraṇīyakoṇi* *ad* there is an episode of contemporary importance. Gods, men and demons lived with their father as students of sacred knowledge. On completion of their studies, Gods requested Prajāpati, their father and principal teacher to give them benediction. Prajāpati uttered the word *da* that all the three of them understood in three different ways. The Gods interpreted it as *damayatta*, i.e., an instruction to control themselves. Men took the word to be *datta*, i.e., to give. Men are by nature avaricious and hence should be willing to distribute their wealth according to the best of their ability. Demons thought that they were asked to be compassionate, *dayadhvam*. The demons are generally cruel hence the stress on compassion. If not in the same way, the word *ahiṁsā* has also generated varied and interesting interpretation of what it connotes in modern times.

*Ahiṁsā*, a Sanskrit word originally, has been translated into English by various writers as non-killing, non-injury, non-hatred, harmlessness, in-offensiveness, non-cruelty, non-aggression, tenderness, innocence, goodwill and love.

The Indian stream of philosophical thought is credited six comprehensive philosophies of *ahiṁsā* or non-violence. They are (1) Jainism and (2) Buddhism, representing the ascetic ideas of non-violence. The Vedic idea is brought forward by (3) the *Vedas*, (4) the *Dharmaśāstras* and (5) the *Purāṇas*. The *Dharmaśāstras* and *Purāṇas* include some casual references to the ascetic idea of non-violence. In contemporary thought, (6) Gandhi expounded a comprehensive philosophy of non-violence derived from ascetic sources. It has many new aspects developed



specifically from the pragmatic application of the principle in all spheres of human life. What exactly do we mean by the term *ahiṣā* or Non-violence then?

According to one of the Sanskrit dictionaries, the word *ahiṣā* means (1) abstention from causing pain (*pīṣa*) to others by speech, mind and body, (2) relieving living beings from pain and (3) refraining from causing pain to a living being (*prāṇin*) in the way not enjoined by the *śāstras*. The last of the three meanings contains a reference to the inclusion of Vedic *Hiṣā* into the concept of *ahiṣā*.

The Vedic conception of *ahiṣā* is prevalent in the early *Upaniṣads*, in legal literature, very frequently also in the other *Dharmaśāstras*, *Purāṇas* as a matter of commonplace in the Mīmāṃsā school of thought and even in Paṇini's writings.

Violence is very often described as a fact of life and hence many justify it. Stronger creations live upon weaker ones and hence there is no being in the world who is purely non-violent, the argument goes like this. It may yet be right or wrong, we may reduce it or maintain by moral approval. Vyāsa enumerates 81 types of *hiṣā*, while the Jains had made even more elaborate enumeration, and according to them there are 432 types of *hiṣā*.

Among the motives of violence, the *Gīta* mentions passion (*kāma*), anger (*krodha*), and greed (*lobha*) the triple gate of hell while the Jains have mentioned four evil motives for *hiṣā*: Deceit (*māyā*), greed (*lobha*), pride (*māna*) and anger (*krodha*).

One Jain text, *Puruṣārtha-siddhehyupay* describes *ahiṣā* as having positive concerns. It is the best medicine for the suffering arising from the disease of the world-whirling. It is the benefactor (*hita-kāriṇī*) of all beings. Similar to a good mother non-violence is the canal of nectar in the word-desert.

The Buddhist non-violence is powerful and positive antidote to violence. The motivation of a non-violent action includes compassion, and non-violent action is also by nature positive. For the Buddha non-violence seems to have been mainly mental. The disciples of Buddha took delight in non-violence.

The five great vows (*Mahāvratas*) enjoined upon by the Jains in the case of monks and the small vows (*Anuvratas*) in the case of laymen are: Abstention from violence (*hiṣā*), faults (*aurta*), theft (*steṇa*), sexual indulgent (*abrahma*) and attachment to worldly objects (*parigrahe*). They prescribe separate meditations for each of the five vows.

The Jains have very extensively dealt not only with *ahiṣā* but also with the meanings of *hiṣā*. *Hiṣā* means the hurting of life-principles (*prāṇa-vyāpāropana*) due to the passionate activity (*kāṇḍya-yoga*). Another later Jain text says that *hiṣā* is any injury whatsoever to the



material (*dravya*) or conscious vitalities (*kāya-yoga*). Even when there is injury to life, it cannot be considered *hiṁsā* if the person is not motivated by any kind of passion (*raga*) and carefully follows the code of right conduct.

We may also note that the Buddhist term *avihiṁsā* is defined as that by which another being is not harmed (*navihethyate*). It is an antidote to the mental factor called *vihiṁsā*. Thus it refers to *avihiṁsā* too as a mental factor. In another Sanskrit Buddhist text *avihiṁsā* is defined as compassion (*karuṇā*).

According to Vyāsa the Yogic *ahiṁsā* denotes absence of oppression (*anabhidroha*) towards all living beings (*sarvabhūta*) in all respects (*sarvātha*) and for all times (*sarvāda*). Other moral restraints and moral rules are the roots of *ahiṁsā*. All these promote perfect *ahiṁsā*.

The ascetic conception of *ahiṁsā* differs from the Vedic conception by not including any form of justified violence into the idea of *ahiṁsā*. Nor does it imply that any type of *hiṁsā* is morally good.

Mahātma Gandhi through his experiments added several new layers of meaning for the term *ahiṁsā* or Non-violence. With him it became synonymous with the infinite potentials for ushering in a social order evolved by motivated persons who are seekers of *satya* (truth) and *ahiṁsā* (Non-violence).

It will be of interest here to note the importance Gandhi attached to the practice of *ahiṁsā* in our daily lives. His now famous eleven vows that he insisted on everybody in his ashram to take began with *ahiṁsā*. And interestingly Gandhi got this integrated into a well-defined scheme for concerted action. He did not leave it to the level of an abstract or ideal goal he was striving to achieve. Gandhi himself explained it further:

1. *Ahiṁsā* (non-violence). We may not give up the quest for truth, which alone is, being God himself. *Ahiṁsā* is the means, and truth is the end. Without *ahiṁsā* it is not possible to seek and find truth.
2. *Satya* (Truth). Truth is God. Truth in a much wider sense means truth in thought. Truth in speech and Truth in action. Where there is Truth, there is true knowledge, and where is always bliss (*Ānanda*).
3. *Asteya* (Non-stealing). It is theft to take anything belonging to another without his permission. However, to take or collect something from others for which we have no real need, also amounts to theft.
4. *Brahmacharya* (Chastity). *Brahmacharya* means conduct adapted to the search of Brahma, i.e., truth from this etymological meaning arises the special meaning, viz., controls all the senses. We must entirely forget the incomplete definition of *Brahmacharya*, which restricts itself to the sexual aspect only.



5. *Aparigraha* (Non-possession). Civilization, in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication of wants, but in their deliberate and voluntary reduction. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment and increases the capacity for service.
6. *Sharir-Shram* (Bread Labor). Everyone, whether rich or poor, must perform himself his daily work, which should assume the productive form, i.e., Bread Labor. How can a man, who does not do physical labor, have the right to eat?
7. *Aswad* (Control of the Palate). Control of the palate is very closely connected with the observance of *Brahmacharya*. What we eat should only be to sustain the body and not for self-indulgence.
8. *Abhaya* (Fearlessness). Fearlessness is indispensable to attain ineffable peace and connotes freedom from all external fears - fear of disease, bodily injury and death, of dispossession, of losing one's nearest and dearest, of losing reputation or giving offence and so on.
9. *Sarva Dharma Samabhav* (Tolerance or Equality of All Religions). Tolerance for other faiths imports to us a truer understanding of our own. True knowledge or religion breaks down the barriers between faith and faith. Reverence for other faiths need not blind us to their faults. We must be keenly alive to defects of our own faith also, and try to overcome these defects.
10. *Swadeshi* (Service of the Immediate Neighbor). A votary of *swadeshi* dedicates himself to the service of his immediate neighbors. One who allows oneself to be lured by the "distant scene" but falls in his duty towards his neighbors, violates the principle of *swadeshi*.
11. *Asprishyata Niwaran* (Removal of Untouchability). Untouchability is not apart and parcel of Hinduism. Not only this much, it is a plague.

To Buddha, *ahiṁsā* is a very personal sort of virtue the practice of which could help an individual to lead a fruitful and harmonious life resulting ultimately into a peaceful and harmonious society. Mahātmā Gandhi found in *ahiṁsā* infinite potential in his relentless fight against all kinds of evils. *Ahiṁsā* and *satyagraha* became the two running passions in his numerous and continuous experiments. In the unique fight Gandhi waged without any of the known or conventional weapons but armed with the strength of *ahiṁsā* permeated and tempered with love. Gandhi could succeed in convincing his opponents the genuineness of the causes he was trying to promote. With the emphasis on the purity of means and ends, Gandhi was probably trying to improve the importance content and significance of *ahiṁsā* by giving it a "local colors and habitation," to borrow a phrase from Shakespeare. Never before Gandhi in human history, let us understand, has anyone tried to make *ahiṁsā* a weapon in the hands of the masses to fight their oppressors. Gandhi once said, "*Ahiṁsā* is the highest duty. Even if we cannot practice it in full, we must try to understand and refrain as far as possible from violence." He told the people again and again, "*Ahiṁsā* means infinite love which again means infinite capacity for



suffering.” To Gandhi it is a positive instrument of self-realization through love. Negatively speaking, it is non-killing, non-injury and non-exploitation. It should never be a passive force but should be vibrant and creative. It will not be out of place in this context to examine how Gandhi transformed *ahiṃsā* and *satyagraha* into effective weapons to fight evil. And for this a quick look at his South African days will be useful.

Some 150,000 Indians were settled in South Africa by 1890 and most of them having taken abode in Natal and Transvaal. Discrimination of all sorts was rampant and living conditions were pitiable with the white population resenting the very presence of these Indians and oppressive measures that would force the emigrants to leave the country introduced. It was a systematic campaign of terror, persecution and inhuman treatment to fellow human beings. They were made victims of racial, social and political discrimination and were humiliated with taxes and curtailment of civil rights that were not denied even to slaves elsewhere. This is what Gandhi saw on his arrival in South Africa in 1893.

Gandhi, the young lawyer who was commissioned to argue a case when landed in South Africa was shocked to see this humiliating experience. He wrote in his autobiography:

I observed on the very first day that the Europeans meted out most insulting treatment to the Indians. I was pushed out of the train by the police constable at Maritzburg, and the train having left, was sitting in the waiting room, shivering in the bitter cold. I did not know where my luggage was nor did I dare to inquire of anybody, lest I might be insulted and insulted once again. Doubt took possession of my mind. Late at night I came to the conclusion that to run back to India would be cowardly. I must accomplish what I had undertaken.

What followed in the next two decades of Gandhi’s work in South Africa was a saga of not only sacrifice and dedicated work undertaken with courage, conviction and fortitude but also in this process he learnt that suffering can be used creatively for the emancipation of people other than oneself and the path to achieve this is through the harnessing of the infinite power of *ahiṃsā* and *satyagraha*.

*Satyagraha* was a new weapon hitherto unknown to humanity until Gandhi demonstrated the supreme power of this matchless weapon. Gandhi did not try to define *satyagraha* for he realized that his own understanding of it was ever growing. He compared it to the sun that cannot be adequately described. “I have no text book to consult in time of need, not even, the *Gīta*, which I have called my dictionary,” Gandhi wrote. The word *satyagraha* denotes *satya* (truth) and *graha* (a steadfast grasping). It is again used to denote truth force, soul force, a firm grasp upon truth etc

The manner in which Gandhi went about organizing the dumb Indians of South Africa to whom even basic rights were denied clearly indicates



that he was very clear about what he was trying to achieve. He was convinced even from the early days of the South African experience that passive resistance and *satyagraha* based on *ahiṣā* will become an invincible instrument in the hands of the oppressed and less powerful when they are confronted with powers with superior resources. Gandhi used to say that the brute force can be conquered only by love and not by the display of one's power. The Tolstoy Farm, the Phoenix Settlement, the austerity which characterized his life in the Ashram all indicate his inclinations and conviction that practice is more important than precepts and the core of life is something to be lived rather than to be preached. This basic honesty in Gandhi characterized all what he did later.

The two decades of Gandhi's work in South Africa convinced the white rulers that a man of moral courage who has developed the soul force to the level of high achievement can never be defeated in his onward march to fight evil. Hence they yielded to many of the demands for which Gandhi agitated. If the tax laws could be repealed and other reforms conceded by a ruthless oppressive and cruel regime are any indication of the realization of the power of a new type of political movement based on *ahiṣā*, Gandhi could certainly claim all credit for this unique achievement. It is said that Gandhi had already become a Mahātmā by the time he left South Africa in 1914. Tolstoy rightly predicted that the Non-violent work of Gandhi in South Africa was the one in which the whole life of Christian 'and non-Christian world was bound, one day, to participate. "This man of God left us a heritage, a spiritual force that must in God's time, prevail over arms and armaments and dark doctrines of violence," he wrote. *Ahiṣā* which was sought to be realized as a personal virtue has now become an instrument used along with *satyagraha* to fight evil by arousing people's power.

According to Gandhi there are three forms of *ahiṣā*. *Ahiṣā* that is free from the matters of profit and loss does never yield even in the most critical moments of struggle. This is the *ahiṣā* of the brave. The second is *ahiṣā* accepted in the form of policy in which man uses *ahiṣā* in order to avail himself of an opportunity and becomes violent just after he has done so.

The third form of *ahiṣā* is that which is named *ahiṣā* by mistake. It is the passive resistance of the coward because in the words of Gandhi violence is indicative of cowardice.

There is no room for cowardice in the Gandhian concept of *ahiṣā*, "I would prefer violence to cowardice if a choice is to be made between the two. The doctrine of *ahiṣā* is not for the weak and the coward. It is only for the brave and the strong. The bravest is one who never kills but meets his death voluntarily when threatened to be killed."



Gandhi was aware of difficulties in putting into practice the ideal form of *ahimsa*. Only God can be the perfect non-killer. Imperfection of non-violence is natural for man because in its ideal stage non-violence works in full negativity. Therefore, violence to some extent is unavoidable for all creatures. He said in this context, "An observer of truth and non-violence is likely to indulge in the least violence."

Critics of Gandhi have pointed out that Gandhi's experiments have been mostly confined to his private life and his attempts to practice *ahimsa* in public life have not been very successful. These are only casual remarks and on the contrary the various mass movements Gandhi successfully launched both in South Africa and in India reveal that *ahimsa* was the guiding feature in all the attempts and it may be worth in this context to remember what Romain Rolland wrote about Gandhi's practice of *ahimsa*. There is no hope of success in the terribly increasing dictatorial ways of the nations that dominated the world and have left their relentless traces in the exploitation of millions of men. A great and constant need of the experiment of *ahimsa* is being experienced in public life. The success of *ahimsa* is cock-sure."

Gandhi considered *ahimsa* as one of the world's greatest principles that no power on earth can wipe out. "Thousands like me may die to vindicate the ideal but *ahimsa* will never die. And the gospel of *ahimsa* can be spread only through believers dying for the cause."

Strangely he himself ended his earthly sojourn by becoming a martyr for the cause he was espousing all through his life. Following the vivisection of India into India and Pakistan communal frenzy was mounting and more than two attempts on his life had been made and the Government and his admirers were competing with one another to take appropriate steps to protect the life of Gandhi. They even planned to screen the visitors to Birla House where he was staying and to frisk those who wanted to attend his prayer meetings. Gandhi disapproved of this saying that if he had to die at the hands of an assassin he would welcome it gladly any day. Gandhi said this on the 20<sup>th</sup> day in January 1948. An assassin struck the deadly blow on him when he was on his way to his evening prayer after nine days. Another practitioner of non-violence, Dr. Martin Luther King also fell a victim to fanaticism of a different kind. Does this indicate the failure of *ahimsa* or non-violence? If so many of the great teachers of humanity whose experience was not very dissimilar to that of Gandhi and Martin Luther King could be said to have failed. Let us remember we stand on their shoulders and while we boast about our achievements, let us not forget that all our work is only a continuation or improvement on what our predecessors have done earlier. It may be remembered that Gandhi's views and practice of *ahimsa* were considered to be outlandish and were said to be due to the Western influence on him. In this context he said,



I have nothing to him ashamed of if my views on *ahiṁsā* are the result of my Western Education. I have never tabooed all Western ideas, nor am I prepared to anathematize everything that comes from the West as inherently evil. I have learnt much from the West and I should not be surprised to find that I had learnt something about *ahiṁsā* too from the West. I am not concerned what ideas of mine are the results of my foreign contacts. It is enough for me to know that my views on *ahiṁsā* have now become part and parcel of my being.

Can *ahiṁsā* and *satyagraha* be moral equivalents to wars and other conflicts that corrode human survival? It is claimed by both Western and Indian Scholars that *ahiṁsā* and *satyagraha* can be resorted to any situation involving injustice that in some situations of this kind armed resistance is impossible and hence *satyagraha* and *ahiṁsā* are better adapted than armed resistance to the role of ultimate instrument of justice. This assertion is partially ambiguous.

As Horsbough said, the prospects of non-violence in the sphere of international conflict may be brighter than is commonly supposed in spite of our continued belief in armed force. As Gandhi demonstrated through his work, a conscientious effort to make *ahiṁsā* a way of life and not to keep it as a creed is the need of the hour, "Man either progresses towards *ahiṁsā*, or rushes to his doom", Gandhi said. Analyzed against the background of all what the great teachers of humanity and votaries of *ahiṁsā* did, Gandhi's contribution to the cause is second to none. An incredible optimist that he was, Gandhi believed in the essential goodness, of all. He said, "one step enough for me."



## CHAPTER 24

### BUDDHIST ETHICS AND A NEW MORAL ORDER

Thich Minh Chau

Today, our world is now most concerned about the findings of a new moral order, likely to save humanity from a war of extinction. We are also greatly worried over our present ecological crisis that may threaten to throw our planet into an abyss of continuous calamities such as earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruptions, avalanches, epidemics and incurable diseases. Many of us are actually engaged in fighting against social evils and moral degradations such as drug addiction, juvenile delinquency, prostitution, mental disorders, etc. Evils that drain away our moral stability threaten our personal happiness and disrupt our familial tradition.

