

Outlook of Non-Violence in Buddhism: An Informative Study

Sanjib Kumar Das

Introduction

India is a land of multi-religions, multi-systems and multi-beliefs. Moreover, it is the land of enlightened beings right from the fourth century B.C. and has given birth to countless sages and personalities like Gautama the Buddha, Guru Nanak, Shankaracharya, Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Ramkrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Babasaheb Ambedkar and so on from time to time. Thus, it seems a sort of spiritual power has pervaded since the time immemorial. Particularly, practice of non-violence, tolerance, compassion and love is deeply rooted in the religions developed in the country. It causes even an illiterate person gains a spiritual personality by coming into the contact of inexpressible spiritual truths. A long lineage of sages and saints as well as siddhas and great souls are involved in its history. The property of spirituality of this religious land is the most precious gift of its citizen. In all these precious gifts, Tathāgata Buddha, the Founder of Buddhism, retains a significant role.

Followed by the attainment of Buddhahood, Buddha turned Three Wheels of Doctrine¹ according to the wish, interest and disposition of sentient beings, and moreover solely for the welfare of others. In course of time, His teachings were compiled in three baskets called in Sanskrit 'Tripiṭaka'. Undoubtedly, His entire words (*Buddhavacana*) are good at the beginning; it is good in the middle; and it is good at the end too. It is because if his *vacana* is examined we will be sure that it is really favourable, appropriate and beneficial in every circumstance and occasion. Why is it so? The reason is that His *vacana* is not based on any kind of superstitious belief or dogma. Rather, whatever He spoke during the three Wheels of Doctrine is logical and relevant in every circumstance and era. This is the reason He emphasized that His *vacana* should not be accepted just by closing one's eyes with blind faith by thinking it has been spoken by such and such great being. Rather, it should be examined and investigated, and after examination and investigation, if it is found relevant, logical, true and beneficial, it should only then be accepted.

¹ According to Mahāyāna assertion, followed by the attainment of Buddhahood, Tathāgata Buddha turned Three Wheels of Dharma. In the first Wheel of Dharma, he preached on the existence of all phenomena, that is, if there is suffering, definitely there is a cause of that suffering and to every cause there is a remedy. So applying the remedy, one can become free from that suffering. Moving up the standard bit higher, i.e., in the second Wheel of Dharma, he spoke that all phenomena are empty by nature and if any phenomenon exists, does exist on interdependent basis. These two aspects of phenomena are like a single coin that has one identity but two different aspects. It means on the basis of interdependent origination, existence of every phenomenon can be accepted. Therefore, it is normally explained by the scholars that the existence of all phenomena are merely a designation, an imputation, rather than naturally existent. Later, in the third Wheel of Dharma, the Blessed One spoke on the subject, Buddha-nature, the *Tathāgatagarbha*.

He said in *Śrī Mahābala Tantrarāja*:

O monks and wise men,
Do not accept my words just because you respect me,
But analyze them by yourself as the goldsmith analyze gold through burning,
cutting and rubbing
And then accept them. [Tantra 216 Ga 216B]

As per the above-mentioned description, all the paths paved by him through delivering sermons are mutually interconnected like a web, and so none of them be regarded as less important. However, the entire path is summarized into two main two things: view and conduct. And both of them are meant to help reach the final spiritual goal, i.e., the attainment of liberation. Between these two main things, views refers to the system of *Pratītyasamutpāda* while conduct to non-violence. Regarding the former, i.e., the system of *Pratītyasamutpāda* is the central viewpoint to the practise of Buddhism. It is the heart; it is the backbone of the Buddha's entire thought, entire philosophy. It is the root foundation of entire Buddhist tenets as well as the doctrine that differentiates Buddhism from all other religions and philosophies. Although *Pratītyasamutpāda* is the cause to accomplish emptiness, but the realization of subtle *Pratītyasamutpāda* is only possible only after the comprehension of emptiness. Without understanding the depth and actuality of *Pratītyasamutpāda*, different types of misconceptions in Buddhist religion and philosophy are liable to occur. Indeed, it is the essence of the Buddha's entire philosophy, and the essence of this system is found inscribed in many stone inscriptions saying to Śāriputra by Aśvajit:

ye dharmāḥ hetuprabhavaḥ hetuṃ teṣāṃ tathāgathyavadat//
teṣāṃ ca yo nirodha evaṃ vādī mahāśramaṇaḥ//

