

LET PEACE PREVAIL ON EARTH

The belief that the only way to fight aggression is by applying more aggressive methods has led to the arms race between the great powers. And this competition to increase the weapons of war has only brought mankind to the very brink of total self-destruction. If we do nothing about it, the next war will be the end of the world where there will be neither victors nor victim... only dead bodies.

Hatred does not cease by hatred;
By love alone does it cease.

Such is the Buddha's advice to those who preach the doctrine of antagonism and ill-will, and who set men to war and rebellion against one another. Many people say that the Buddha's advice to return good for evil is impracticable. Actually, it is the only correct method to solve any problem. This method was introduced by the great Teacher from His own experience. Because we are proud and egoistic, we are reluctant to return good for evil, thinking that the public may treat us as being cowardly people. Some people even think that expressions of kindness, honesty, patience and gentleness are signs of weakness. But what harm is there if we could settle our problems and bring peace and happiness by adopting this cultured method and by sacrificing our dangerous egoism?

TOLERANCE

Tolerance must be practiced if peace is to come to this earth. Force and compulsion will only create intolerance. To establish peace and harmony among mankind, each and everyone of us must first learn to practise the ways leading to the extinction of hatred, greed and delusion, the roots of all evil forces, tolerance and peace will come to this restless world.

Today the followers of the most compassionate Buddha have a special duty to work for the establishment of peace in the world and to show an example to others by following their Master's advice:

All tremble at punishment,
All fear death;
Comparing others with oneself,
One should neither kill nor cause to kill.

Dhammapada

Peace is always obtainable. The way to peace is not only through prayers and rituals. Peace is the result of man's mental development, harmony with his fellow beings and with his fellow beings and with his environment. The peace that we try to introduce by force is not a lasting peace. It could be likened to a truce between the conflict of selfish desire and fleeting worldly conditions.

Peace cannot exist on this earth without the practice of kindness and tolerance. To be tolerant, we must have proper understanding, with unbiased mind. The Buddha says,

No enemy can harm one so much as one's own thoughts of craving, hate and jealousy.

Dhammapada

Buddhism is a religion of perfect understanding because it preaches a life of self-restraint and self-reliance. Buddhism teaches a life based not on rules but on principles.

Buddhism has never persecuted or maltreated those whose beliefs are different. The Teaching of the Buddha is such that anyone can practise the Noble religious Principles even without any religious labels.

The world is like a mirror; if you look at it with a smiling face, you can see your own, beautiful smiling face. On the other hand, if you look at it with a grim face, you will invariably see ugliness. Similarly, if you treat the world kindly the world will also certainly treat you in like manner. Learn to be peaceful with yourself and the world in return will also be peaceful with you.

Man's mind is given to so much self-deceit or egoistic ideas that he does not want to admit his own weaknesses. He will try to find some lame excuses to justify his wrong action so as to create an illusion that he is blameless. If a man really wants to be free from problems, he must have the courage to admit such weakness. The Buddha says:

*Easily seen are other's faults;
Hard indeed it is to see one's own faults.*

The history of mankind is a continuous manifestation of man's greed, hatred, pride, jealousy, selfishness and delusion. It is mentioned that during the last 3,000 years, men have fought 15,000 major wars. Is this the characteristic feature of man? What is his destiny? If they are really human how can they bring destruction to their fellow beings?

Although men, have discovered and invented many important things which people have not known before, they have also made great advances leading towards the destruction of their own kind by misusing this new discoveries. Many human dignity and civilizations have been completely erased from this earth...Modern man has become so sophisticated in his art and techniques of warfare that it is now possible for him to turn the whole of mankind into ashes within a few seconds. The world has become a store-house of military hardware as a result of a little game called "Military Superiority" We are told that the prototype of a nuclear weapon is more powerful than the atomic bomb which was dropped at Hiroshima, Japan in August 1945. Scientists believe that a few hundred thermonuclear weapons will chart the course towards, universal destruction. Just see what human beings are doing to their own human race! Think what sort of a scientific development it is! See how cruel and selfish man has become.

Man should not pander to his aggressive, intrinsic attitude. He should instead uphold the noble teachings and display justice with morality to enable peace to prevail.