We do not have the ambition to introduce any magic solution to such human and social worries. We would rather advocate Buddhist ethics actually expressed in Lord Buddha's teachings and truthfully reveal His noble vow of saving sentient beings from sufferings and unhappiness. Let us try first to understand the definition of Buddhist Ethics in order to tally with His dedication to relieve people from suffering. We shall stress the close relationship between Buddhist ethics and man's happiness, rather inseparable in His noble teachings. Finally, we shall take up some applications of these Buddhist ethics in everyday life of the individuals, of the society, repeatedly mentioned of the Lord Buddha's teachings.

When the Lord Buddha said, "Bhikkhus, in the past as well as in the present, I have preached only the sufferings (*dukkha*) and the cessation of sufferings."<sup>1</sup> He asserted that the sole purpose of His teachings is aimed at helping human beings to know suffering and the cessation of sufferings throughout 45 years of His preaching career. In His first sermon preached in the Deer Park, He declared:

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<sup>1</sup> *M.*, I, 140.



This is suffering, this suffering should be known and this suffering has been known. This is the cause of suffering, this cause of suffering should be eradicated and this cause of suffering has been eradicated. This is the cessation of suffering, this cessation of suffering should be realized and this cessation of suffering has been realized. This is the way that leads to the cessation of suffering, this way that leads to the cessation of suffering should be practiced and this way that leads to the cessation of suffering has been practiced.”<sup>2</sup>

What’s more, He advised His homeless disciples to go forth, “For the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the advantage, for the welfare and for the happiness of deities and human beings.”<sup>3</sup> In His teachings for his religious disciples, He strongly emphasized that a life of virtue is a life of happiness. A Bhikkhu who has accomplished the following 5 practices will live in happiness here now, without any worry, without any sorrow and without any anxiety. After his death, he will enter a good afterlife. What are the five? The monk has faith, shame, fear, diligence and wisdom.<sup>4</sup> Another His teaching centers round the relationship between virtue and happiness for oneself and for others,

A Bhikkhu who has accomplished the following five practices will bring happiness to himself and to others. What are the five? The Bhikkhu leads a life of virtue and encourages others to do the same. He practices meditation and encourages others to practice it. He develops wisdom and encourages others to develop it. He achieves liberation and encourages others to achieve it. He realized the knowledge that he has been liberated and encourages others to realize it. With these five practices, the Bhikkhu brings happiness to himself and to others.<sup>5</sup>

To the Lord Buddha, a life of virtue is a life of happiness and a life of happiness is a life of virtue. He always taught His disciples to observe the precepts, leading a life of virtue that ensures happiness for themselves. The Lord Buddha advises His lay people to observe the five precepts, to practice the ten merits so that here now they may be free from mental sufferings and mental) anguishes and when dying, they may have a unworried mind. After death, they may be born into the realm of happiness and the world of deities. A sutta says:

“The wise and the ignorant”<sup>6</sup> mention that a person who has demeritorious thoughts, words and actions here now feels three kinds of sufferings and anxieties: When seeing people gathering and discussing, he

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<sup>2</sup> S., V, 420.

<sup>3</sup> S., I, 105.

<sup>4</sup> A., II, 3.

<sup>5</sup> A., III, 14.

<sup>6</sup> M., III, 338.



is afraid that they are discussing and criticizing his own de-meritorious actions. When seeing a person being persecuted by his crimes, he becomes frightened that sooner or later he will also be punished by his misdeeds. He is always obsessed by his de-meritorious actions, just as the land is overshadowed and over-hanged by the shadow of high mountain ranges late in the afternoon.<sup>7</sup>

There are five dangers to a householder who does not observe the five precepts. His wealth will be diminished due to his wastefulness and extravagant way of living. He gains a bad reputation. His mind is frightened and bewildered when he enters any congregation. His mind is deranged when he is dying. After death, he will be born into the hell, the world of sorrows and sufferings. In contrast, a householder who observes the five precepts well, leading a virtuous life, will reap the following five advantages: (1) He becomes wealthy because he does not waste his money. (2) He enjoys good reputation. (3) He enters any congregation with his mind free from fear. (4) When dying, his mind is not deranged. (5) After death, he will be born into the world of deities and men.<sup>8</sup>

With the above quotations we can draw the conclusion that Buddhist ethics is a way of life leading to happiness here now and hereafter. This is a way of life, not a moral lesson to be applied mechanically and passively. Such a way of life can be accomplished through practice, not through praying or begging for. Only through practice may the practitioner enjoy happiness right now in this very life that may be seen and known, not in any world remote and imaginary.

If Buddhist ethics is a way of life leading to happiness, it is also one that praises human dignity, affirming that a man is capable of leading a noble life of moral happiness. The Lord Buddha's life represents a living example of how a man, through self-reliance sought for truth, undergoing austerities, practiced meditation and attained enlightenment. Thus, He searched for truth up to His liberation, testifies in a most eloquent manner that with the body and energy of a man, with mindfulness of a man, with wisdom of a man and without soliciting the help of any supernatural power, He had reached supreme Brahmacariya life, attained supreme liberation and realized supreme Nibbāna. He proved that not too much sufferings in Niraya hell, not too much joy in Heaven, only with the body of a man. He knows sufferings through wisdom so as to transcend sufferings. He knows happiness through wisdom so as to transcend heavenly happiness. Finally He realized the highest bliss becoming the Enlightened One.

Buddhist Ethics is a way of life that highlights the unique position of a man and testifies that a man has the ability to attain the highest emancipation if he has enough energy and exertion of a man.

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<sup>7</sup> *M.*, III, 163.

<sup>8</sup> *D.*, III, 86.



In addition, Buddhist Ethics is a way of life that eradicates the wicked and practices the good, as stated in many Buddhas' teachings:

Not to do any evil,  
To perform what is good,  
To keep one's own heart pure,  
These are the teachings of the Lord Buddhas.<sup>9</sup>

Better not to do evil deeds,  
Evil deeds bring up torment after wards  
Better to perform good deeds,  
Having done so, there will be no torment.<sup>10</sup>

The various practices taught by the Lord Buddha are ways and means to abolish the de-meritorious and realize the meritorious. Thus meditation aims at destroying five hindrances such as (1) greed, (2) anger, (3) slothfulness and torpor, (4) worry and restlessness and (5) skeptical doubt and at replacing them by (1) directed thoughts, (2) sustained thoughts, (3) joy, (4) happiness and (5) one-pointed-ness. To attain Arhatship, one should abolish the three cankers of sensuality, existence and ignorance. Ten fetters should be done away with (1) personality belief, (2) skeptical doubt, (3) clinging to mere rules and ceremonies, (4) sensuous craving, (5) ill will, (6) craving for fine material existence, (7) craving for immaterial existence, (8) conceit, (9) restlessness and (10) ignorance. The seven dormant tendencies should be stamped out with (1) sensuous greed, (2) grudge, (3) speculative opinion, (4) skeptical doubt, (5) conceit, (6) craving for continued existence and (7) ignorance. All these hindrances, fetters, cankers and dormant tendencies are considered as impurities of the mind to be abolished and be replaced by their meritorious counterparts.

*Viriya* means diligence to prevent the unborn unwholesome dhammas from being born, to eradicate the already born unwholesome dhammas. *Viriya* means diligence to help the unborn wholesome dhammas to be born, and the already born wholesome dhammas to be developed. The Lord Buddha again helps us distinguish what are the bad dhammas and what are the good dhammas as taught to Vacchagota:

Greed, anger and ignorance are bad. Generosity, love and wisdom are good. Killing, stealing, sensual indulgence, telling lies, speaking double ways, speaking ill, speaking purposelessly, greed, anger and ignorance are bad. Not killing, not stealing, free from sensual indulgence, not telling lies, not speaking double ways, not speaking ill, speaking with a purpose, generosity, love and wisdom are good.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Dhp.*, 183.

<sup>10</sup> *Dhp.*, 314.

<sup>11</sup> *M.*, II, 489.



The Lord Buddha divided thoughts into two kinds. Greedy, angry and harmful thoughts lead to self-harm, to harm of others, to harm of both to the destruction of wisdom and to partake to worry and anxiety. They are wicked thoughts. No greedy, no angry and harmless thoughts lead to no harm to oneself, no harm to others, no harm to both, no destruction of wisdom and no worry and anxiety. These are good thoughts. Why is there such a distinction? The Lord Buddha explained, "Because I have recognized the harmfulness, the degradation, the impurity of the wicked thoughts, the liberation, the advantage and the purity of the good thoughts."<sup>12</sup>

The Lord Buddha used a very beautiful image to express differences between the wicked and the good thoughts: "It is far indeed between the earth and the sky! It is far indeed between this shore and the other shore of an ocean! It is far indeed from the place where the sun rises to the place where it sets! But farther and much farther are distances between the wicked and the good!"

A striking feature of Buddhist ethics is its reliance on the doctrine of cause and effect that influences a person's deeds, whether they are good or wicked. "Karma" in the Lord Buddha's definition derives from the verb "*Karoti*" meaning "an act, an intentional act (*cetanā*)." The doer is well aware of his act. Without the doer's intention, that act is not "Karma." Therefore the Lord Buddha taught that man is the master of his Kamma and also its heir. A person cannot avoid bearing the result of his acts. In other words, he is responsible for his acts and his life in the present as well as in the past. Man only has to take the responsibility of his own happiness or unhappiness.

By oneself, evil deed is done.  
By oneself, one is defiled.  
By oneself, evil deed is not done.  
By oneself, one becomes purified.  
Purity and impurity are done by oneself.  
No one can purify another.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, intentional acts or Kamma are very important for they ensure either good or bad effects of any action done with intention. And man, being the actual master of his own Kamma, cannot avoid the results of his Kamma:

Not in the sky, not at the bottom of the sea,  
Not to take refuge in the mountainous cave,  
Not in any place in the world,

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<sup>12</sup> *M.*, I, 314.

<sup>13</sup> *Dhp.*, 165.



One can avoid the consequences of the Kamma.<sup>14</sup>

The 1<sup>st</sup> lesson of the doctrine of cause and effect in Buddhism is that of patience. We have to accept life as it is, whether pleasant or unpleasant, for it is not what Gods or deities impose on us or force us to bear. The incidents in our lives are not accidental. They are rather the results of what we have done before. Therefore we should not be overwhelmed with joy or with sorrow, when facing the results, either pleasant or unpleasant. What is bound to come will surely come when there are favorable conditions for it to take place. Patience is not passive or negative. It is a wise and balanced attitude in front of any situation, pleasant or not, without forgetting to be vigilant.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> lesson is self-confidence. Every law is clear, precise, just and objective. So is the law of cause and effect. If we live by that principle throughout our lifespan, we are in a position to enjoy the greatest freedom in the world. We will live with self-confidence and tranquility, free from all worries. We will live every minute of the present and make the most contribution to the Dhamma as well as to the world.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> lesson is self-reliance. If the past has had a decisive influence over the present life, our present life, lightened by the Dhamma, will ensure a bright, happy and peaceful future for us. There is no doubt about it, for our present life is within our reach.

The 4<sup>th</sup> lesson is self-control. We always have to be well aware of every thought, word and deed of ours. However trivial they may be, they must be meritorious, true, shining and clear. We must know how to control ourselves from de-meritorious words, deeds and thoughts, even feelings. In Buddhism, these are self-examination and purification. A purified mind is a bridge that connects virtues, meditation and wisdom. For only with a purified mind (without the least contamination) can a practitioner attain the state of Samādhi and develop wisdom in order to see into the nature of things.

Those are the 4 meaningful lessons for humankind that can be drawn from the principle of cause and effect in Buddhism.

Although it is often written in sūtras that the man is master of his Kamma and its heir, Buddhism does not merely stress on the doer's role as the master or his responsibility for his own Kamma. It also confirms that man is not a slave to his Kamma. On the contrary, he is an active master of his own Kamma. Buddhist doctrine of Kamma is not determinism or fatalism. This explains why a wicked man, if he realizes his fault and quits the wicked practice, may become a saint. On the other hand, a good one, if he is negligent, keeps bad company, avoids self-examination and may turn bad and wicked. The ability to turn the good into the wicked practice

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<sup>14</sup> *Dh.*, 127.



requires us to be diligent and vigilant. The ability to turn the wicked into the good practice encourages man to quit the bad and accomplish the good. During the Lord Buddha's lifetime, there were vivid evidences. For examples, the robber Aṅgulimāla and the prostitute Ambapālī, after their conversion to Buddhism, became Arhans.

In other words, although he is a master of his own Kamma, he still plays an active role towards it. An heir of his own Kamma, a person is not its slave. On the contrary, he is capable of converting or destroying his past Kamma if he makes great and proper attempts at present.

In the *Kutadanta-sutta*,<sup>15</sup> the Lord Buddha indirectly reveals to us His political and social viewpoint. When petty thefts and violent robberies are rampant in the country, the state has better not to levy more taxes or not to suppress the wrong-doers by imprisonment or capital punishment. The wisest way to control these social evils is to provide peasants with food and young seedlings, merchants with capitals and government employees with reasonable salaries. In the *Dīghajānu-sutta*, when asked which methods should be practiced in order to attain happiness here now, the Lord Buddha answered that there are four, namely, (1) skillfulness, (2) protection, (3) keeping company with good people and (4) leading a balanced life. Skillfulness means being good and skillful at one's profession able to do it and guides others in it. In other words, everybody should have a job for livelihood and should be an expert on it. Protection means to know how to protect his own gains earned from his own labor, through the sweat of his exertion, not from thefts or fraudulence.

Keeping good company means making friends with those who have religious faith so as to deepen their faith with those who are virtuous so as to learn their virtues, with those who are generous so as to follow their generosity, and with those who are wise so as to develop their wisdom. Leading a balanced life means that a person's income should be greater than his expenses so that he may be free from debts. It should not be miser or prodigal. With money well earned in hands, a person should know how to use them to bring happiness to himself and to others. Following the Lord Buddha's teachings, society must be free from bribery, injustice, corruption, fraud and bureaucracy.

In a good society, the relationship between a man and a man must be good and be based on humanitarianism. In *Sigālovāda-sutta*, the Lord Buddha mentioned the good relationship between parents and children, teachers and students, husbands and wives, friends and friends, masters and servants, clergymen and laymen.

Reading the Lord Buddha's teachings over 2,500 years old, we are surprised at their modern approaches and practicality. For instance, the teachings on the relationship between parent and children, teachers and

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<sup>15</sup> D., 9.



students, husbands and wives, the Lord Buddha advised that children have five duties toward their parents, i.e., (1) making a living for their parents, (2) fulfilling filial duties, (3) keeping in a good state the family and its tradition, (4) protecting what they inherit and (5) holding funeral ceremony when their parents pass away.

Parents have also five duties toward their children as follows: (1) Prevent children from doing bad deeds; (2) encourage children to do good ones; (3) train children with occupations; (4) marry son and daughter when they come of age; and (5) hand down the heritage in time to them.

In the relationship between teachers and pupils, the Lord Buddha advises the pupils to perform five duties toward his teacher as follows: (1) Salute the teacher when he comes up; (2) wait on and take care of the teacher; (3) earnestly learn what the teacher teaches; (4) help the teacher by himself; and (5) learn well the occupation taught by the teacher.

The teacher has also five duties toward his pupil as follows: (1) Train the pupil with his own qualifications; (2) teach the pupil how to well remember the necessary; (3) teach the pupil the occupation up to the highest level; (4) praise the pupil in presence of acquaintances; and (5) ensure the pupil's occupation in all aspects.

In the relationship between husband and wife, the Lord Buddha talked of the husband's five duties toward his wife as follows: (1) Respect his wife; (2) deal with his wife in a correct manner; (3) keep loyalty to his wife; (4) give the household decision to his wife; and (5) buy jewelry for his wife.

The wife has also five duties toward her husband as follows: (1) Fulfill her duties towards her husband; (2) respectfully receive her husband's relatives; (3) keep loyalty to her husband; (4) keep well the wealth of her husband; and (5) deal with the housework skillfully and quickly.<sup>16</sup>

We would not call the relationship in the Lord Buddha's teachings as mentioned above the idealistic models or examples for us to imitate, models that transcend temporal and spatial limits. The Lord Buddha's teachings are nearly 3,000 years old, and the Indian social and cultural settings of His time were quite different from ours. We should always appreciate and praise His spirit of equality and humanitarianism as expressed through His teachings on the relationship between man and man.

It can be said that all social relationships based on humanitarianism and equality are morally good. Once there is a virtue, there is happiness, and vice versa. Virtue and happiness inter-mingled as milk and water are inseparable.

Leading a moral life ensures happiness. Leading a moral life is also leading a life true to oneself and harmonious with oneself. The true self is capable of attaining wisdom and virtues of Buddhahood.

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<sup>16</sup> *D.*, IV, 180.



However, human beings have been wrapped up in ignorance and turned their backs against their true selves while running after sensual and worldly pleasures, false values and imaginary needs. These have led man to innumerable wicked deeds and, as a result, man is forever fettered in the cycle of birth and death.

The Lord Buddha came into the world with only one purpose, namely, to point out to man the meaning of *dukkha* and the way that leads to the cessation of *dukkha* and to point out the true selves and the false ones within each of us. He taught us to lead a morally good life, and to return to our true selves.

Buddhism calls us to return to our own true selves, not to the worried selves that are busy running here and there on the life journey just like fugitives. The true selves are far different from the ones that indulge themselves in incessant sensual pleasures with deafening music and harmful nerve - straining noise and colors. The true selves are not also the ones ravished in power and wealth, the ones whose sole objective is to gain power and wealth. Such an objective will turn out completely meaningless to a dying man.

According to Buddhism, living with the false selves, a person may gain everything he needs. He feels quite unhappy, for he does not have the tranquility of the mind and real happiness. The strength of the sea does not lie in its noisy moving surf, but in its tranquil waters in the far depth. It will be the same with the human mind. Besides the surface tumult of endless thoughts and emotions, the mind is also a great ocean with profound inner layers that have been ignored by man, himself being too busy with the world's outward distractions.