[All phenomena are produced from cause.
Its cause has been spoken by the Tathāgata.
Their cessation whatever it may be
Has been spoken by the great Śramaṇa.]

On the other hand, regarding non-violence, its presentation is elaborated in several Buddhist scriptures and treatises. Some outlines will be presented on the basis of authentic sources here as under:

Meaning

The Sanskrit term 'Ahimsā' = *a+himsā* means not+*himsā*. *Himsā*= Harm, injury or violence. The Sanskrit root *hims* meaning to strike. Thus, we begin with the idea of non-injury. In some ways, it literally means not hitting. The term is generally rendered into English as 'Non-harm, Non-injury, not causing harm or Non-violence'. In another words, willfully refraining from any action, cause of action or intention of action which is born out of hatred or greed accompanied by a will to refrain from harming others or from an indifferent attitude; or from a lack of caring for others, is also non-violence. It means one

should himself abstain from taking life of other living beings, should not have the intention to kill and also should not be inspired others for doing so. Anyhow, the term ‘Ahimsā’ is universally translated as ‘Non-violence’.

Non-violence is the heart of Buddhist thinking and conduct. It is derived from the perspective of the view of universal loving-kindness (*maitrī*) and compassion (*karuṇā*) towards all living beings. When it is understood in this way non-violence calls for positive action to do away with sufferings of all living beings.

In fact, concept of non-violence has been the basic practice in the four Indian religions of Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism and Sikhism. It is defined by the Encyclopedia Britannica as “the ethical principle of not causing harm to other living things.” The philosophical principles of these religions occupy highest position in terms of significance and applicability. In ancient India, the concept of non-violence was not a mere theory; but, practised in different ways. These practices of non-violence had been instrumental in resolving many issues among the rulers and prevent war.

From the Buddhist point of view, non-violence is truly a valuable gift to the world. This concept can play significant role in the process of making the world peaceful, better and happier place if applied and taken into practice properly. Today, we are in the era of globalization, where there are number of means of communication and transportation available. On the other hand, some countries are burning under the fire of violence day and night and so they seek the light of non-violence for relief. Therefore, the world is in dire need of the applicability of non-violence and it has to be made practicable so that global political and religious crisis can be brought to an end to a large extent. To practise non-violence is far easier than to be violent in general. Violence in any form creates suffering and unhappiness for both self and others whereas non-violence brings peace and harmonious co-existence. If we want universal brotherhood, mutual understanding, co-operation, communal harmony and global peace, we need to adopt non-violence as our only instrument to peacefully settle down the differences whatever it may be.

Concept of Non-violence in other Indian religions

Jainism is one of the main religions of India. In this religion also, this practice is being widely prevalent. The basic philosophy of Jainism is not to injure even the small insects at all. The followers of Jainism made it as a part of their vows. This can simply be understood from their practice that Jains eat during day time only and cover their mouths with cotton mask so that they would not accidentally or unintentionally swallow or harm insects or germs while eating food or breathing air. It is advised not to cause pain and suffering to other beings. In Jainism, non-violence is seen as the most essential religious duty for everyone. “*Ahimsā paramo dharmah*” is a statement often inscribed on Jain temples. Non-violence is practised in Hindu systems as well. The meat eating and animal sacrifices are restricted in Hinduism except on some occasions. It was common practice in our ancient society, where royal family engaged in frequent hunting expeditions for their pleasure and for game meat as well. Most of all, the animal sacrifices were common among the tribal inhabited areas in order to please their local gods and goddesses.² Non-violence practiced