Treaties, pacts and peace formulae have been adopted and millions of words have been spoken by countless world leaders throughout the world who proclaim that they have finally found the way to maintain and promote peace on earth. But for all their efforts, they have not even succeeded in removing the threat to mankind. The reasons for this is that we have all failed to educate our young to truly understand and respect the need for selfless service and instill in them the danger of selfishness. To guarantee true peace, we must use every method available to us to educate our young to practise love, goodwill and understanding.

THE BUDDHIST ATTITUDE

Buddhists should not be the aggressors even in protecting their religion. They must try their best to avoid any kind of violent act. Sometimes they may be forced to go to war by others who do not respect the concept of the brotherhood of man as taught by the Buddha. They may be called upon to defend their fellow men from aggression, and as long as they have not renounced the worldly life, they are duty-bound to join in the

struggle for peace and freedom. Under these circumstances, they cannot be blamed for their actions in becoming a soldier or being involved in defence. However, if everyone were to follow the advice of the Buddha, there would be no reason for war to take place in this world. It is the duty of every cultured man to find all possible ways and means to settle disputes in a peaceful manner, without declaring war to kill his fellow men. The Buddha did not teach His followers to surrender to any forms of evil powers.

Indeed, with reason and science, man could conquer nature, and yet man has not yet even secured his own life. Why is it that life is in danger? While devoted to reason and being ruled by science, man has forgotten that he has a heart which has long been neglected and been left to wither away and he polluted by selfish desire.

If we cannot secure our own lives, then how can world peace be possible? To obtain peace, we must train our minds to face facts. We must be objective and humble. We must realize that no one person, nor one nation is always wrong. To obtain peace, we must also share the richness of the earth. We should not deprive the living right of others.

It is simply inconceivable that five percent of the world's population should enjoy fifty percent of its wealth, or that twenty-five percent of the world should be fairly well-fed and some over-fed, while seventy-five percent of the world is always hungry. Peace will only come when nations are willing to share, the rich to help the poor and the strong to help the weak, thus creating international goodwill. Only if and when these conditions are met, can we envision a world with no excuse for wars.

The madness of the armaments race must stop! The amount of money and human lives that various governments waste in the battlefield should be diverted to build up the economies to elevate the standard of living of the people.

The world cannot have peace until men and nations renounce selfish desires, give up racial arrogance, and eradicate crazy attitude for possession and power. Wealth cannot secure happiness. Religion alone can affect the necessary change of heart and bring about the only real disarmament... that of the mind.

All religions teach people not to kill; but unfortunately this important religious principle is conveniently ignored. Today, with modern armaments, man can kill millions within one second.

Very unfortunately some people bring religious labels, slogan and banners even into their battlefields. They do not know that by so doing they are only disgracing the good name of religion.

*Verily, 'O Monk' said the Buddha, ' due to sensuous craving,
Kings fight with kings, princes with princes, priests with priests,
Citizens with citizens, the mother quarrels with the son,
The son quarrels with the father, brother with brother,
Brother with sister, sister with brother, friend with friend . '*

Majjhima Nikaya

We can happily say that for nearly 3000 years there has never been any serious discord or conflict created by Buddhists that led to was in the name of this religion. This is the result of the dynamic character of the concept of tolerance contained in the Buddha's teaching.

People today are restless, weary filled with jealousy. They are intoxicated with the selfish desire to gain more fame, wealth and power. They crave for gratification of the senses. People are passing their days in fear, suspicion and insecurity. In this time of turmoil and crisis, it becomes difficult for people to coexist peacefully with their fellowmen. There is therefore, a great need for tolerance in the world today so that peaceful co-existence among the people of the world can be possible.

The world has bled and suffered from the disease of dogmatism and of intolerance. The land of many countries today are soaked with the blood needlessly spilled on the earth. Whether in religion or politics people have been conscious of a mission to bring humanity only to their own way of life and have been aggressive towards the ways of life of others.

Let us look back on this present century of highly publicized "Progress"... a century of gadgets and inventions. The array of new scientific and technical devices is dazzling... the hand phone, facsimile, telephone, electric motors, aeroplanes, radio, television, computers, internet, space ship, satellites and electronic devices...