Today all over the world, especially in western countries, Buddhist meditation is highly appreciated, for it is not only a simple and efficient method to bring the body and the mind into harmony and to help relax the human nervous system but it is also a way of living, a morally good, peaceful and noble life model and a safe escape from the tense and noisy life of modern civilization.

It is wonderful that the *ānāpāna-sati*, introduced by the Lord Buddha in many Pali suttas, is very simple and easy for everybody to practice with good results. There is no magic or occult element in this practice. It is in fact within the reach of everybody, in the monastery as well as at home. The essential thing is the practitioner's faith and regular practice. Meditation practice brings us a good health, the efficiency in work and a tranquil and harmonious state of mind that a person without this practice cannot experience. That state of mind is the noble happiness that humanity has dreamed of.

However, meditation practice is not a problem of technique or know-how. First and foremost, it is the result of a moral way of living, far from low desires and wicked practice, for nothing can hamper meditation more



than low desires and wicked practice. Only when the practitioner is free from them can he enjoy and experience the bliss in meditation. For those who have felt the void and the meaningless life with low sensual desires and those who are looking for a way of living with high ideals, meditation practice is a solution that ensures happiness.

Leading a moral life consists of doing meritorious deeds, saying meritorious words and thinking meritorious thoughts. Meditation practice helps us accomplish these three.

As a conclusion to my article, I would like to offer the following new moral order formulated from the Lord Buddha's teachings and applicable to this modern age. Such a moral way of life minimizes the risks of a nuclear war to usher into an era in which peace, security and harmony will become a permanent feature and all humane values are appreciated and respected.

1. Dedication of our life to the welfare of all sentient beings working for peace, disarmament and international brotherhood.
2. Living a healthy and contented life so as to devote more time and more energy for peace and for the welfare of all living beings.
3. Abstinence from any action leading to disputes and wars, i.e., the performance of any action leading to peace harmony and international understanding.
4. Respect for the life of all sentient beings, for the life of our planet and for the purity of our environment.
5. Peaceful coexistence and mutual cooperation the spirit of international harmony and human brotherhood.



## CHAPTER 25

### WONHYO'S IDEAL ON PEACE AND UNION

Ki-young Rhi

#### 1. Time of Dispute

Being himself a great monk-scholar of Mahāyāna Buddhism, Wonhyo (617- 686) follows faithfully the ideal of Mahāyāna. He starts all his philosophical speculations and religious understandings from the global idea of the harmonious universe professed in the greatest Mahāyāna scripture, i.e., the *Avataṁsaka* (Kr., *Hwaeom-gyeong*), which mainly insists on the close mutual interrelationship of all the components of the universe without exception. This universe itself was proclaimed in this sūtra as the manifestation and function of Buddha's body of law, the *dharmakāya*.

Wonhyo understood that *dharmakāya* is the life, the mind, the seed or the egg from which the whole world develops and in which the whole world evolves and into which at the end of time the whole enters. Various and different terminologies are used by Wonhyo to designate the essence (*dharmakāya*), the manifestations (*saṁbhogakāya*) and the action (*nirmāṇakāya*) of the Buddha's body: for example, one mind, one mindedness, one vehicle (*ekayāna*), the way, the source, the source of one mindedness and so on.

He believed that all living beings (*sattva*) are actually the constituting parts of this Buddha's body, living temporarily in this world of transmigration (*saṁsāra*) revealing their various imperfections that are the results of their own ignorance (*avidyā*).

Like other Mahāyāna thinkers of East Asia, Wonhyo also had a keen awareness of the serious contamination of the time he lived in, due to accumulated egocentric ways of thinking. He knew already the description of the *paṇcimakāla* (the time of the end) given by several important Mahāyāna scriptures.

Increasing phenomena of dispute, dispute as social conflict, dispute in the name of religious denominations, for instance, were the salient features of this Time of the end. The following five kinds of dirtiness-es



(ka<sup>ㅅ</sup>ㅅㅅㅅ), which are considered the results of accumulated wrong ways of thinking may have a certain significance even for today:

1. The dirtiness of the time;
2. The dirtiness of the living beings;
3. The dirtiness of the views or the ways of thinking;
4. The dirtiness of the human passions; and finally,
5. The dirtiness of the life-length.

## 2. Religion as the Way of Life to Dispel the Dispute

Wonhyo understood the essence of Buddha's teaching as the way of life to dispel dispute. In other words, the point of Buddha's teaching is to realize the perfect peace and union that is the ultimate reality of the universe (the one mindedness or the true nature of this phenomenal world, *dharmadhātu*). Explaining the main theme of the *Mahā-parinirvāṇa-sūtra*, Wonhyo says:

The sūtra, bringing together the different assertions of the scriptures, integrates them into the one taste of the ocean. It harmonizes also the diverse disputes of many thinkers, developing the most universal spirit of the Buddha. In this way the sūtra provides the possibility to all kinds of noisy living beings to go back all together to the final goal. The final goal is the non-dual real nature, to which all the living beings rush after long sleep and dream. It is indeed the great enlightenment.

Wonhyo's words make clear his conviction that the final goal of religion is the transformation of common life, full of dispute and quarrel, into a life of peaceful union and harmonious integration. The text cited above alludes to the belief that the so-called "final goal," the great enlightenment, is quite similar to the Vedāntic conception of the realization of non-duality (*advaita*). The same idea was expressed in many places in Wonhyo's writings. I cite here another text from Wonhyo's treatise on the *Sukhāvatīvyūha*.

Sometimes if one becomes a victim of the five kinds of dirtiness because of the winds of passion, he floats and sinks in the waves of suffering, continuing to flow on the dirty stream endlessly. Sometimes if one can cut down the four kinds of stream, thanks to the roots of goodness, then one never retreats but finally arrives at the other shore, stopping every kind of disturbance forever.

But even these two, flowing and stopping, are also the great dream. At the very moment of the perfect enlightenment, there is no HERE and THERE. The distinction between the dirty land and the pure land comes from the



ignorant view through which one cannot see the one-mind. There is no separate existence of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*.

Nevertheless, it is impossible for those who do not accumulate through their efforts the merits to go back and understand this origin, this great enlightenment. And it is not possible also to those who continue the long dreaming to open their eyes and see that.

Perhaps the following texts from his Treatise on the *Vajrasamādhi-sūtra* will help us better comprehend Wonhyo's view.

All the dharmas (phenomena) are only the one-mind. All the sattvas (living beings) are nothing but the One Original Enlightenment.

All the sattvas who are to be saved by the Tathāgata (arrived at the perfect state as it should be) are nothing but the flow of the one mind.

Once asked by a disciple what gate a beginner should take to enter into the way of spiritual exercise, Wonhyo answered as follows:

There are no separate dharmas from the one mind. The six bad ways of life, going up and down the waves, flow only because of ignorance (*avidyā*) that makes one fail to understand the one mindedness.

Though there are the waves of the six bad ways of life, they cannot go out of the source of the one mind. For the six bad ways of life move and appear only in this mind and by this mind. One can make the vow to save all those sattvas of the six bad ways of life.

Since these sattvas of the six bad ways of life cannot escape from the one mind, it is quite natural to have for them great compassion, regarding them absolutely as like as themselves.

There are the two gates: one is the gate of the "eternal silence," and another is the gate of the "birth and death"; according to the first gate of the one mind, practice the *samatha* exercise, and according to the second gate of the same one mind, raise your spiritual exercise of *vipassanā*. When you are able to live with these two, you will become an able man for the meritorious life.

### 3. *Ilseung (Ekayāna)* as the Ultimate Reality

*Ilseung (Ekayāna)* literally means one vehicle, which one has to ride in order to go back to one's own self. *Ilseung* means at the same time that one reality which is already realized in oneself, the true self. This is a *yāna* (vehicle), but this does not mean any particular doctrine or ideology such as the Mahāyāna or Hīnayāna. The principal Mahāyāna sūtras and śāstras



(treatises) such as the *Saddharma-pu<sup>1/2</sup>arika-sūtra*, the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*, the *Lakṣaṇa-sūtra*, the *Parinirvāṇa-sūtra*, the *Avataṁśaka-sūtra* and the *Mahāyāna-raddhotpāda-śāstra* use this term as well as the term Mahāyāna to mean the same. It designates the very source of life both for individual living beings and also for the universal life. From the psychological point of view, it is called the mind, but from the biological point of view the term the embryo or the germ of life was used. This is also the synonym of the *dharmakāya* (Buddha's body of law or essential body which does not mean a common human body) or the *dharmadhātu* (metaphysically it means the true reality, but it means also all the phenomenal world of that reality). *Ilseung* is called the *Tathāgata-garbha*, the embryo or the germ of Tathāgata, for it is another aspect of all living beings (*sattva*). In his Treatise, Wonhyo declared that the main theme of the *Saddharma-pu<sup>1/2</sup>arika-sūtra* (The Lotus of the True Law) is to clarify the meaning and the importance of this term *Ilseung* (*Ekayāna*). The following comments on this term professed by Wonhyo might give quite significant guidelines for our present discussion on inter-religious dialogue. Wonhyo declares that the *Ilseung* has to be considered from two angles: Who are the riders of this vehicle? What is it that in fact we ride? To these two questions Wonhyo replies as follows:

On the question on who might be the riders of this vehicle, we might say there are three categories of living beings: (1) Those who live their spiritual lives under the banners of the following triple *yānas*: *Prāvakayāna*, *Pratyekabuddhayāna*, and *Bodhisattvayāna*; (2) The following four kinds of *Prāvakayāna* practitioners: practitioners whose minds are definitively fixed, practitioners whose minds are affected by extreme arrogance, practitioners whose intentions are weak and retrogressive, practitioners who are taking this *Prāvakahood* just for the altruistic purpose to convert them into the true dharma (*saddharma*); (3) The following four kinds of common living beings (*sattva*): those who are to be born in moisture, those who are to be born from the egg, those who are to be born from the matrix, those who are to be born from the mysterious spiritual operations.

Then what is it in fact that we ride? According to my own understanding there are the following four aspects of this *Ilseung* (the *Ekayāna*):

- (1) *Li* (reason or law as the invisible eternal principle) is verily the one *dharmadhātu*. Sometimes this is called also the *dharmakāya* (the body of law) or the *Tathāgata-garbha* (the embryo of Tathāgata).
- (2) *Gyo* (teachings or instructions given in various modes and conceptions) is so to speak all the teachings and instructions taught



by the Buddhas of all the times and of all the places during their life-time from the enlightenment to the death.

- (3) *In* (cause) has two aspects. First it is the Buddha's nature that everybody has. It is from this nature that every living being is able to manifest the triple bodies of Buddha (*dharmakāya*, *saṃbhogakāya* and *nirmāṇakāya*). Second is the good spiritual disposition through which every living being tends to do meritorious activities, whatever the present status of the person might be, whether holy men or common people, Buddhists or non-Buddhists.
- (4) *Gwa* (effect, fruit). As we saw before, *Ilseung* is the enlightened mind that is at the same time the cause and the effect. When it is considered as already given at birth, it might be called enlightenment *a priori*; but when it is considered as the effect acquired during the life-time, it might be called enlightenment *a posteriori*. The first corresponds with the *dharmakāya* and the second with the *saṃbhogakāya* or the *nirmāṇakāya*.

#### 4. How to Arrive at This Ultimate Reality, *Ilseung*?

To this question that seems to me very crucial for us who are seeking success in inter-religious dialogue, the best answer I found is a brief resume of Treatise on the *Vajrasamādhi-sūtra* written by Wonhyo himself.

If there are constant flows and vicious circles of false imaginings from beginning-less time, it is because of the tendency of living beings to separate the forms and names and become attached to them.

This is the reason why, if one wants to go back to the source of this stream, one should separate himself from the false characters of the dharma which exist only temporarily. So in the first chapter, the *sūtra* emphasizes the need of deep meditation about formlessness as the fundamental character of the world.

But if there still remains any subjective intention to look for any objective things, he cannot recognize the enlightenment *a priori*, bestowed with him from the eternity. So the *sūtra* explains in the second chapter the necessity of the elimination of the subjective ego-consciousness.

The similar content of these first two stages is illustrated also in another place, as follows:

When a Bodhisattva who has cultivated the highest intuitive knowledge, attempts to look for any particular nature and form of things, he does not



seize anything subjective or objective such as *atman* (self) or *anātman* (not-self), *nitya* (permanence) or *anitya* (impermanence), *utpāda* (appearance) or *anutpāda* (disappearance), *bhava* (being) or *abhava* (non-being).

At that moment, the Bodhisattva personally realizes the sameness of things, understanding the true reality of all the dharmas. He becomes completely free from the false views, entering into the reality which is beyond duality and opposition, neither beginning nor ending, neither birth nor death, neither being nor non-being. The ultimate reality surpasses all the ways of words and phrases, and it goes beyond all the realms of mental activities.

From this, we can understand that the means to arrive at this final goal that Wonhyo had in mind was indeed the spiritual concentration that aims at the complete integration of subject / object dichotomy. Wonhyo illustrates the same view in his commentary on a sūtra that treats the fundamental actions of Bodhisattva, that is, the *Bosal boneop gyeongso*.

The ways without any particular denomination are not the “non-ways.” The gates without any particular denomination are not the “non-gates.” Since there are no “non-gates,” everything and all things are the gates through which one can enter into the final goal: since there are no “non-ways,” everyplace and every Situation are the ways through which one can go back to the source. This way that leads to the source is hard to follow for its secrecy; this gate that leads to the Final goal is hard to enter for its extreme broadness.

The text cited above shows Wonhyo’s attitude toward someone who has attachment to particular names and forms of religion as unique and absolute.

He emphasized the crucial importance of the *dhyanā* (spiritual concentration); but the text proves that he was not holding any conformist attitude toward *dhyanā*. He thought rather that everywhere and every time where there is daily life, *dhyanā* should be done and might be done.

We were taking perhaps too long to explain Wonhyo’s summary of the first two chapters of the *Vajrasamādhi-sūtra*. Let us continue to read the rest of the summary.

The third chapter of the *Vajrasamādhi-sūtra* treats the original enlightenment, the so-called enlightenment *a priori* and its powerful function. It clarifies that as soon as one achieves the double efforts for emancipation from both the objective realities and the subjective ego-consciousness as well, he can immediately meet with the original one-mindedness that is the enlightenment *a priori*.



The title of the fourth chapter is “On the Move from the False to the Real.” It explains the powerful functions of enlightenment *a priori* that enables living beings to move from the false to the real.

The fifth chapter treats the true nature of this one mindedness that is the emptiness. It clarifies that the emptiness is the result of the successful practices of the first two elementary spiritual exercises.

The last chapter, the sixth, entitled as “On the *Tathāgatagarbha* (The Germ of the Tathāgata)” reveals the meaning of the final state, the perfect realization of the one taste, the perfection of the human beings in accordance with true nature. The sūtra concludes that in this way nothing arbitrary has been done and thanks to it, one becomes able to do everything valuable without conflicts.

Thus we have charted for us a way to peace in Wonhyo. His way unfolds against the backdrop of the “harmonious universe” and it is the way that we seek.







## CHAPTER 26

### WONHYO'S THEORY OF HARMONIZATION

Sung-bae Park

Wonhyo (617-686) is, without doubt, the most eminent personality in the history of Korean Buddhism. Most accounts of Wonhyo's life are derived from the works of his two earliest biographers: Zanning's *Song Gaosengzhuan*, and Ilryeon's *Samguk yusa*. Though it may be rather surprising (since he did live in the seventh century) there is a substantial amount of biographical material available on Wonhyo. The earliest record concerning him is contained in the *Goseonsa Seodang hwasang tapbi* (Inscription of Seodang Hwasang in Goseon Monastery). It seems that this inscription was composed approximately one hundred years after Wonhyo's death and remained unknown until its discovery in a stream in Gyeongju, Korea, in 1914. Unfortunately, it was found in fragments which contained many illegible characters. Because of this, the primary biographical sources for Wonhyo are still the records of Zanning and Ilryeon.

According to his biographers, Wonhyo was an extremely complex figure whose career underwent several radical transformations. Early in his life, he was a member of the Hwarangdo, an elite youth corps. After this he became a Buddhist monk, and fought as a soldier in the war of unification while keeping his monk status. At one point, he returned to the secular life, spending much of his time wandering through the gay quarters of town. He also had a love affair with a princess, during which time he lived at Yoseok Palace, and ended up being the father of Seol Chong, who is considered the founder of Confucianism in Korea. It is recorded that Wonhyo, the "unbridled monk," later belonged to a street gang, and then a group of beggars; yet he still continued to spread the teachings of the Buddha wherever he went.

Late in his life, Wonhyo traveled throughout unified Silla, singing and dancing while beating a gourd, everywhere inspiring the masses to chant Buddha's name and to long for the Pure Land. In Zanning's



biographical account, there are many miraculous stories about Wonhyo. Throughout his unusual life, Wonhyo left an enormous legacy of philosophical treatises addressing virtually all schools of Buddhist thought, becoming the most prolific, original, and influential writer in Korean literary history.