² Ed. Das, Sanjib Kumar & Geshe Dakpa Kalsang. *Buddhavacana*, Delhi: Buddhist World Press, 2018, p. 184

by Mahatma Gandhi, who made the concept famous in modern times, should duly be acknowledged and respected. He made it as important strategy in Indian struggle for independence from British rule. His approach of non-violence was the non-violence of brave and courage rather than weakness and fear. He said that non-violence like charity must begin at home. Sikhism believes in the equality of all human beings. A peaceful people, Sikhs uphold non-violence, although they do believe they do believe that force can be used as a last resort.³

Non-violence in Buddhism

Apart from the above-mentioned concept of non-violence by the non-Buddhist schools in India, this concept is the heart of conduct, life-tree of practice as asserted by Buddhists. In the absence of its practice hardly one can become a real Buddhist. Non-violence, loving-kindness, compassion and tolerance are the valuable teachings of Buddhism which are relevant and in many ways benefitting the mankind.

The concept of non-violence in Buddhism has been laid out in several areas of practice such taking refuge, five fundamental precepts (pañca śīla), fourfold immeasurable (caturbrahmavihāra), cause of cultivating the Bodhicitta, right livelihood, identification of an ideal Brāhmaṇa, ten wholesome actions and so on. **(i)** We should know that seeking for refuge (Śaraṇa-Gamana) is the very thing that makes a demarcation between a Buddhist and a non-Buddhist. In other words, it is called the entrance to become a Buddhist. After become a Buddhist one has to observe some certain training. It is explained that having taken refuge in the Dharma we do not hurt other beings. It is stated in sutra:

He who has taken refuge in the noble Dharma
Does not think of hurting and destroying.⁴

From the two lines mentioned above, it is clear that one who wants to become a Buddhist the concept of non-violence is made imbibed in him at the grass root level. It means his Buddhist life begins with the conduct of non-violence by giving up violence. Otherwise he does not become eligible to be a pure Buddhist.

(ii) Buddha's disciples are generally categorized into two— laity and ordained. Both are eligible to become upāsaka by receiving the five fundamental precepts. The five are: not killing, not stealing, not indulging in sexual misconducts, not telling lies and not taking alcohol. Among these five, the first precept is to avoid doing harm to other living things. And the precept applies to all living beings not just humans. All beings have a right to their lives and that right should be respected. Therefore, we cannot impose suffering on others. Killing not only causes suffering to the person who is killed but also causes suffering for their family and friends who have lost their loved one. It is also the seed of future suffering, with bad karmic consequences for the killer. The word “doing harm to other living beings” does not only mean doing violence by killing, rather it also covers any harmful action

³ *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*

⁴ *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, 1974, p. 105

committed by killing, stealing, adulterating, telling lies and even spoiling life by taking alcohol.

During the first Wheel of Dharma turned at Sarnath, Buddha spoke on the Four Noble Truths— Truth of Suffering, Truth of the Cause of Suffering, Truth of Cessation and Truth of Path. Among the four, when the issue of Truth of Suffering arises, we need to understand that existence of suffering takes place when a harmful action referring to violence is done. So, unless we give up the violence, there is no expectation of non-violence.

(iii) Among the eightfold noble path, here emphasis is being given on the Right Livelihood (Skt. *Samyak ājīva*) as this one seems to be very vital and need of the day for every mankind. It is the outcome of right action. It means that we should earn a living without violating the principles of moral conducts. On the other hand, wrong means of livelihood are those which simply cause suffering to self and others. Trading in human beings, trading in weapons, trading in flesh, trading in intoxicating drinks and drugs, and trading in poison are examples. These represent generally the codes of morality as initially spoken by the Buddha during his first sermon at Sarnath. Later, by virtue of the need and circumstances, it was distinguished for ordained and laity. However, the five basic codes (*pañcaśīla*) have been prescribed as the foundation of codes for both ordained and laity.