Yet in this same century the children of the earth who have developed all these inventions as the ultimate in progress, are the same people who have butchered millions of others by bayonets or bullets, gas or bomb. Amidst all the great "Progress", Where does the spirit of tolerance stand?

Today man is interested in exploring outer space when he is totally unable to live even as a man-to-man in peace and harmony on the earth. Man will eventually desecrate the other planets.

For the sake of material gain, modern man violates nature. His mental activities are so preoccupied with his pleasure that he is unable to discover the meaning of life. This unnatural behaviour of present day mankind is the result of his wrong conception of human life and its ultimate aim. It is the cause of the frustration, fear insecurity and intolerance of our present time.

In fact, today intolerance is still being practiced in the name of religion. People merely talk of religion and promise to provide short cuts to paradise. If Muslims really follow the concept of Brotherhood, if Christians live by the Sermon on the Mount, if the Hindus shape their life in oneness and if Buddhists follow the Noble Eightfold Path, definitely there will be peace and harmony in this world of ours. In spite of the invaluable Teachings of the great religious teachers people have still not realized the value of harmony and understanding. The intolerance that is practiced in the name of religion is most disgraceful and deplorable.

The Buddha's advice is

*Let us live happily, not hating those who hate us.
Among those who hate us, let us live free from hatred.
Let us live happily and free from ailment. Let us live happily
And be free from greed, among those who are greedy.*

OUR DUTY

Today, more than at any other time in history, peace seems remote and has become the most unattainable commodity in the world. There have been wars and conflicts before, there have also been terrible tyrants and oppressive governments, but never have there been these forces which seem bent on wrecking human lives been so effective on a

global scale. As Buddhists, we too have a great responsibility to support all right thinking men who endeavour to join hands to stop this madness which is threatening to destroy our planet.

Is there a phase in human history when people are contented after getting what they desire? Is it not so that the more we feed our senses, the more the craving grows? How good will it be if men can develop contentment that the Buddha had appreciated.

Millions of innocent human beings now have to flee from their homelands as refugees. There are no words in the human vocabulary that can fully describe the sorrow and agony inflicted by war on the people. "War", according to Albert Einstein. "Is a savage and in-human relic of an age of barbarism". And he is right.

It seems to me today that man is a creature that finds greater pleasure in destruction than creation. Is it in man's intrinsic nature to fight? No, it looks more like men finding peace so boring and war is exciting. The Buddha has clearly stated in the Dhammapada.

*Though one should conquer a million men in the
Battlefield, Yet he, indeed is the noblest victor
Who has conquered himself.*

It is easy to kill, rob and threaten, but it takes greater strength to control the mind when it is influenced by anger and jealousy. Love and compassion are not symptoms of weakness but of strength. It takes a truly strong man to refrain from taking revenge.

The Buddha says in Dhammapada

*Self-conquest is, indeed far greater than the
Conquest of all other folk, no other supernatural being
Can win back the victory of such a person who is
Subdued and ever lives in restraint.*

Such sentiments have been echoed in the teachings of other religious leaders who came before and after the Buddha, but the Buddha alone has stated in no uncertain terms that there can be no excuse whatsoever for attack or even retaliation. There is no excuse for aggression of any kind for the Buddhists. He says: We should not be the aggressors but the defenders.

Racial arrogance, religious discrimination, traditional and customary practices, language and cultural differences, political conflicts, superiority and inferiority complexes, capitalism and poverty are some of the main causes which arouse man's prejudice capable of persuading him to inflict violence and bloodshed on others. Selfishness or egoistic ideas will only further aggravate the situation.

So as human being, our task is to convince the world that peace is something which can be achieved not by conquering others but by conquering our own selfishness.

The Buddhist way is not to increase the numbers of those who label themselves "Buddhists" but to increase the number of noble human beings who do not fear to speak out against war and reject hatred. By realizing the dangerous situation of the world today, we hope that Buddhists all over the world, irrespective of their religious denominations or sects, will contribute something within their capacity to maintain peace and harmony for human beings to live without fear and worry.