Nearly all scholars of Korean Buddhist philosophical thought share the consensus that Wonhyo's lifelong aim was to establish a foundation for *tong bulgyo*, or "Buddhism of Total Interpenetration," by means of his key principle, termed *hwajaeng*, which can be translated as "Harmonization of All Disputes". Through the mechanism of *hwajaeng*, Wonhyo endeavored to reconcile all doctrinal debates so as to unify and synthesize all sectarian perspectives into a single, comprehensive Dharma, namely *tong bulgyo*. In order to understand the highly syncretic and conciliatory nature characterizing the Korean Buddhist pattern of thinking in general, one must grasp the meaning and importance of Wonhyo's fundamental principle, which permeates his entire system of thought, and is most explicitly elaborated in his work *Shimmin hwajaeng non* (Treatise on the Harmonization of All Disputes in Ten Chapters)<sup>1</sup>, the text which is usually regarded as the most creative and original of Wonhyo's philosophical writings. It is recorded that this treatise was held in such high esteem by the Buddhist scholars of the time that it was translated into Sanskrit and brought to India. The earliest extant record of Wonhyo's central philosophy is found in the Goseon Monastery inscription which includes what is apparently an excerpt from Wonhyo's *Treatise on the Harmonization of All Disputes in Ten Chapters*. The inscription reads in part:

When Wonhyo stayed at a small shrine in the suburbs to the northwest of the King's castle, he read secular books such as *The Book of Predictions...* and non-Buddhist books which have been rejected by the Buddhist world for a long time. Finally he wrote the *Treatise on the Harmonization of All Disputes in Ten Chapters*, a part of which states:

When the Tathāgata was in the world, everybody relied on his perfect teaching. After Buddha's death, however, people's opinions were like showers and their pointless theories were like rising clouds. Some said, "I am right; others are wrong." Others argued, "Mine is like this but others' are not like this." Finally, theories and opinions became a flood.

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<sup>1</sup> Wonhyo, "Simmun hwajaengnon," *Hanguk bulgyo jeonseo*, vol. 1 (Seoul: Dongguk University Press, 1979), 838-40; Jongik I, "Fundamental Philosophy of Wonhyo," *Collected Works of Dr. Jongik I* (Seoul: Publishing Committee for Dr. Jong-ik I's Works, 1994), 44-116.



The attitude of staying in a deep valley while avoiding great mountains or loving emptiness while hating existence is just like entering a forest while avoiding the trees. But one should be aware of the fact that green and blue are identical in essence, and ice and water are identical in origin; a mirror reflects myriad forms, and parted waters will perfectly intermingle once they are reunited.

Therefore, Wonhyo wrote the *Treatise on the Harmonization of All Disputes in Ten Chapters*, which everybody accepts. Everyone agrees that it is excellent.

The author of this inscription reported only the motives behind Wonhyo's writing the *Treatise on the Harmonization of All Disputes in Ten Chapters* and its impact; he did not discuss the theory contained in it. However, there are two facts about the inscription worth noting. First, of the many works by Wonhyo, only this treatise was mentioned. This would indicate that the idea of harmonization was generally recognized as central to the thought of Wonhyo. Second, and more importantly, five similes are mentioned for harmonizing doctrinal disputes. The first is the simile of the forest and the trees. This indicates the ignorance of people who know only names while failing to see what the names really mean. The second and third similes, about the relationship of green and blue and ice and water illustrate that although the appearance of a thing may vary, its internal essence is one and the same. The fourth simile, about the mirror in which myriad forms are reflected, reveals the relationship between the one essence and its variant forms. The fifth simile, about water for which no real division is possible, can be read as an allusion to the possibility of harmonizing all disputes.

We know nothing about the author of the inscription. Some scholars suggest that the passage in the above inscription was originally included as a segment of Wonhyo's preface to the *Shimimun hwajaeng non*. However, since only fragments of this treatise still survive, this cannot be proven.

The next record of Wonhyo's ideas concerning the principle of *hwajaeng* is found in the "Funeral Odes for Wonhyo of Bunhwang Monastery" composed by the great Goryeo dynasty scholar-monk Uicheon. Uicheon's remarks are more general than those of the Goseon monastery inscription:

Wonhyo harmonized the disputes of all people by penetratingly clarifying the relationship between essence and marks and by comprehensively embracing the past and the present. He harmonized all disputes thus establishing an extremely impartial theory for that time ... I have examined all philosophers of the past, but no one compares to Wonhyo.



Some scholars have regarded “essence” (*che*) mentioned above as referring to the meditative tradition of Cheontae (Ch. Tiantai), and “marks” (*sang*) as referring to Xuanzang’s Faxiang school. However, because Uicheon did not elaborate further, it is impossible to determine whether this is actually the case.

Uicheon is known as the first person to “discover” Wonhyo. Uicheon refers to Wonhyo variously as “Wonhyo, the Lord of Korean Buddhism,” “Wonhyo the Bodhisattva,” “Wonhyo the Holy Sage,” etc. Uicheon carried his admiration for his predecessor to the extent that in 1101 C.E., he influenced his father King Sukjang to grant Wonhyo the posthumous title of “Hwajaeng Guksa”, or “National Master of the Harmonization of All Disputes,” as well as to erect a commemorative stone pagoda with an inscription.

It was not until the early years of the twentieth century that the serious study of Wonhyo began with the publication by Jo Myeonggi of the *Collected Works of Wonhyo in Ten Volumes*. However, nearly all studies of Wonhyo to the present day have been largely biographical or bibliographical in content, or are only partial approaches dealing with special topics; very few scholars have devoted themselves to Wonhyo’s central philosophy of harmonization and reconciliation. Bak Jonghong’s book entitled *Hanguk sasangsa* (A History of Korean Thought), which became available in 1966, was the first to discuss Wonhyo’s theory of harmonization from a truly philosophical perspective. In this book, Bak attempted to demonstrate that Wonhyo had accomplished a reconciliation of the long-standing Mādhyamika-Yogācāra conflict by synthesizing the two in his own thought. Moreover, Bak made a lasting contribution to the study of Wonhyo by elucidating in a rigorous philosophical manner the dialectical logic of synthesizing opposite categories operating throughout Wonhyo’s doctrine of harmonization. According to Bak, Wonhyo’s principle of *hwajang* functions to establish a dialectical interpenetration between the many and the one based upon the fundamental doctrines of Hwaeom Buddhism. Bak especially elaborates on Wonhyo’s Hwaeom dialectical logic of interpenetration between opposites and the reconciliation of contradictions in terms of the relationship between “doctrine” (*jong*) and “essence” (*yo*) by means of the concepts of “opening” (*gae*) and sealing” (*hap*) of the truth. “Doctrine” refers to the development of the one into the many while “essence” refers to the unification of the many into the one.

When the truth is opened it is called doctrine; when sealed, it is called essence. The opening aspect of the truth is also called the arising aspect of dharmas while the sealing aspect of the truth is called the ceasing aspect of dharmas. Furthermore, the aspect of arising is



sometimes referred to as the aspect of accomplishing myriad virtues, while the aspect of ceasing is referred to as the aspect of returning to One Mind. Although these two aspects seem to be contradictory, in fact, they freely interpenetrate without any obstruction. The Mādhyamika doctrine of Nāgārjuna concentrated on the aspect of ceasing and ignored its interpenetration with the aspect of arising, while the Yogācāra doctrine of Vasubandhu and Asaṅga clarified the aspect of arising but ignored its interpenetration with the aspect of ceasing. In a chapter of his book entitled Wonhyo's Philosophical Thought, Bak gives a concise synopsis of his viewpoint, stating that the dialectical logic of "opening-sealing" (*gaehap*) is the key to all of Wonhyo's writings. In Bak's words:

Wonhyo's method of unfolding Truth is consistently pervaded by the logic of opening and sealing. No matter what texts, either sūtra or śāstra, he was expositing, Wonhyo first analyzed the whole structure of the text in question from the perspective of *gae* and *hap* --- this is really a characteristic methodological feature in Wonhyo's writings.<sup>2</sup>

It can be asserted that in the final analysis, the theoretical foundations underscoring Wonhyo's *tong bulgyo* as established by the principle of *hwajaeng* represent/reflect the metaphysical infrastructure of Hwaeom Buddhism. As can be noticed easily in examining his biography, Wonhyo's life itself has often been regarded as a paradigmatic embodiment of the Hwaeom principles of non-obstructed interpenetration and mutual harmonization between opposites. For instance, when Wonhyo was singing and dancing all over Korea and wearing a mask like a shaman priest, he chanted a song which he composed called *muaega* or "Song of Non-obstruction" while beating a drum, thus embodying what Koreans have traditionally called *muaehaeng* or the life of "unobstructed action". Wonhyo's life has come to exemplify the non-obstructed interpenetration between the sacred and profane dimensions of experience, thereby exhibiting the unimpeded mutual harmonization of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, form and emptiness, as well as *shi* (phenomena) and *li* (principle), as propounded by the *Flower Adornment Scripture* of Hwaeom Buddhism. Now let us look into the following passage by Sakamoto:

Since Uisang succeeded Zhiyen's *panjiao* system, he could become the First Patriarch of the Hwaeom School in Korea ... whereas, since Wonhyo had a different *panjiao* system from that of Zhiyen's, he could not become the First Patriarch of the Korean Hwaeom school.

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<sup>2</sup> Jonghong Bak, "Wonhyo's Philosophical Thought," *Hanguk sasangsa* (Seoul: Ilsinsa, 1966), 59-88.



This is comparable to the case of Huiyuan who had a different *panjiao* system from that of Fazang. Because of this difference Huiyuan could not succeed the patriarchship of the Hwaeom School in China.<sup>3</sup>

Although Sakamoto's comparative study of Wonhyo and Uisang raises an important point, namely, that Wonhyo could not succeed Zhiyen, just as Huiyuan could not succeed Fazang, due to a doctrinal deviation in both their respective systems, nonetheless, we must argue against, or at least qualify Sakamoto's position, on at least three important points.

First, although Wonhyo was a celebrated Hwaeom scholar, and although history often records him as a Hwaeom monk, still, technically, Wonhyo was not a monk belonging to the Hwaeom School. Wonhyo enjoyed studying all Buddhist works and left a remarkable contribution to the studies of various sūtras. Therefore, he remained wholly divorced from any sectarian movements and their respective identifications with various sūtras, while instead preferring the freedom of a layman. In the Unified Silla Dynasty, the patriarchship of any Buddhist school was transmitted only among monks, and therefore, it is pointless to seek the reason for Wonhyo's not becoming the First Patriarch of the Hwaeom School in Korea upon the basis of his *panjiao* system.

Sakamoto Yukio, one of Japan's foremost scholars on Hwaeom (Jp. Kegon) Buddhism, has elaborated a comparative analysis of the two great Unified Silla Hwaeom masters, Wonhyo and Uisang, in his work entitled *Kegon kyōgaku no kenkyū*. In this study Sakamoto suggests that due to his greater fame and seniority, as well as his role of spreading Hwaeom Buddhism all over Korea by chanting his "Song of Non-obstruction" throughout the countryside, Wonhyo could justifiably be regarded as the First Patriarch of Hwaeom Buddhism in Korea instead of Uisang. However, as Sakamoto further suggests, since Uisang conformed to the Second Patriarch Zhiyen's *panjiao* or "doctrinal classification" system, and Wonhyo did not, the latter could never be regarded as the First Patriarch of Korean Hwaeom Buddhism. In Sakamoto's own words:

(Even though) systems were in fact identical to Zhiyen's, he still could not become a Huayan patriarch simply because he was not a Huayan monk.

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<sup>3</sup> Sakamoto Yukio, *Kegon kyōgaku no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Heirakuji shoten, 1964), 428-31.



Secondly, it is inappropriate to explain the relationship between Wonhyo and Zhiyen by comparing it to the case of Fazang and Huiyuan, for in fact the two cases are not wholly analogous. Whereas the relationship between Fazang and Huiyuan was that of a master to disciple, there was no such relationship between Zhiyen and Wonhyo. Thus, there did not exist any reason for Wonhyo to be accused of being a heretic like Huiyuan, who was accused as such by Chengguan, the Fourth patriarch of Chinese Huayan, because Huiyuan did not accept his teacher Fazang's *panjiao* system.

Thirdly, one should not be misled by the typological division of the *panjiao* system into four phases which were used by both Wonhyo and Huiyuan (as opposed to the fivefold *panjiao* of Zhiyen). Both scholars employed the same technical term, "*si jiaopan*," but the contents and purpose of the two systems are quite different. Nonetheless, Sakamoto has introduced a most valuable suggestion when he identifies the *panjiao* system as the criterion by means of which the successor was chosen within the Huayan lineage when the Light of the Dharma was transmitted from Zhiyen to Uisang. In the Chan (or in Korean, Seon) or "meditation" school the selection of patriarchal succession and the transmission of the lamp was determined by the criterion of the enlightenment experience. Of course, the schools of Buddhism which concentrated on scriptural study also emphasized the enlightenment experience, yet, since they also held the study of sūtras in highest regard, it was also possible to have some other standards of selection (of patriarchship) unique to the scriptural study schools. Hence, it is precisely at this point that Sakamoto suggests that it was conformity to the teacher's *panjiao* system that was the deciding factor or determinative criterion of patriarchal succession and transmission of the lamp from Zhiyen to Uisang as opposed to Wonhyo.

The first record describing Wonhyo's *panjiao* system is Fazang's well-known *Huayan tanxuanji*. Since then, all the famous Huayan scholars' works, including Li Tongxuan's *Xin Huayan lun*, Huiyuan's *Kandingji* and Chengguan's *Huayanjingsu*, each quote the same passage which was originally found in Wonhyo's commentary on the *Huayanjing*, which is now no longer extant. In Huiyuan's quotation, which is the most comprehensive, we read:

Dharma-master Wonhyo of Silla Dynasty also established a *panjiao* system of Four Doctrines as follows:

First, the Special Teachings of Three Vehicles such as the Teaching of Four Noble Truths and the *Dependent Origination Sūtra*;  
Second, the Comprehensive Teaching of Three Vehicles such as the teachings of *prajñā* texts and the *Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra*;



Third, the Particular Teachings of One Vehicle such as the *Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, etc.; and

Fourth, the Full Teachings of One Vehicle such as the *Flower Adornment Scripture*.

Although Wonhyo's fourfold *panjiao* system deviates from the fivefold *panjiao* systems of Zhiyen and Fazang, nonetheless, it clearly proclaims the Hwaeom school as being the most comprehensive and perfect of all the Buddhist doctrinal teachings. However, despite the superiority which Wonhyo attributes to the Hwaom teachings, we must be careful to understand his *panjiao* system in a purely philosophical way as opposed to a device being used for sectarian purposes. This is clearly indicated by the concluding sentence of Wonhyo's *Commentary on the Nirvāṇa-sūtra*, wherein he writes:

If someone is trying to read the intention of the Buddha manifested in the sūtras by means of a sectarian system, it would be a serious mistake.

As stated previously, all of Wonhyo's exegetical writings on the *Flower Adornment Scripture* are now missing except for his preface and a single chapter of one commentary. At the outset of his "Preface," Wonhyo writes:

The teaching of the dharma-field of non-hindrance is originally neither dharma nor non-dharma; neither vast nor small; neither one nor many. Since it is not vast it collapses into a small particle of dust but remains nothing; since it is not small, it becomes an expansive space but yet leaves more; since it is not short, it is able to contain the kalpic waves of the three worlds; since it is not long, it enters into one moment with its entirety; since it is neither dynamic nor static, sa<sup>^</sup>sāra becomes nirvana and nirvana becomes sa<sup>^</sup>sāra; since it is neither one nor many, one dharma is all dharmas and all dharmas are one dharma. Thus, the dharma of non-hindrance creates the dharma-gate to the dharma realm, and that is where all bodhisattvas enter and all Buddhas of the three worlds exist... If someone is able to grasp the essence of the dharma-gate, they are immediately able to manifest throughout the three boundless worlds before a single thought-instant has lapsed. Furthermore, they will place all worlds of the ten directions into a single particle of dust.

In this key passage Wonhyo reflects his basic interpretation of the structure of the *Flower Adornment Scripture* as well as the essential pattern of his own Hwaeom thought-system, namely, the dialectical logic which establishes the reconciliation of contradictions and the interpenetration of opposites in terms of the relation between "doctrine" (*jong*) and "essence" (*yo*) by means of "opening" (*gae*) and "sealing"



(*hap*) the truth. As stated earlier, whereas “doctrine” refers to the unfolding of the one out into the many, “essence” refers to the unification of the many back into the one. When the truth is opened it is called doctrine; when it is sealed it is called essence. Consequently, when Wonhyo says that “since (the teaching of the dharma-field) is not vast, it collapses into a small particle of dust but remains nothing”, this is sealing the truth into essence through the unification of the many into one; whereas when he says “since it is not small, it becomes an expansive space but still leaves more,” this is the opening of truth into doctrine through the unfolding of the one into the many. Again, when he continues “since it is not short, it is able to contain the kalpic waves of the three worlds,” this is the opening of truth into doctrine, whereas when he says “since it is not long, it enters into one moment with its entirety,” this is sealing the truth into essence. Wonhyo may therefore be said to summarize this dialectical interplay between essence and doctrine by means of sealing and opening the truth when he says: “since it is neither dynamic nor static, *sa<sup>h</sup>sāra* becomes nirvana and nirvana becomes *sa<sup>h</sup>sāra*; since it is neither one nor many, one dharma is all dharmas and all dharmas are one dharma.” Thus, in the final analysis it is precisely this Hwaeom dialectical logic of interpenetrating the opposites of one and many through the reciprocal functioning of opening and sealing which provides the entire theoretical infrastructure for Wonhyo’s *tong bulgyo* or Buddhism of total interpenetration as established by the principle of *hwajaeong*, or the harmonization of all disputes. Wonhyo’s “Preface” to his commentary on the *Flower Adornment Scripture* of the Hwaeom school then goes on to analyze the meaning of the title. He proceeds:

The phrase *dae bang gwang bul hwaeom gyeong yeon* or “decorated by flowery garlands in the vast spaciousness of Buddha” means that the world of dharmas is so infinite that it is enormous, spacious and boundless. The virtue of his action is such that it is said to be decorated by Buddha flowers. Unless it is vast and spacious, there is no way to spread the Buddha flowers and unless there are Buddha flowers there is no way to decorate the vast and spacious (dharma-world). Therefore, by speaking about both the spacious world and (Buddha) flowers, the concepts of both spaciousness and adornment are expressed. The word *sūtra* means that since a round and full dharma wheel is completely heard throughout the whole world of ten directions without remainder, and since the world always turns three segments of time intervals, all people rely on it. With such an outline, the *sūtra*’s title is thus named. Therefore, it is called *dae bang gwang bul hwaeom gyeong* or “the *sūtra* of decorating the spacious world



with Buddha flowers and showering Buddha flowers on the vast universe.”<sup>4</sup>

According to Wonhyo, the title of the *Flower Adornment Scripture* reveals two fundamental aspects of the *dharmadhātu*, or non-obstructed dharma-world of total interpenetration, namely, the aspect of “spaciousness” and the aspect of “adornment” by Buddha flowers. This analysis may be further specified in terms of Wonhyo’s *cheyong* hermeneutic device. Whereas the *che* or “essence” of the unobstructed *dharmadhātu* is its aspect of immeasurable “spaciousness” or “vastness,” its *yong* or “function” is its aspect as “adorning” the universe through its decoration by Buddha flowers and showering Buddha flowers upon the whole realm of dharmas. As Wonhyo states in the above, “Unless (the *dharmadhātu*) is vast and spacious, there is no way to spread the Buddha flowers, and unless there are Buddha flowers there is no way to decorate the vast and spacious (*dharmadhātu*). Thus, “spaciousness” and “adornment” (by Buddha flowers) as *che* and *yong* are inseparable aspects of the unobstructed *dharmadhātu* of total interpenetration. Again, in terms of Wonhyo’s dialectical logic of opening and sealing, “spaciousness” is its static aspect as sealing into essence such that the many become one, whereas adornment by Buddha flowers is its dynamic aspect opening into doctrine such that one becomes many. Finally, Wonhyo’s “Preface” emphasizes the necessity to practice, stating that the *Flower Adornment Scripture* of Hwaeom is a dharma-wheel of sudden teaching, whose accuracy guarantees its effectiveness. In Wonhyo’s words:

Now, this sūtra is a dharma-wheel of sudden teaching; perfect and peerless, it is a teaching of dharma reality which is broadly opened; it manifests virtues of boundless action. This virtue of action is far from any fear, but manifests order. Since there is order, we can practice it. Its teaching is endless, but once it is taught, it is exceedingly accurate. Since it is accurate, we can advance forward. One who can enter the teaching does not enter anywhere, so that there is no place he does not enter. One who practices this virtue does not attain anything, so that there is nothing he does not obtain. Therefore, ten sages at the level of three wisdoms do not perform any action which is not flawless; ten Buddhas of three bodies do not have a virtue which lacks any qualification. Their appearance is magnificent and their implication is sublime. How could anything compare to it?