Some may say that they have to do such a business for their living and, therefore, it is not wrong for them to do so. But this argument is entirely baseless. If it were valid, then thieves, murderers, gangsters, smugglers and swindlers can also easily say that they are doing such unrighteous acts only for their living and, therefore, there is nothing wrong with their way of life.

Some people believe that fishing and hunting animals for pleasure and slaughtering animals for food are not against the Buddhist precepts. This is another misconception that arises owing to a lack of knowledge in *Dharma*. All these are not decent actions and bring suffering to other beings. But in all these actions, the one who is harmed most of all is the one who performs these unwholesome actions. Maintaining a life through wrong means is not in accordance with the Buddha's teaching. Buddha says in *Dhammapada*:

Though one should live a hundred years immorally and unrestrained,
Yet it would indeed be better to live one day virtuously & meditatively.
It is better to die as a cultured and respected person
Than to live as a wicked person. [103]

Right livelihood may be considered as the most important one for us in this era too. In this context, two things may be mentioned here. The first one is— we human beings have a strange habit that we earn and want to earn livelihood for the purpose of hoarding instead of enjoying. For the sake of storing, we keep on earning through wrong means till our last breath. We open accounts in different banks, corporations and post office, and keep on depositing and hoarding. We hardly think how much of them will be enjoyed by us during our present life time. We hardly think how long we will live; how much the person will be destined to enjoy the wealth for whom we are hoarding. Most probably they will also do the same thing, I mean instead of enjoying, they will also hoard. Another thing is we hardly think that in order to be destined to enjoy, good karmas were to be done and merits were to

be accumulated in the previous life. Otherwise, despite of being a millionaire, one is not destined to have meal for three times a day properly. On the other hand, despite of being an animal like dog, cat, bird etc., it lives with rich family and enjoys rich food regularly.

The second thing is— in the present age, our main motto is just to earn money and hoard property. For the sake of earning money, we get involved in various incorrect livelihoods, such as corruption, scam, bribe, cheating etc. We don't care about our parents, children, friends, teachers, state or even country. The three primary poisons— attachment, hatred and ignorance— play crucial role at the time of getting involved in such wrong activities of earning money. Ignorance does not permit you to understand the reality and actuality; attachment increases your want and greediness; and hatred causes to lose your fear, embarrassment and shame. As a result, we do countless unwholesome things from the moment of getting up from bed to going to bed. Not only this, even at the time of sleep, we sleep by making plans, schemes, tricks etc. What happens to it? The Wheel of Time never stops. Rather it keeps on rotating and amassing huge quantity of misdeeds. Somehow if we are not successful in our plans or tricks, we become unhappy which simultaneously gives rise to dissatisfaction, stress and tension. Consequently we are caught by different types of sickness. Now see the role of the same money we tried to earn and hoard. We utilize the money for the treatment of our sickness. From one side, we are earning whereas from the other side, we are losing. We keep on giving pain to our precious body for nothing. So what I want to say that yes, we need money for our survival. But do we need to be involved in incorrect livelihood?

In general, five types of accumulation are considered as wrong livelihood for both ordained and lay persons. They are:

1. Using flattery in order to receive wealth, property etc., i.e., the way of gaining it through eloquent speech is called wrong livelihood.
2. Asking for a desired object indirectly by giving a hint, without saying directly.
3. Reminding some of a gift which he had given on a precious occasion, and thus wishing for it again.
4. Presenting fruits, flowers etc., to an officer or rich person for the purpose of getting some important work done.
5. That which is prescribed for monks only. Monks are allowed to hoard personal property. In spite of that, if a monk accumulates, that would be wrong livelihood.