Besides Wonhyo’s “Preface,” only the chapter on the “Guangming-jiao” or “Enlightenment as Light” is still extant in his ten

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<sup>4</sup> Wonhyo, “Jinyeok Hwaeomgyeongso seo,” *Hanguk bulgyo jeonseo* (Seoul: Dongguk University Press, 1979), Vol. I, 495.



volume commentary on the *Flower Adornment Scripture*. Wonhyo interprets the title of this chapter in the sūtra as follows:

The Tathāgata completely illumines the whole universe of the ten directions by radiating Light. It causes all the great crowds (of sentient beings) to eliminate the obstructions of darkness and awaken to the body of the Tathāgata as universally penetrating throughout the whole *dharmadhātu*.

Wonhyo proceeds to clarify this passage by explaining it in two parts. The first defines the source from which the Light originates, while the second explains that which is illuminated by this light. The first part asserts that the Tathāgata Buddha emanates ten billion rays of universally pervading light from one of the one thousand ring marks on his feet. When the meditative praxis of *zhiguan* (tranquilization and clear observation) is cultivated, one arrives at the level of the sage, whereupon the ten billion rays of light are emitted from the ring marks in one's feet. The second part says that these ten billion rays of universally pervading light radiating from the Buddha's feet penetrate without hindrance throughout the ten directions of space and the ten periods of time so as to illumine the minds of all sentient beings by awakening their resolute faith while eliminating their doubts and obstructions, thus leading to the stages of practice, understanding and enlightenment.

In the above passage Wonhyo describes these ten billion rays of universally pervading light as constituting the actual body of the Buddha. Hence, the Buddha's Body of Light is identical to the *dharmadhātu* of non-obstructed interpenetration. It is for this reason that traditional Buddhist iconographic art portrays Vairocana Buddha of the *Flower Adornment Scripture* as surrounded by halos and auras of brilliant multi-colored lights spreading outwards into boundless space, illuminating the whole dharma-realm. We can further comprehend Wonhyo's interpretation of the Tathāgata Buddha's Body of Light in terms of his *cheyong* formula. It will be seen that in his *Haedongso* (Korean Commentary on the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*),<sup>5</sup> Wonhyo identifies the *cheyong* construction as the key to establishing his hermeneutic principle and at one point in his exegesis of the treatise he proceeds to apply the *cheyong* view while analyzing the Tathāgata Buddha's body. According to this analysis, the internal essence of Buddha's body is its non-obstruction, while its external function is

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<sup>5</sup> Wonhyo, "Kisillon haedongso," *Hanguk bulgyo jeonseo* (Seoul: Dongguk University Press, 1979), Vol. I, 698-732; and Sung-bae Park, *Buddhist Faith and Sudden Enlightenment* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1983), 35-42.



“complete freedom”, in accordance with the Single Vehicle teachings of Hwaeom Buddhism. To repeat Wonhyo’s words:

There are two aspects of Buddha’s body. The term *muae* (non-obstruction) extols the marvelousness of the essence of Buddha’s body. The term *jajae* (complete freedom) extols the excellence of the function of Buddha’s body.

In this context, Wonhyo quotes from the *Flower Adornment Scripture* stating:

The foregoing words “essence of Buddha’s body” refer to the Tathāgata’s physical body which was acquired as the result of performing myriad actions; it mysteriously permeates. Therefore, although the Buddha has marvelous form, he is unobstructed. Not one of the Buddha’s marks and not one of his excellences is bound or limited. Therefore the term ‘unobstructed’ is applied. As the *Flower Adornment Scripture* says, “If sought, the furthest limit of space could be found, but even a single pore of the Buddha is boundless.” Although he is unobstructed, the Buddha does possess the characteristics of direction and location. Therefore he is given the name, “he who has a body but is unimpeded.”

Having elaborated on the internal essence of the body of the Buddha as “non-obstruction,” Wonhyo next proceeds to define the external function of the Buddha’s body as “complete freedom” or “omnipotence”:

The term “omnipotence” extols the function of the Buddha’s body. This refers to the mutual function of the five faculties, the mutual action of the ten bodies, etc. Hence the words “who has a body but is omnipotent.” The meaning of “mutual operation of the five faculties” is explained in the eighth chapter of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, where the “eight omnipotences” are discussed. The meaning of “ten bodies” is explained in the “Ten Stages” chapter of the *Flower Adornment Scripture*.

In this passage, “the mutual function of the five faculties refers to the Buddha’s ability to substitute one bodily sense faculty for another, or the ability to make one faculty carry out the function of all the others. In other words, the mutual function of the five faculties demonstrates the un-obstructed interpenetration of the five sense-fields, or what is the experiential reality of what is termed in modern psychology as “inter-sensory synesthesia,” i.e., the cross-model wherein colors are heard, sounds are tasted, flavors are visualized and scents are felt.

The “mutual action of the ten bodies” refers to unobstructed interpenetration between the Buddha’s ten bodies, which the *Flower*



*Adornment Scripture* enumerates as: (1) sentient being body; (2) land body; (3) karmic reward body; (4) śrāvaka body; (5) pratyeka-buddha body; (6) bodhisattva body; (7) tathāgata body; (8) wisdom body; (9) dharma body; and (10) space body. Hence, it can be asserted that in terms of its functional aspect, the Buddha's physical body is precisely the phenomenal world of dependent co-origination itself as experienced through the synaesthetic interfusion of the five sense fields, which occurs due to the essence of the Buddha's body---its totally unimpeded non-obstruction.

Thus, according to Wonhyo's analysis, the Buddha's physical body is in actuality a universally permeating body of light, whose internal essence is non-obstruction and whose external function is complete freedom, as taught in the *Flower Adornment Scripture*. In the more poetic terms of Wonhyo's "Preface," this means that the *che* of Buddha's body is vast, enormous and immeasurably spaciousness, while the *yong* is its adornment by Buddha flowers and the showering of Buddha flowers throughout the whole dharma realm, achieved by means of the Tathāgata's inconceivable compassionate actions, inconceivable miraculous deeds, and inconceivable meritorious accomplishments.







## CHAPTER 27

### MASTER YONGSEONG'S LIFE AND WORKS: AN ENGAGED BUDDHISM OF PEACE AND JUSTICE

Jin-wol Lee

#### 1. Introduction

It can be said that peace and justice have been crucial issues throughout world history and particularly during modern times when, among individuals, local groups and international societies, various conflicts and injustices have been reported almost continuously in the mass media. Although Buddhism seems to be traditionally known as a religion of compassion and wisdom, it has not been widely recognized as a religion of peace and justice, particularly with respect to aspects of an engaged social nature. This paper examines peace and justice within the context of Buddhist thought and practice, with particular reference to the works of Seon (Jp. Zen, Ch. Chan) Master Yongseong.

Seon Master Yongseong (1864-1940) was an eminent Buddhist leader of his time,<sup>1</sup> and his dharmic descendants have formed an influential group that continues to play a leading role in the Korean Buddhist community until this day.<sup>2</sup> Recently, the *Complete Collection of Seon Master Yongseong's Works*, about seventeen thousands pages written in Korean and Chinese, was issued.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Yi Neunghwa, *Joseon bulgyo tongsa* (Seoul: Simmun-sa, 1918), vol. II, 961.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Dongsan and Goam, his disciples, were and Seongcheol, his second generation, is the Patriarch of Korean Jogye Order, the major Buddhist tradition in Korea.

<sup>3</sup> *Yongseong daejongsa jeonjip* (The Complete Collection of the Great Master Yongseong), edited by Seok Domun (Seoul: Sinyeong-sa, 1991), 18 vols. Hereafter cited as the YDJ.



The purpose of this paper is to carry out an appreciative investigation of Yongseong's works as a case study, in which any reference to thought and practices that relate to peace and justice will be examined. To achieve this, his life and works will first be briefly reviewed. Then, from the body of his entire works, selected topics related to peace and justice will be examined and discussed.

In a paper on peace and justice such as this, it is useful to make preliminary working definitions of the main terms. For our purpose, peace and justice are defined as follows:

Peace means the state of being free from destructive conflict. It is a state of harmonious relations, inner contentment and serenity.

Justice means moral rightness in action or attitude, fair treatment in conformity to truth or sound reason.

## 2. Yongseong's Life and Works

### 2.1. Historical Environment

To understand his life and thinking, the particular circumstances of Yongseong's life within the historical context that influenced him should be considered.

In the later nineteenth century when Yongseong was born and growing up, Korea and East Asia, like the rest of the world, was experiencing rapid socio-political, economic and cultural changes. From the beginning of Yi Dynasty (1393-1910), Buddhists have been continuously suppressed and persecuted by the Confucian government. From the late seventeenth century, even among the Confucian themselves, any actual or alleged deviation from the principles of Zhu Xi, was persecuted. The Yangbans educated in Confucianism monopolized government positions and were despotic until the end of the dynasty.<sup>4</sup> It was during the turmoil and anxiety of the first year of the rule of Gojong (r. 1864-1907), the last king of Joseon Dynasty and the first emperor of the Daehan-Jeguk (1897-1910) of Korea that Yongseong appeared in the world. During the period of Yongseong's boyhood, the country faced numerous serious crises, and was destabilized by the threat of foreign invasion, peasant rebellion, the religious challenges of the Christianity and the activities of the new Eastern Learning (Donghak) movement. While a reform was attempted by Daewon-gun, father of Emperor Gojong to help enlighten society, the major characteristics of the time were instability and crisis.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See Ki-baik Lee, *A New History of Korea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 201-9.

<sup>5</sup> See James B. Palais, *Politics and Policy in Traditional Korea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 1-2; Kim Key-hyuk, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order: Korea, Japan, and Chinese Empire, 1860-1882* (Berkeley:



When Yongseong became a monk in 1879, Korea was a country that had been seclusive but was now being opened by foreign pressure and had entered international affairs and suffered from conflicts among its neighbors, i.e., China, Japan and Russia. Eventually Korea was seized by Japan and was colonized.<sup>6</sup> The Korean people were put under a militaristic rule and lost not only their national independence but also their lands and their rights. Every aspect of their lives came under the control of the Japanese government. During the colonial period, a variety of momentous changes took place in Korea, such as the transformation of the socio-economic system from its traditional basis. The Japanese objectives in Korea were not only to exploit human and natural resources in order to aid the economic development of Japan but also to assimilate the Koreans into Japanese culture through numerous programs. For example, the use of Korean language was at first discouraged and later forbidden; the study of Korean history was forbidden; and Koreans were forced to change their traditional family and given names to a traditional Japanese style.<sup>7</sup> In areas of religion, the Japanese government also suppressed traditional Korean activities by their rule. For instance, some Christian leaders suffered imprisonment for not cooperating with the new government, and Korean Buddhist Temples that had previously enjoyed considerable autonomy were severely restricted by the Temple Law of the Governor-General.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, it is remarkable that it was religious leaders who were serving as the national representatives who advocated the March First Movement for National Independence.<sup>9</sup>

This brief review is enough to show that Yongseong lived in a critical period when the social environment consisted of conflict brought on by injustice. These injustices were not only in a narrowly defined socio-political domain but were also found in the larger context of both cultural and religious institutions.

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University of California Press, 1980), 1-4; Lee Chong-sik, *The Politics of Korean Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 3-14.

<sup>6</sup> See Hilary Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea: 1860-1910* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960), 493-507.

<sup>7</sup> See Andrew C. Nahm, *Korea: Tradition & Transformation* (Elizabeth, N.J.: Hollym International Corp., 1988), pp.223-260). For further details, see Andrew J. Grajdanzev, *Modern Korea* (New York: John Day Company, 1944); and Sang Chul Suh, *Growth and Structural Changes in the Korean Economy, 1910-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978).

<sup>8</sup> See Wi Jo Kang, *Religion and Politics in Korea Under the Japanese Rule* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1987), 13-81.

<sup>9</sup> See Lee, *The Politics of Korean Nationalism*, 101-126.



## 2.2. Life

Yongseong was born in 1864 in Namwon County of Jeolla Province in the south-west part of Korea on the eighth of May in the lunar calendar. He was the first son of Mr. Baek Namhyeon, and was named Sanggyu. It was said that his mother Son has conceived him just after having a dream in which a Buddhist monk in radiant robe came into her room. In his boyhood, it was said that, unlike ordinary children, he rarely talked and abhorred the smell of fish. For instance, when he was six years old, he released a live fish that had been caught by his father. He usually liked to give things to poor neighbors and help invalids without the knowledge of his family. He was educated from an early age and had shown a talent for composition: for example, he composed a classical Chinese lyric poem by the age of nine.<sup>10</sup>

In 1877, Yongseong left home and entered Deokmil-am, a Buddhist monastery in Namwon, but was forcibly returned home by his parents. In 1879, he went to Haein-sa Monastery in Hapcheon County of Gyeongsang Province in the southeast part of Korea, and he visited Venerable Hwawol, and was accepted by the master to be a monk. He was given the *Prāmaṇera* precepts by Vinaya Master Hyejo. When Yongseong first became a monk, he was given the name Jinjong and he traveled to many places to seek the way. He first went to Venerable Suwol, known as one of the eminent monks of that time, to ask the way of enlightenment and was given instruction in the practice of a *dhāraṇī* (a recitation of sacred words). Later, he visited Seon Master Muyung and started to practice cases from the Seon Tradition.<sup>11</sup>

In 1884, Yongseong received the *Bhikṣu* and Bodhisattva precepts at the traditional platform of Tongdo-sa Monastery from Vinaya Master Seongok who was the legitimate successor of the Daeun lineage that is known as a unique Vinaya lineage in modern times. Thereafter until the age of forty he practiced Seon and reviewed the Tripiṭaka including Seon scriptures at various monasteries such as Haein-sa Monastery on Mt. Kaya, Songgwang-sa Monastery and Seonam-sa Monastery on Mt. Jogye, Hwaeomsa Monastery and Sangseon-am Temple on Mt. Jiri, Bogwang-sa Temple, Taeon-sa Temple, Daeseong-sa Temple, Jeonghye-sa Temple, and Sudo-am Temple. During this period, it is said that he experienced enlightenment and refined his understanding with many scriptural masters such as Hobung, Sukyeong, Wolhwa, Dongun, Geumbong, and Seokgyo. There are also records that he debated with Seon masters such as Homyeong, Dosik, Hyewol, Mangong and Jesan.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> YDJ, vol. 1, 119-20 (1:119-120); and Han Bogwang, *Yonseong seonsa yeongu* (Seoul: Gamno-dang, 1981), hereafter cited as YSY, 5-6.

<sup>11</sup> YDJ, 1:120; and YSY, 6-7.

<sup>12</sup> YDJ, 1:379-80.



In 1903, Yongseong held a public assembly to teach Seon students at the Sangbiro-am Temple, and had a winter-retreat at the Bulji-am Temple in Mt. Geumgang. Thereafter, he not only held Seon or Pure Land meetings at several monasteries but also built meditation halls at temples and repaired the Korean Tripi aka woodblocks of Haein-sa Monastery (which continued up to 1910). From the fall of 1907 to the spring of 1908, he traveled around various sites in China (including Beijing) to observe the world situation and visited many temples to share his views with Chinese masters. In 1910, at the Chilbul-am Seon Center, when he was the director, his congregation asked him to write about his views of Buddhism with respect to other religions; the *Gwiwon jeongjong* was his response to this request.<sup>13</sup>

In 1911, Yongseong came to Seoul. He deplored the religious situation under which Buddhists were not able to play an effective role in comparison with other religions. At this time, he first started to teach Buddhism at lay practitioner's houses and then established the Daegak-sa Temple (the Great Enlightenment Temple). It was here that his Great Enlightenment Movement would be based and was the first modern Buddhist missionary institution in Seoul. In 1912, he opened the Seonjong gyodang, another missionary house that focused on the Seon tradition; this was a collaborative effort with cooperating temples. Thereafter he endeavored to enlighten people until 1919 when he became involved in the national independence movement and was held prisoner by the Japanese government. Some time during the period 1912-19, he also managed a mining business at Bukcheong in the north-east part of Korea for three years; this project was undertaken in large measure because of the financial difficulty of his mission.<sup>14</sup>

In 1919, Yongseong took part in the March First Movement as one of thirty-three national representatives. Then, he was arrested and held prisoner until 1921. After coming out of prison, Yongseong devoted the rest of his life to enlightening the masses through writing, translation, publication, and the establishment and management of Buddhist educational institutions. Such institutions included Dharma meetings, cultivation in agriculture and so on.<sup>15</sup> He wrote dozen of books including the *Susimjeongno* and *Gakkaeillyun*,<sup>16</sup> and translated Chinese scriptures into Korean. Fifteen sūtras, including *Hwaom-gyeong* (*Avataṣaka Sūtra*) and *Beommang-gyong* (*Brahma-net Sūtra*)<sup>17</sup> were among this group; he also published myriads of volumes including the journal *Mua* (Non-self),<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> YSY, 8-10.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-3.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 70-2.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 72-3.

<sup>18</sup> YDJ, 12: 90-1.



established the Samjang yeokhoe as a Tripi aka-translation-publisher<sup>19</sup> and Daegak gyodang as a Buddhist missionary at Yanji in the south-east Manchuria for Korean emigrants,<sup>20</sup> opened Seon meetings at a number of monasteries and began modern Sunday schools at temples.<sup>21</sup> He also cultivated about seventy acres in Yanji, an orchard in Hamyang County of South Gyeongsang Province<sup>22</sup> and advocated the Great Enlightenment Movement<sup>23</sup> in addition to initiating the Buddhist Purification Movement.<sup>24</sup>

In 1940, Yongseong died just after he took a bath and gave farewell remarks to his disciples at the Daegak-sa Temple in Seoul on the twenty fourth of February in the lunar calendar.<sup>25</sup> Manhae, one of Yongseong's juniors in the Saṅgha, wrote an epitaph for him at the pagoda that contained his relics. It could be said that he practiced the Six Pāramitās,<sup>26</sup> the ideal objects of the Mahāyāna Buddhism and completed all of those in his life as a Bodhisattva. He left a number of disciples behind him, and his spirit has been transmitted and spread throughout Korea through his descendants, some of them were the supreme leader of Korean Buddhist Saṅgha, such as Dongsan and Goam, who were direct disciples and the former Patriarchs of the Korean Jogye Order, and Seongcheol who is the second generation and the incumbent Patriarch. In 1962 he was given a national award by the government for his distinguished services to his country.<sup>27</sup>

To sum up, Yongseong showed throughout his life an extraordinary personality that manifested peace and justice with a strong sense of compassion. This was shown through his unusual deeds in his childhood, distinguished achievements after he became a monk, not only in Buddhist groups but also among other social or national groups. He also had tremendous influence on movements such as the enlightenment movement and the independence movement and became highly influential for the next generation with his pioneering practices concerning educational, social, economic and political situations as they related to the masses. For example, among his many activities were translations and publications, modernization of traditional rituals, self-support through agricultural and pomicultural cultivation, changes in industries, and the enlightenment, liberation and independence movements.

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<sup>19</sup> YSY, 68.

<sup>20</sup> YDJ, 1: 575.

<sup>21</sup> YSY, 105.

<sup>22</sup> YDJ, 1: 575.

<sup>23</sup> YSY, 39-56.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-7.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 167-8.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.



In short, he lived in difficult circumstances but did his best for everyone given the situation. Although he is known as a Seon master, mainly because of his emphasis on enlightenment through Seon practice, he is really a Bodhisattva who has gone beyond small sectarian differences. He really was a Korean Bodhisattva.

### 2.3. Yongseong's Works

The following are selected works of Yongseong, classified according to five categories.

#### 2.3.1. Books

1. *Seonmun yoji* (The Essentials of Seon Tradition): An introduction of the major points of Seon tradition to Seon practitioners.<sup>28</sup>

2. *Gwiwon jeongjong* (Return to the Origin, the Right Tradition): A comparative analytical description about religious focuses on relationship among Buddhism, Confucianism and Christianity.<sup>29</sup>

3. *Simjo manyu-ron* (Treatise on the Mind which Produces All Beings): Explanation of the emergence of the world, sentient beings and all the other developments that have originated from the mind.<sup>30</sup>

4. *Susim jeongno* (Right Way of Cultivating the Mind): Discourse about the right approach to Seon and some malfunctions during the practice.<sup>31</sup>

5. *Palsang-nok* (Record of Eight Phases [of Buddha's Existence]): Interpretation of eight successive phases which a Buddha is said to manifest when he appears in the world to save the people, such as descending from Heaven and entering his mother's body, emerging from his mother, sightseeing around the four gates of the castle, renouncing the world, conquering devils, attaining enlightenment, turning the wheel of Dharma and entering nirvana.<sup>32</sup>

6. *Daegakgyo uisik* (Buddhist Rite): A handbook for Buddhist ritual services such as worship, offering, prayer, marriage, memorial and funeral services including chants.<sup>33</sup>

7. *Gakhae ilryun* (Enlightenment-ocean and Sun-wheel): Talking about the great enlightenment and its function that produce the world, including

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>29</sup> YDJ, 8: 749-956.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 4: 153.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 7: 747-966.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 9: 725-887.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 8: 445-628.



all sentient beings and their processes of change and some ways of practice.<sup>34</sup>

8. *Cheonggong wonil* (Clear Sky and Round Sun): Discourses about the nature of enlightenment and mind with its function and practices to attain the way.<sup>35</sup>

9. *Susim-non* (Treatise on Cultivating the Mind): Introduction to the way of Seon and analysis of troubles in the practice of test cases.<sup>36</sup>

10. *Seokka-sa* (History of Pākyamuni Buddha): Biographical history of the founder of Buddhism and his works of wonders.<sup>37</sup>

11. *Imjong-gyeol* (Secrets on facing death): Discourse about the phenomena of facing death and rebirth including the way of Pure Land and *mantra* practice.<sup>38</sup>

12. *Odo ui jilli* (Truth of My Way): A soliloquy about Buddhism focusing on the cultivating the mind through Seon and resolving troubles in practice.<sup>39</sup>

13. *Odo neun gak* (My Way is Enlightenment): A soliloquy about the essence and function of enlightenment including recommendations for Seon.<sup>40</sup>

14. *Bulmun ipgyo mundap* (Questions and Answers for an Initiation into Becoming a Buddhist): A introductory checking handbook to ascertain the beginner's intention to be a Buddhist by examining essential points of Buddhism.<sup>41</sup>

15. *Daegak gyodong gyogwaseo* (Buddhist Textbook for Children): A textbook for young Buddhist students.<sup>42</sup>

### 2.3.2. Books in Translation, Chinese into Korean

1. *Sinyeok Daejang-gyong* (New Translation of the Great Buddhist Sūtra): *Geumgang banya baramil gyeong* (Ch. *Jingang boruo bolomi jing*, Skt. *Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, *Diamond Perfect Wisdom Sūtra*) with commentary.<sup>43</sup>

2. *Suneungeom gyeong seon han yeonui* (Korean-Chinese Exposition on *Suneungeom-gyeong*): An exposition with some Chinese characters and

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 6: 1-550.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 8: 631-745.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 3-71.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 7: 491-647.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 5: 505-63.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 4: 945-75.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 4: 913-39.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 8: 961-75.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 12: 91.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 5: 293-409.



commentary on the *Neungeom-gyeong* (Ch. *Lengyan jing*, Skt. *Pūraṅgama-sūtra*).<sup>44</sup>

3. *Geumbira dongja wideok-gyeong* (Young Geumbira's Great Virtue Sūtra): Young Geumbira is a name of Buddha's manifested representative in his *samādhi* who shows his abilities to the congregation for protection of Buddhism against evils.<sup>45</sup>

4. *Gak jeong sim kwaneum jeongsa chongji gyeong* (Avalokiteśvara's Enlightened Highest Mind Dhāraṇī Sūtra): Recommendation to practice the Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva's mighty *dhāraṇī* for the person who is facing difficult situations with several examples.<sup>46</sup>

5. *Daebanggwang wongak-gyeong* (Great Complete Enlightenment Sūtra): The Complete Enlightenment Sūtra (Ch. *Yuanjue jing*) with explanation.<sup>47</sup>

6. *Sangyeok gwahae Geumgang-gyeong* (Detailed Translation and Interpretation with Outline on the Diamond Sūtra).<sup>48</sup>

7. *Palyang-gyeong* (Eight Brilliance Sūtra): A transliteration beside the original text.<sup>49</sup>

8. *Joseon geul hwaeom-gyeong* (Korean *Avataṅśaka Sūtra*): The pure translation in Korean with a preface and explanation of the *Flower Ornament Sūtra*.<sup>50</sup>

9. *Joseoneo Neungeom-gyeong* (Korean *Pūraṅgama-sūtra*): The pure translation in Korean with a preface and explanation of the *Pūraṅgama-sūtra*.<sup>51</sup>

10. *Yukjo dangyeong* (The Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch): An excerpt with explanation of the *Platform Sūtra* of Chan Master Hui-neng.<sup>52</sup>

11. *Daeseung gisin-non* (Treatise on Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith): Korean with Chinese characters and some notes on the *Awakening of Faith*.<sup>53</sup>

12. *Gak seol Beommang-gyeong* (The Brahma-Net Sūtra of the Buddha): Korean with Chinese characters with preface and appendixes of the ritual services on the Bodhisattva Precepts.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 9: 489-715.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 9: 239-95.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 9: 151-79.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 7: 3-184.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 5: 3-267.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 9: 31-149.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, vols. 11-12.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 709-881.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 6: 468-550.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 9: 183-235.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 3: 5-371.



13. *Yukja yeonggam daemyeong wang gyeong* (The Six Characters of the Spiritual Great Bright King Sūtra): Exposition on the six syllables mantra, “O<sup>^</sup>-ma-<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>i-pad-me-h<sup>^</sup>,” with a recommendation to practice.<sup>55</sup>

14. *Cheonsu-gyeong* (The Thousand Hands Sūtra): Transliteration for reciting with interpretation and preface to the Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva’s *Dhāra*<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>i.<sup>56</sup>

15. *Jijang bosal bonwon-gyeong* (K<sup>^</sup>itigarbha Bodhisattva’s Original Vow Sūtra): Pure Korean version.<sup>57</sup>

### 2.3.3. Articles

1. “Manil chamseon gyeolsahoe changnip gi” (The Statement on Establishing a Seon Community for Ten Thousand Days).<sup>58</sup>

2. “Beomgye saenghwal e daehan geonbak seo” (A Memorial about the Impure Lives of Person Who Violated the Buddhist Precepts).<sup>59</sup>

3. “Jungang haengjeong e daehan huimang” (A Memorial about Central Administration).<sup>60</sup>

4. “Beonjong-seol” (A Discussion about Denominational Tradition).<sup>61</sup>

5. “Seonhwa nuseol” (A Disclosure of Seon Stories).<sup>62</sup>

### 2.3.4. Editorial Work

*Bulil* (Buddhist Sun): A Buddhist journal, co-edited with Bak Hanyeong and others.<sup>63</sup>

### 2.3.5. Record of Yongseong

*Yongseong Seonsa eorok* (Recorded Discourses of Seon Master Yongseong): A variety of sources collected by Hyeil, and edited by Daeheup.<sup>64</sup>

## 3. Yongseong’s Thoughts and Practices for Peace and Justice

### 3.1. Thought

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 9: 3-29.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 6: 613-57.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 583-704.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 546-50.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 550-4.

<sup>60</sup> *Pulgyo*, 93: 171; see YSY, 156-9.

<sup>61</sup> YDJ, 1: 543-4.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 470-97.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 719-825.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 351-579.



To examine Yongseong's basic thoughts about peace and justice, it would be best to investigate dialogues which formed his pre-initiation process for those people who wished to apply to become practicing Buddhists.

- Q: What is your purpose to becoming a Buddhist? Is it to obtain a benefit, or to seek fame?
- A: Those are not right to me. Having heard about the meaning of the Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha, I am determined to be a Buddhist.
- A: Buddha is the [one who attained] enlightenment; because [one who has] enlightened one's own mind, is named [in one's life, thus it is] named Dharma. Saṅgha is the community of peace and harmony; because [their] mind and nature are to be peaceful and harmonious, and are not to be dualistic, [it has been] named Saṅgha. Therefore I pay homage to [the Three Treasures], and I could not give up the Shining Great Just Dharma of the Ocean of Great Enlightened Nature and the Great Way of non-duality of the mind and nature ...
- Q: To believe in the teaching [of Buddha], is this only for yourself?
- A: Because sentient beings are innumerable, I vow to save them; because defilements are countless, I vow to eradicate those; because the Buddhist teachings are immeasurable, I vow to master those; because the Buddha's enlightenment is supreme, I vow to attain it. Therefore [the teaching of Buddha] could be called a principle of good for [everyone] together and not for oneself only; a principle of equality and not of discrimination; principle of no limitation and unboundedness.<sup>65</sup>

Through the above citation, it is clear that Yongseong emphasized enlightenment, justice, peace and harmony, as the nature of the Three Treasures which constitute Buddhism as a religion which emphasizes three things: the founder or creator, the teachings or doctrines, and the community of followers and practitioners. In fact, justice is the object of the enlightenment, and peace follows enlightenment according to the relations among the Three Treasures; the Dharma is the object of the Buddha, and the Saṅgha follows the Buddha. In other words, Yongseong's definition or interpretation of the Three Treasures shows that justice and peace are the main subject of his thoughts. He always advocated enlightenment for people by any and all means, including most of all the translation of the scriptures about enlightenment and leading meditation practices, showing that Yongseong apparently kept above all a concern for peace and justice in his mind. Furthermore, Yongseong also characterized Buddhism as a life-centered and society-oriented principle or religion as he was concerned for all sentient beings and the world. He advocated well-being and equality for

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 8: 963-5.



everyone. His attitude of no limitation shows his adaptability, generosity, liberality and tolerance.

In his practical thoughts, it is noticeable how much Yongseong regarded the *Beommang-gyeong* (Brahma-Net Sūtra), the scriptures of the Bodhisattva precepts, as one of the most important text for our lives. In the preface of the *Gakseol Beommang-gyeong*, Yongseong states that: the forty minds of the scriptures are the right way of all sages' cultivating mind and way of enlightenment, and the ten major and forty-eight minor precepts of the sūtra are a wonderful dharma of practice for having no contamination. Therefore, this sūtra provides instruction from the original source of true sages, and certainly shows the beginning and end of wonderful practices.<sup>66</sup>

The Buddhist precepts can be said to be a Buddhist ethic or good way of life that are just as applicable to non-Buddhists. In the Bodhisattva precepts, the first four seem common to all world religions, namely, don't kill, don't steal, don't engage in sexual misconduct and don't engage in false speech. The other precepts of the Bodhisattva are a collection of guidelines for individual self-sufficiency and for community well-being in which the precepts are devoted not only to maintaining the dharma and saṅgha, but also deal with actions in society. For example, don't consume intoxicants or deal in intoxicants, don't collect deadly weapons, don't seek revenge or seek harm to living beings, and more on a positive note, to seek to liberate all beings based on your kinship with all beings. In the present time, abuse of drugs, threat of arms including nuclear and chemical weapons, unjust imprisonment and suppression of lives, and various forms of terrorism are critical issues throughout the world. Therefore the Bodhisattva precepts would be good sources of ideas for solving these problems. Moreover it is remarkable in his translation of the scriptures that Yongseong interpreted the term Bodhisattva as a Jeongsa,<sup>67</sup> a Person of Justice.<sup>68</sup> Therefore Yongseong thought that the Bodhisattva precepts might be guidelines for being a noble person of justice and peace for the individual and society. While the former focuses on the Vinaya, it is remarkable that Yongseong had enthusiastically endeavored to promote the spirit of Mahāyāna. He translated or interpreted the most important Mahāyāna scriptures, i.e., *Avataṣaka-sūtra*, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, *Complete Enlightenment Sūtra*, *Pūragama-sūtra*, and *Awakening of Faith*.<sup>69</sup> For example, the teaching of the *Avataṣaka Sūtra* emphasizes the perfect interfusion of all plurality and offers principles of peace and

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 3: 9.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 3: 14, and throughout the text.

<sup>68</sup> *Jeongsa* also means right, correct person or scholar in Korean.

<sup>69</sup> These four are known as the representative of the Mahāyāna scriptures by the East Asian Buddhists, and became required textbooks in the traditional Korean Buddhist colleges.



harmony for every situation. Therefore, Yongseong's view is largely based on the Mahāyāna Buddhism in which social ethics for the masses are emphasized and the Bodhisattva is seen as an ideal person who sincerely cares for all lives. Yongseong really was concerned not only for personal enlightenment and well-being but also equally the others in the peace and the justice, as shown in his life above.

In the other areas we can explore Yongseong's socioeconomic and sociopolitical thoughts based upon his petition to the central administration that Buddhist practitioners should do the work of farmer-labor or industrial work (except for making harmful products), that they should be self-supporting and develop economic independence, that Buddhists should have concern for the masses and the lower classes as the base of society rather than just teaching and supporting the upper classes and rulers, and they should not interfere in politics.<sup>70</sup> He wrote that agricultural and commercial works which were the main job of the masses who supported religious practitioners in India about 2500 years ago, were forbidden by Śākyamuni, the founder of Buddhism, to prevent his disciples from being involved in secular interests and to concentrate upon their spiritual practices. However, in the contemporary situation of Korea in the early twentieth century, monks could not survive based solely on the offerings from lay Buddhists, and such dependency become bothersome and was criticized by ordinary people who were themselves suffering in poverty under the Japanese rule. Therefore Yongseong thought that monks should work in the spirit of the teaching and practice of the previous Chan masters in China, such as, Huangpo (d. 849), Linji (d. 867), Gueishan (771-853), and Yangshan (814-c.890).

Yongseong also lamented the situation of Buddhist institutions controlled by the Japanese government and tried to develop independence and encouraged educational reform to enlighten the people. Therefore it could be said that Yongseong thought peace and justice could be achieved through sharing the responsibility of labor activities in the socioeconomic area, and obtaining freedom, human rights and independence of individuals and institutions in the sociopolitical and cultural aspects.

In short, Yongseong's thoughts were based on the principle of the Bodhisattva and the way of Seon practice dealing with all subjects in terms of the peace and justice out of concern not only for Buddhists but also for the people in general society.

### 3.2. Practices

Yongseong's practices for peace and justice could be reviewed in two areas, the internal or personal and the external or social, although both are

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<sup>70</sup> See note 61.



related to each other because social peace and justice could not be fully achieved without individual peace and justice.

In the internal or personal area, he himself practiced and advocated to others the practice of Seon, Vinaya (precepts) and Pure Land devotionism based on the study of scriptures. Seon was emphasized particularly for attaining enlightenment. He had personally attained enlightenment through Seon practice and confidently encouraged other people based on this experience. It seems that enlightenment is a condition for achieving peace and justice wisely and subjectively in all circumstances. The vinaya practice prevents harmful behavior to others and cultivates a moral attitude. Through the Pure Land devotion peaceful and hopeful attitudes can be cultivated through the influence of the compassion of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas. By studying the scriptures, wisdom and ways for achieving peace and justice can be obtained.

In the social area, the most important activity of Yongseong has been called the Great Enlightenment Movement by which all his efforts of practices could be included. He often held Seon and Dharma meetings in various places to share his experiences of enlightenment and to teach the way of practices to practitioners and the public. He also established the vinaya platform many times to give precepts to people, which served as a way of enhancing moral concerns in society.

He also established new temples, such as Daegak-sa Temple in the center of Seoul and Daegak gyodang, a mission at Yenching in Manchuria where many Korean immigrants who had escaped from Japanese rule came to live. Moreover, he opened a Sunday-school in the temples to teach and enlighten the people. He organized the Samjang yeokhoe, a translation and publishing institution, for educational purposes. Yongseong translated numerous scriptures and published myriads of books, as shown above, to give an easier way of teaching Buddhism to people and realizing national culture. He led the March First Movement, a national independence movement, as a national representative and shared the suffering of the masses under the unjust Japanese rule. Furthermore Yongseong, unlike ordinary traditional monks, cultivated and served people physically and spiritually in the farm and orchard, and had a mining business to solve the economic problems of managing his movement. In fact, it could be said that all the activities cited above are related to human justice and peace in his time.

In brief, Yongseong did his best in the situation to practice ways to realize his vision of peace and justice among people in society through the enlightenment movement by using various expedients including not only religious practices of the Buddhist tradition but also worldly methods in the spirit of Bodhisattva.



#### **4. Conclusions**

Although further research is needed, it could be pointed out from the above that Yongseong was a remarkable advocate of peace principles of the Bodhisattva and the way of Seon masters who acted in accordance with the situation.

Yongseong lived in a difficult time of historical transformation from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century in Korea where peace and justice were ignored and violated mainly by the foreign powers and at a time when most people were struggling for survival. Nevertheless he was concerned and practiced not only for himself but also for people as a living Bodhisattva and as a pioneer in solving the troubles of his day. He tried to reform the old-fashioned Buddhism and to restore the real teaching of the Buddha within his situation. He used a wide variety of expedient methods to enlighten not only Buddhists but also Korean society as a whole. He showed the possibility and potentiality of Buddhism to contribute the social peace and justice and encouraged us to reinterpret traditional Buddhism to create an efficient way to attain the goal of Buddhism for people of the world. His life and work has served as an inspiration for many people from his time to the present to improve social practice for peace and justice.







## **CHAPTER 28**

### **THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA'S POLICIES TO BUILD A PEACEFUL NORTHEAST ASIA**

Hak-joon Kim

Recently the international political situation is changing rapidly in Northeast Asia. In September 1991, North and South Korea both entered the United Nations. In October, there took place the fourth round of South-North Korean high-level talks in Pyeongyang. In November, President No Taeu took the initiative in shaping the non-nuclear policy with the goal of building trust between the two divided parts of Korea and promoting arms reductions on the Korean Peninsula, leading to lasting peace in this part of the world. For one thing, this policy is in positive response to President Bush's nuclear arms reduction plans and President Mikhail Gorbachev's subsequent announcement of reciprocal moves, which have combined to spur a worldwide trend of reductions in nuclear arms and nonproliferation and elimination of weapons of mass destruction. The ROK Government believes that its just-announced nuclear initiative will go a long way toward preventing nuclear proliferation on the Korean Peninsula and thus to creating a more stable security environment on it.

With all the efforts of South Korean government to bring peace in the Northeast Asian region, North Korea still refuses international inspections of its nuclear facilities. The political situations on the Korean Peninsula, however, have changed to be much stable and peaceful due to the 4 years diplomatic efforts of the No administration. The purpose of this paper is to explain South Korea's policy directions toward peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia by reviewing its Northern Policy and reunification policy.

#### **1. Republic of Korea's Northern Policy**

With the inauguration of the Sixth Republic on February 25, 1988, the status of the Northern Policy was upgraded from that of a highly restricted



strategy of nominal importance to a position at the center of South Korean diplomacy.

One of the many factors underlying this transformation was a change in the international political situation. Ever since his rise to power in March 1985, Soviet leader Gorbachev had been working vigorously to reduce international tension and carry out drastic reforms at home. In a speech delivered in Vladivostok in June 1986 and another given in Krasnoyarsk in September 1988, Gorbachev announced his intention to seek cooperation and friendship with the Pacific nations. These speeches helped to transfer the perception of the Soviet Union that prevailed in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>1</sup> Ideological barriers between East and West began to come down in the new atmosphere, and the East European countries made conspicuous moves to rid themselves of communist doctrine and Soviet influence. Such developments created circumstances favorable to the active and effective promotion of the Northern Policy.

The successful staging of the 1988 Seoul Olympics held great importance for the *Nordpolitik*. The event enabled the northern countries to see South Korea in an entirely new light, one that revealed neither a colony of the “American imperialists” nor a nation economically dependent on “international capitalism.” Visitors could confirm firsthand that South Korea was a prospering nation well on the way to democracy. The games also provided South Korean businesses with opportunities to initiate trade with northern countries, and their efforts met with favorable reactions. Thus, the Seoul Olympics helped to create an atmosphere conducive to the implementation of the Northern Policy.<sup>2</sup>

Another important factor for the policy was the enhancement of a sense of national self-esteem among the South Korean people, who gained new confidence in themselves as a result of their achievements in many fields. This confidence and the pride that goes with it have given the South Koreans a sense of mission, a desire to advance into the international community and to make the reunification of Korea a reality. The renewed national spirit has been a driving force behind South Korea’s endeavors to succeed with its Northern Policy.

In his 1987 campaign pledges and his 1988 inaugural address, President No made it clear that “northward diplomacy” would be a key policy of the Sixth Republic. Adopting the slogan “creating a vibrant era of national

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<sup>1</sup> Byeong-jun An, “Soviet Policy toward Korea,” in *Political and Economic Prospects for the Asian Pacific Region: The Views of the Asian Experts*, ed. Tokyo Club Foundation for Global Studies (Tokyo: Tokyo Club Foundation for Global Studies, 1999), 63-78.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 66-8. For a presentation of Soviet viewpoints, see Alexander Fedorovsky, “South Korea as a New Economic Partner,” in *USSR and the Pacific Region in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed., Vladimir Ivanov (New Delhi: Allied Publishers Ltd., 1989), 94-102.



esteem,” No proclaimed a new beginning, “an era of hope, which will see Korea, once a peripheral country in East Asia, take a central position in the international community.”<sup>3</sup> He declared that he would devote his efforts to realizing peace on the peninsula and reuniting the divided nation, and he promised to advance the Northern Policy aggressively.

Particularly noteworthy is the fact that No linked this policy closely to the goal of reunification, introducing a concept of linkage that was absent in the policies of the Fifth Republic. Addressing this subject in his inaugural address, No said, “We will broaden the channel of international cooperation with the continental countries with which we have had no exchanges, with the aim of pursuing a vigorous northern diplomacy. Improved relations with countries with ideologies and social systems different from ours will contribute to stability, peace and common prosperity in East Asia. Such a northward diplomacy should also lead to the gateway of unification.”<sup>4</sup> The president reiterated this position in a speech on March 1, 1988: “I am willing to meet anyone as part of my efforts to pave the way for national reunification, whatever the difficulties and hardships. I will push for improved relations with the northern countries with which we have no diplomatic ties. In this new era we will open broad ways for contact with those countries, which I believe will help us make progress in our endeavors to achieve unification.”<sup>5</sup>

Let us briefly view what the Northern Policy has accomplished, proceeding in roughly chronological order.<sup>6</sup> The policy’s first major achievement was the opening of diplomatic relations with all East European communist except Albania. On September 13, 1988, Hungary, first among European communist countries, agreed with South Korea to exchange permanent ambassadorial missions, which were set up in Seoul and Budapest on December 1. Finally, on February 1, 1989, the two countries established full diplomatic ties and opened resident embassies. President No made an official trip to Hungary on November 22, 1989, becoming the first South Korean head of state to visit an East European nation and Hungarian

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<sup>3</sup> The Presidential Secretariat of the Republic of Korea, ed., *Korea: A Nation Transformed* (Seoul: Donghwa Publishing Company, 1999), 57-64.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>6</sup> Hong Nack Kim, “Sino-Soviet Rapprochement and Its Implications for South Korea’s Northern Policy,” in *Korea and World Affairs*, 12.4 (Autumn 1988). It was a special issue on the Northern Policy of the Sixth Republic of Korea with 6 articles. Andras Hernadi, “The South Korean-Hungarian Relationship: An International Perspective,” in *Korea and World Affairs*, 13.2 (Summer 1989); and Jung Ha Lee, “South Korea’s Policy toward Socialist Countries: Its Impact on Inter-Korean Relations,” in *Korea and World Affairs*, 13.4 (Autumn 1989). About the official statement of the South Korean government, see Korean Overseas Information Service, Ministry of Culture and Information, *Backgrounder*, 49 (March 2, 1989) and *Northern Diplomacy* (February, 1999).



President Arpad Goncz reciprocated with a visit to Seoul in November 1998. These visits served to accelerate the development of ties between Seoul and Budapest.

On November 1, 1989, South Korea and Poland agreed to establish full diplomatic relations and open resident embassies. On December 18, 1989, South Korea and Yugoslavia announced the establishment of formal diplomatic ties: Seoul's embassy in Belgrade opened on February 7, 1990. On November 7, 1990, Yugoslav President Borisav Jovic became the first leader of an East European country to make a state visit to South Korea. In a magazine interview, Jovic commented, "Even in the short period of less than a year since diplomatic relations were established between our two countries, they have expanded at an unprecedented pace."<sup>7</sup> On March 23, 1990, during a visit to Sofia, Foreign Minister Choe Hojung signed an agreement with the Bulgarian government to establish ambassadorial level diplomatic relations. Just one day before that, on March 22, South Korea and Czechoslovakia had agreed to normalize relations. In addition, South Korea and Romania established full diplomatic ties on March 23, 1990. Relations with East Germany have, naturally, come to a different conclusion. Even though East Germany expressed a desire to normalize relations, South Korea chose to await the outcome of the German reunification process that was then in motion. Since Germany was eventually reunified on October 3, 1990, the question of normalizing relations became irrelevant. Albania, on the other hand, does not yet have diplomatic relations with Seoul. When the waves of reform washing over Eastern Europe eventually reach Albania, however, changes can be expected in the country's domestic and foreign policies that should lead to friendship with South Korea.

The policy's second achievement was the normalization of relations between South Korea and the Soviet Union. In April 1989, the Trade Promotion Corporation opened a trade office in Moscow, and at the same time the Soviet Chamber of Commerce set up an office in Seoul. On December 8 of that year, the two countries agreed to establish de facto consular ties, and they exchanged consular offices in March 1990. That same month Gim Yeongsam and Bak Cheoleon visited Moscow, and it was agreed in a meeting between Gim and Gorbachev that relations would be normalized at an early date.

The South Korean / Soviet summit meeting, held in San Francisco on June 4, 1998 between President No Taeu and Mikhail Gorbachev, was one of the most significant events in the two countries diplomatic history. It also signaled a turning point in the history of Northeast Asian international relations. On August 2, 1990, a government delegation led by Gim Jongin, Senior Secretary for Economic Affairs to President No, and Gim Jonghwi,

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<sup>7</sup> *Diplomacy*, 16.11 (November, 1990): 9.



Senior Assistant for Diplomacy and National Defense, visited Moscow for talks on economic cooperation and the establishment of diplomatic ties. On September 14, the two countries signed provisional aviation and trade treaties. Finally, on September 30, South Korea and the Soviet Union normalized relations, 86 years after Russia and Korea's Yi dynasty had severed all ties under pressure from Japan. Korean Embassy in Moscow opened on October 30, and on that day the first South Korean ambassador to the Soviet Union began work. Such was the background to No's trip to Moscow on December 13-17, the first state visit to the Soviet Union ever made by a South Korean leader. As a return of diplomatic courtesy for it, President Mikhail Gorbachev visited South Korea on April 19-20, 1991. These reciprocal visits mark a significant development in ROK-Soviet relations.

The Northern Policy's third achievement is the improvement of relations with China. Beijing, which had initially permitted only private-level exchanges, eventually gave its approval to contacts between Seoul and China's provincial governments: such relationships have been established with both Shandong and Liaoning. Since April 1988 the two countries have exchanged various missions and have promoted, among other things, mutual participation in trade expositions. Bilateral trade grew from \$1.2 billion in 1985 to \$3.2 billion in 1989, a year in which as many as 23,000 people traveled between China and South Korea. Another sign of an improving relationship was Seoul's participation in the 1990 Beijing Asian Games, which involved dispatching a consular mission to look after the interests of the South Korean athletes.

On October 28, 1990, Seoul and Beijing signed an agreement to exchange trade offices, a step that may lead to the establishment of official ties. Under the accord, the offices are to be opened as soon as circumstances allow: each is to be staffed by fewer than 20 persons, including government officials from the respective foreign and trade ministries, and is to perform such consular services as are entrusted to it, including the issuing of visas. President No has appointed No Jaewon, a former vice-foreign minister, to head the office in Beijing. While acknowledging that Beijing's close relationship with Pyongyang has limited its ties with Seoul, No Jaewon believes that the decision to exchange trade offices with Seoul indicative of a change in China's policy.<sup>8</sup> Admittedly, China has intensified efforts to solidify its system of government and has strengthened its ideological bonds with North Korea in the period since the June 1989 suppression of the democracy movement on Tiananmen Square. Even so, the opening of the trade offices can be expected to offer opportunities for Seoul and Beijing to normalize their relations.

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<sup>8</sup> *Korea Herald*, December 5, 1990.



The final major accomplishment of the policy is the establishment, for the first time, of full diplomatic relations between Seoul and an Asian communist country. South Korea and Mongolia officially recognized each other on March 26, 1990. This breakthrough should favorably affect Seoul's relations with Vietnam, which have been steadily improving especially in the field of economic cooperation, and may also enhance its ties with China. In the meantime, on January 15, 1990, Seoul established diplomatic relations with Algeria, which is not among northern countries but which has a socialist government.

As far as promotion of peace and stability in Northeast Asia is concerned, recent rapid development of Soviet-South Korean relations is most important. For more than eight decades after 1904 when ROK-Soviet diplomatic relations abruptly severed, each side had regarded the other as an adversary. In fact, Soviet-South Korean rapprochement heralded the crack-down of the Cold War ice in the Northeast Asia.

## **2. Impact of the ROK-Soviet Rapprochement on Inter-Korean Relations**

Because the Korean Peninsula is a region where the interests of the United States, the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China and Japan all converge, it is natural that the peninsula should be extremely sensitive to any changes in the international political climate. It is also to be expected that as relations between the Soviet Union and the Republic of Korea continue to develop, there will be a direct impact on relations between North and South Korea.

First, the establishment of diplomatic relations between the ROK and the Soviet Union resulted in the recognition of the reality that there exist two Koreas on the peninsula. The Soviet policy-makers who pursued diplomatic relations with Korea have made official the fact the peninsula: the Republic of Korea and the Democratic Republic of Korea. Formal recognition of this reality, they assert, will contribute to peace and security on the peninsula as well as a positive approach to peaceful reunification. This contention has received wide support in the international community. Former Foreign Minister Shevardnadze has stated that the fact that there are two nations on the peninsula, a South Korea and a North Korea, is the one reality of the situation.<sup>9</sup>

From this point, one can proceed to the next logical step that is cross-recognition by the four major powers and simultaneous diplomatic recognition. The United States and Japan who now currently only recognize South Korea will recognize the north in the near future. So are China and the Soviet Union in their relations with the south. Following the same line

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<sup>9</sup> *Izvestia*, October 2, 1999.



of thought, both countries should be admitted into the United Nations, which was already accepted by North Korea. Between North and South Korea, normalization will follow only after each side has agreed to recognize the other. That type of normalization means that the North-South Korea relationship has been transformed into one of peaceful coexistence. From the recovery of trust and the spirit of homogeneity among brethren countries peaceful reunification could become a reality.

The Soviet Union became the first country among the four major powers to give official recognition to both Koreans by establishing diplomatic relations with South Korea. Through this action, the Soviet Union will first be imparting a direct influence on Japan and China. In fact Japan has begun negotiations for the establishment of diplomatic relations with North Korea. China on October 20, 1990 exchanged trade offices with Seoul. Right now it is not clear when Japan will achieve full diplomatic relations with North Korea or when the same will be true of China and Korea. However, if the current trends prevail, these events should be accomplished within the next two to three years. On the other hand, the problem of when the United States and North Korea will be able to commence full diplomatic relations remains a knotty one. This writer predicts that the event will follow the temper of the times. If things proceed as they should, all of the super-powers will have established simultaneous recognition of both Koreas by the mid-1990s.

Further, among all the nations that surround the peninsula, it is only the Soviet Union that both Koreans have diplomatic relations with. Therefore it can be expected that, in the development of North-South relations, the Soviets will play the role of prudent mediator. Soviet political scientist Vasily Mikheyev comments, as the only superpower to have relations with both Koreas, the Soviet Union should use that position as a basis for utilizing the three-way relationship to help strengthening stability on the peninsula.<sup>10</sup>

Yet at this point it might be expedient to question whether or not simultaneous recognition by all the super-powers will truly help the reunification process. The North has asserted that this would, on the contrary, make the division permanent and block any attempts at reunification. We, however, believe that this as a provisional measure can only aid the process of a peaceful reunification. If there is mutual recognition and acceptance among the affected parties, sincere negotiations can begin to start on the basis.

Simple statistics shows that among 171 countries in the world, 91 already recognized both North and South Korea. This also would tend to disprove North Korea's contention regarding simultaneous recognition. The assertion that simultaneous recognition will mean the permanent division of

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<sup>10</sup> *Moscow News*, May 5, 1991.



the peninsula is contradictory in terms. As Gorbachev was relating the successes of his visit to South Korea to the Supreme Soviet on April 26, 1991, he stated that through the neighborly friendship of the ROK and the Soviet Union, the reunification on the peninsula has been brought one step closer and that the Soviets would give every possible assistance along the road to a final rapprochement.<sup>11</sup>

Second, the Soviet Union during the course of recent summit talks implied that in regards to the problem of reunification, they support more of the South Korean position than they do of the North. The Soviets find themselves at times not in total agreement with the North and even on some points at complete odds with the North Korean position. The Soviets are totally against North Korea's possible dependence on military force or violent revolution to accomplish reunification.

On the other hand, the Soviet Union is either in agreement or at least in sympathy with many of South Korea's proposals. For example, the "Six Nations' Consultative Conference on Peace in Northeast Asia" first proposed by President No in his address to the United Nations General Assembly in 1988 and the 1989 proposal for a systematic process of mutual recognition known as the Korean National Unification Formula also proposed by No have met with Soviet approval. In addition, practical proposal for cross recognition and entry by both Koreas into the United Nations have garnered Soviet backing. More than anything else, the fact that the Soviet Union chooses to ignore their long-time ally and make their first visit to South Korea is very suggestive. Among the points of contention between North and South Korea has been that of regulation of military expenditures and the Soviet Union has looked upon the South Korean proposal with a great deal of favor. It is expected that the Soviet Union will make its position on these matters even more clear as mutual relations develop. In addition, it appears that the Chinese will also come forward when the appropriate opportunity arises to make its own position firmer.

Third, it also appears likely that as another result of the ROK-Soviet rapprochement, the Soviets will use the chance to make very strong demands. The Soviets have indicated that they do not agree on Gim Ilseong's "Juche" philosophy or the power succession from Gim Ilseong to Gim Jeongil. It is widely known that the Soviet Union has tried to use its influence to get the North to pursue a policy of openness and reform North Korea, in turn, has displayed stubborn position to both this type of "pressure" from the USSR and the worldwide shock given by the rapid revolutionary changes in the Soviet Union and East Europe itself.

However, most Korea experts feel that North Korea will enter on the road to reform and openness against her wishes. Within the North's ruling elite there are at least those technocrats who have some sense of the rational

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<sup>11</sup> *Korea Times*, April 28, 1991.



calculation and within the larger context show some symptoms of wanting such reform. In the future we see that the Chinese will begin a transformation towards their own reforms. If this reform comes anytime in the near future, the burden on the North will be even greater.

Fourth, summarizing our analysis so far, it can be seen that the activity in North-South dialogue has been sparked by the round of summit talks between South Korea and the Soviet Union. There still exist many barriers that surround talks between the two Koreas making it difficult to be optimistic about the future. As a result of

These visits, however, mutual exchange among the four super-powers regarding the issue of reunification has become more active. It seems possible to believe that the prospects for cross-recognition have become greater and in that atmosphere North-South dialogue will be able to progress. President No in a written interview with a Soviet academic journal said he felt that the normalization of relations with the Soviet meant that there would be a cessation to confrontation on the peninsula and the firm establishment of peace.<sup>12</sup> It is a fact that Soviet Union exerted a strong influence on the North in making the first North-South Prime Minister's Meeting in Seoul and North Korea's decision to enter the United Nations to come true

### 3. Republic of Korea's Reunification Policy

As described above, the Northern Policy of South Korea is closely linked with its reunification policy. The Sixth Republic has pursued its peaceful reunification policy vigorously from its advent.

President No announced a special declaration known as the July 7th Declaration in 1988. In the declaration, he put forward the new six point policy on reunification: (1) exchange of visits by a broad spectrum of the people of South and North Korea and free visits to both parts of the Korean Peninsula by overseas Koreans; (2) exchanges of correspondence and visits between members of divided families; (3) open trade between South and North Korea as a single community; (4) no opposition to nations friendly with the south trading with the north unless it involved military goods; (5) giving up the competitive and confrontational diplomatic war between the south and north while ensuring that the north makes a positive contribution to the international community; and (6) cooperation with Pyeongyang in its efforts to improve ties with the United States and Japan and in parallel seek improved ties with the Soviet Union and China.<sup>13</sup>

On August 15, 1988, President No proposed a summit meeting between himself and the North Korea's Gim Ilseong without any conditions. In

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<sup>12</sup> "President No Taeu's Written Interview," in *Far Eastern Affairs*, 1 (1991): 4.

<sup>13</sup> *Korea: A Nation Transformed*, 65-8.



response to his proposal, Gim also made a proposal for summit meeting in Pyongyang to discuss several issues, including the U.S. troop withdrawal, North Korea's confederation plan, and a joint declaration of non-aggression between the south and north.

In an address by President No at his 43<sup>rd</sup> Session of the U.N. General Assembly on October 18, 1988, he proposed that South and North Korea "agree to a declaration of non-aggression or non-use of force in order to better construct a framework for mutual trust and security." He also declared, "The Republic of Korea will never use force first against the North." He proposed an agenda for discussion at a summit meeting by suggesting, "We discuss sincerely and resolve all the problems raised by either or both sides with regard to disarmament, arms control and other military matters."<sup>14</sup>

President No on September 11, 1989 announced the Korean National Community Unification Proposal. As an interim step, this proposal called for the creation of a Korean Commonwealth.<sup>15</sup> Based on this interim step without discarding one's sovereignty, a process of reconciliation and cooperation can be built towards the ultimate objective of creating a unified democratic republic. This proposal warrants attention as it seeks to overcome the weaknesses in previous unification proposals put forth by the South Korean government and states that the willingness to accept the existence of a contending system in the Korean peninsula. It is a realistic proposal that would go a long way towards reducing tension between the two Koreas.

The formula's implementation is based on the following three major steps. First is to build mutual confidence on the basis of a South-North dialogue and to hold a South-North summit meeting, including an adoption of a Korean National Community Charter. Second is the creation of a Korean Commonwealth, being a common sphere of national life to promote common prosperity and to restore national homogeneity. And third is the creation of a unified assembly and government based national elections as stipulated in unified constitution so that a unified and democratic republic can be formed.

From a structural viewpoint, a Council of Ministers would be co-chaired by the Prime Ministers of the South and the North and would comprise around cabinet-level officials from each side, and a number of standing committees could be created to deal with diplomatic, political and military issues. Such bodies could then specifically discuss ways to accelerate political dialogues, agree on military confidence-building

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-12.

<sup>15</sup> National Unification Board, *To Build National Community through the Korean Commonwealth - A Blue Print for Korean Unification* (Seoul: National Unification Board, 1989).



measures, the transformation of the current Armistice Agreement into a peace treaty and changing the demilitarization zone into a Peace Zone.

The Korean Commonwealth would have a Council of Presidents as the highest decision-making organ, the already-mentioned Council of Ministers and a Council of Representatives to be composed of equal numbers of members of the legislatures in both the South and the North. The Council of Representatives would draft a constitution for a unified republic and develop methods and procedures to bring about the unification. With agreement on a draft of the constitution, the next step would be to promulgate it through democratic methods and procedures including the holding of a general election under the unified constitution, which would then lead to the formulation of a unified legislature and a unified government. Thus, a unified and democratic republic would be created.

In September 1998, North Korea's Prime Minister Yeon Hyeongmuk paid a historic four-day visit to Seoul that marks a turning point in inter-Korean relations. Yeon led a seven-member delegation attending the first of two meetings formally known as the "highest-level officials talks," or prime ministers conference, between North and South Korea. South Korea's Prime Minister Gang Yeonghun paid a return visit to Pyongyang for the second prime minister's meeting in October. Prime Minister Gang traveled to Pyongyang as head of a seven-member delegation. These round of talks concluded with a mid-December meeting, again in Seoul.

This exchange of visits by North and South Korean prime ministers, the first of its kind in the 45 years since the country was divided, signifies that Seoul and Pyongyang are now prepared to accept each other as legitimate counterparts in inter-Korean relations. The meetings also represent the establishment of the first "official" contacts between the two governments. Although two inter-Korean exchanges have occurred previously, namely visits by secret envoys in 1972, and Red Cross sponsored reunions and artist-troupe exchanges in 1985, this was the first time that Seoul and Pyongyang had exchanged official visits by their prime ministers.

In addition, there were artistic and cultural exchanges held between both sides that coincided with the October and December visits.

In October South Korean artists participated in a music festival held in Pyongyang. They were granted permission to travel north and enjoyed a warm reception from their hosts. In December, that visit was reciprocated by the North Koreans whose artists performed twice in a "Year End Traditional Music Concert for Reunification" in Seoul.

Even though there have been many North-South contacts so far, many people believe that the normalization of North-South relations would not be realized in near future. What then would be the first condition for establishing an atmosphere of peaceful coexistence on the Korean Peninsula? This would be a provisional acceptance of the fact of division. On the Korean Peninsula, there are in fact "Two Koreas" in existence. It



must be accepted that neither side is going on talk over the other.<sup>16</sup> Once this new mind-set is fixed, the division of Korea becomes a stable type and normal inter-Korean relations become possible. I believe that when relations become normalized, an atmosphere of peaceful coexistence can mature. The fact of Korea's division has become publicly accepted in the flow of world events.

Second, it should be accepted that a peaceful North/South political integration be anticipated within a relatively short period of time. This means that it must be accepted that the methodology for peaceful reunification encompasses gradualism, a step-by-step doctrine and functionalism in addition to neo-functionalism. Moreover, it must be accepted that a middle phase is necessary for actual reunification. Here the thoughts of a scholar are pertinent: "Unless the Korean people, who have become both alien and enemy to one another, undergo a 'middle phase' of reunification, i. e, contact, exchange and reconciliation, no matter what sort of 'necessary' or 'provisional' debate occurs on the political level, expectations for success are totally unrealistic."<sup>17</sup>

In regards to this assertion, if we examine the history of the development of East/West German relations, it is possible to find some relevancy to the Korean question. It is very important not to overlook the importance of the years of mutual trade and cooperation that built up to the dramatic breakthrough in East/West German relations recently. North and South Korea must rise above confrontation between ideologies and moral obligation, and a truly sincere effort must be made to establish as quickly as possible mutual trade and human contact. To this point, President No proposed on July 20, 1999 that on August 15 in commemoration of the 45<sup>th</sup> year of Korea's Liberation discussions be held regarding plans for unrestricted travel by Koreans between the South and North for a period of five days from August 13 to August 17.<sup>18</sup> North Korea immediately rejected this proposal. But we feel that with a short period of time the possibilities are great that the North and South will be able to come to some sort of agreement. This type of "middle phase" interaction is part of the process if a peaceful reunification is to be possible.

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<sup>16</sup> Even the Soviet scholars accept the existence of "two Koreas" on the peninsula as a basic assumption for the sincere North/South dialogues. See V. Martynov and G. Kunadze, "Korean Peninsula on the Eve of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: An Equation in Two Unknowns," an article prepared to congratulate *Dong-A Ilbo*'s 78<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1998. *Dong-A Ilbo* [Dong-A Daily News], June 3, 1998.

<sup>17</sup> Yeongil Jeong, *On the Unification of the Divided Countries* (in Korean)(Seoul: Goryeo-won, 1988), 369.

<sup>18</sup> For the full text, see Korean Overseas Information Service, *Opening South Korea's Border* (Seoul, July 1999).



Third, the two Koreas must sit down and discuss seriously the long-avoided topic of arms reduction between the two countries.<sup>19</sup> Without mitigation of military tension, the goal of establishing peace on the Korean Peninsula is not more substantive than a mirage. On numerous occasions, the South has made proposals to the North on the problem of arms reduction on the peninsula. As briefly mentioned, in his October 1988 address to the United Nations General Assembly, President No stated that if North Korea responded, his administration was ready to begin serious discussions on arms reduction.<sup>20</sup> Most recently in July 1990, the President established a panel of specialists on the arms control issue who will be reporting directly to him. First time in the history of North/South talks, this proposal was on the agenda of the September 1990 Prime Ministerial meeting. This would be a point of departure for substantive talks on changing the Korean War Armistice Agreement to a peace treaty.

Fourth, in order for relations between the North and South to be normalized and for the development of peaceful coexistence between the two countries, it is extremely important that North Korea undergoes a process of positive change. It was in order to make this process a success that President No issued his special proclamation of July 7, 1988.<sup>21</sup> In the proclamation, the President pointed out that the South was making a concerted effort to establish friendly relations with, and exist in a spirit of cooperation with communist countries. The North, in turn, should seek to establish such ties with Western countries, thus contributing to stability and peace in the world community. Ultimately this would contribute to a relaxation of tensions between North and South Korea.

From this point on, it would be prudent not to regard North Korea as a major threat if we wish to institute a policy of change. West Germany took the lead in establishing trade and cooperation with and gave economic aid to East Germany. But during that time careful measures were taken so that East Germany's pride was not hurt in the process. Underlying this, of course, was the fact that West Germany did not consider East Germany to be a threat.

#### 4. Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, the future of inter-Korean relations, which is most important in promoting peace and stability in Northeast Asia, will be touched upon. The structure of the division on the Korean Peninsula is a compound one, resulted from international settings and internal

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<sup>19</sup> On the issue of arms talks, see Yeong Koo Cha, "Arms Talks on the Korean Peninsula: A Korean Perspective," in *Political and Economic Prospects for the Asian Pacific Region: The Views of the Asian Experts*, 73-86.

<sup>20</sup> *Korea: A Nation Transformed*, 3-12.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 65-8.



confrontation. To put it more simply, these terms describe a situation that arose as a result of an overlap of the international cold war on that of Korea's own domestic cold war. When the division is understood in this way, it is logical to foresee that a recent thaw in the international cold war will be highly significant in terms of the Korean reunification issue.

History will most certainly regard Gorbachev's reforms as revolutionary in the way that Lenin's October Revolution was. The repercussion effect has been extremely comprehensive. In East Europe the collapse of communist dictatorships signals the end to an era of ideological confrontation between East and West, and hopefully signs of harmony and cooperation will soon follow on the horizon.

Repercussions finally touched Asia also. Although temporarily impeded by the tragic bloodshed of the Tiananmen Square Incident, cries for reform, openness and freedom were heard in China, and throughout the nation the opposition seized the chance to hold demonstrations. In Mongolia hard-line Stalinism is undergoing modification. Finally on the Korean Peninsula the icebergs of the cold war are beginning to shift. Korea's *Nordpolitik* has garnered sympathetic responses from the communist bloc. With the exception of Albania, South Korea now enjoys diplomatic relations with all East European countries and Mongolia. Further, the historical diplomatic relationship established by Presidents No and Gorbachev can be viewed in very optimistic terms. In the not-too distant future, establishment of formal diplomatic relation with China should become a reality.

The warmth from the international thaw is even touching North Korea. In the first place, the North's indispensable supporter, Soviet Union is exerting a tremendous amount of pressure for change. The Soviets are persuading the North to fall in line with the world trend. The Chinese, upon whom the North's leadership has a unique dependency, and who became even more rigidly doctrinal after the Tiananmen Square Incident, has even counseled at the very least dialogue with South Korea. On other fronts, North Korea is tentatively involved with expanding its exchanges and cooperation with Western countries.

The current international trend to "Koreanize" the problems of the two Koreas remind us that the heart of the problem lies within each nation itself. To begin with, the North's extremely doctrinal rigidity is a major obstacle. Gim Ilseong has attempted to keep the citizens of North Korea under his direct control, and always ready for military mobilization. The results have kept the North Korean people at a low standard of living and by necessity completely cut off from the outside world. The North Korean power elite claims the international trend that accepts "Koreanization" of the Korean problem is an intrigue to divide the two Koreas permanently. In making this emotional appeal to the sensitive issue of Korean nationalism, they block all reform efforts and maintain Gim Ilseong's theocratic rule.



As many experts have already pointed out, North Korea's orderly change and stability would be beneficial for North-South relations in the future. Rather than a Romanian revolutionary change, a gradual and orderly change would be desirable in North Korea. With this in mind, thorough research on and preparation for what type of descendants Gim Ilseong's system will generate is necessary. It would be also desirable to point the technocrat faction toward the line of pragmatism. In the event that the power of the technocrats was used pragmatically, the idea of "liberating" the South could be abandoned. And for the time being both sides could live with a policy of peaceful coexistence.

For South Korea the new trends in international politics are very positive and productive. If political situation becomes more stable, the North will lose whatever hopes it has the realization of communist revolution in South Korea. Instead, the North will be forced to abandon its position of rigid doctrinism and allow exchanges with the South. In this case, peaceful international order can be established earlier than expected in Northeast Asia.









Photo 1: Group picture of contributors taken at the Sheraton Walker Hill.





Photo 2: Taken at the Office of President Min Byong-chun of Dongguk University, co-organizer of the 5th International Seminar on Buddhism and Leadership for Peace together with the Korean Buddhist Dae Won Sa Temple of Hawaii.





Photo 3: A dinner photo taken at the Sheraton Walker Hill with former South Korean President Gim Daejung and the seminar representatives. President Gim Daejung delivered a special speech to the seminar participants







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