Now the question arises here, how can one be turned back from such wrong livelihood. In this concern, Buddhism emphasizes that first we need to gain proper understanding in order to differentiate the means of earning livelihood whether it is right or wrong. It is because wrong means only does not refer to those actions done by force and confidentiality as these are being done by sweet talk in our society from top to bottom for the purpose of getting their work done. Everyday television, radio and newspaper make us witness news of several powerful people once engaged in such wrong means of livelihood languishing in jail. Such action is also done by the people through flattery and manipulation. For example, if an agent of a company comes to a family and speaks to its member using pleasant and sweet words as well as showing booklet, pamphlet and official document with enticement, unaware innocent people will hardly disbelieve in them. It is because everybody is not able and even doesn't have time to investigate the truth between their words and actions. Such

type of fraud persons and agents collect money in the name of company and disappear while the innocent public loses their capital due to their misunderstanding. What happens here? Such fraud and fake persons adopt the wrong means for earning their livelihood. Buddha also mentioned: “These five trades, O monks, should not be taken up by a lay follower: trading with weapons, trading in living beings, trading in meat, trading in intoxicants, trading in poison.”— Anguttara Nikaya V.177, *Translated by Martine Batchelor*.

(iv) In the practice of the fourfold immeasurable, Buddha taught compassion and loving-kindness to others in place of hate and violence, and not just love for our friends but equally for our enemies, or those who seek to do us harm. One cannot become enlightened without compassion. Hatred which is one of the three root delusions includes violence, doing harm or killing and it is the fundamental opposite of compassion. The practice of immeasurable compassion is like the attitude of the mother who looks after her sick son more carefully. She always worried about him, thinking, how he will survive etc. In the same way, the practitioner who practices the Immeasurable Compassion sees all sentient beings equally without discriminating nearer and further. Similarly, he thinks about is worried about particularly those who are immersed in suffering, in order to free them from it. With such an attitude, he serves them as much as possible. Neither does he flatter anybody nor does he do anything prompted by selfishness; but the goal to serve the needy persons becomes his nature and enduring purpose of life.

(v) The concept of Bodhicitta is the most important doctrine in Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is the very thing that makes a demarcation between a Mahāyāna practitioner and a Theravāda practitioner. It means this Bodhicitta is the entrance to Mahāyāna System or the root of the Greater Vehicle. The term is rendered into English as mind of enlightenment, altruistic mind of enlightenment, enlightened attitude and so on.

The meaning of Bodhicitta is defined as the wish for perfect enlightenment in order to be able to work for the benefit of others. It is expressed by Maitreya-nāth in *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* (Ornament of Clear Realization):

The cultivation of a Bodhicitta

Is the wish for perfect enlightenment for the benefit of all. [1:19]

In another way, it is also defined that the mind being endowed with compassion and non-dualistic thought is called Bodhicitta. Thus it is very clear that in the absence of compassion there is no question of generating Bodhicitta. This compassion is the other form non-violence and it emerges in a practitioner when he or she is free from violence. Another thing has been mentioned in the previous definition of Bodhicitta: “The wish for perfect enlightenment in order to be able to work for the benefit of others.” Let’s see, if a person wishes to be able to work for the benefits of others, can he do if he is not free from the attitude of violence referring immorality, partiality, disharmony and intolerance? He can only do it when he is endowed with non-violence consisting of compassion, loving-kindness, liberal thought, morality and harmony. Buddhist scriptures and treatises present the ‘Seven Instructions on Cause and Effect (Sapta-Hetu-Phala-Nirdeśa)’ as a process of cultivating the Bodhicitta. Among them, compassion for all sentient beings is the third

cause for cultivation of Bodhicitta. There it says, in the absence of compassion, Mahāyāna Buddhism becomes like a blind person.

(vi) In *Dhammapada*, while explaining the meaning of Brāhmaṇa Buddha says: “*One who remains friendly amongst the hostiles, Who abides peacefully amongst the cudgel-holders, Who is detached amongst the attached ones, I call him a Brāhmaṇa.* [406]⁵. Somewhere else, He also says: “Monks, even if bandits were to sever you savagely limb by limb with a two-handle saw, he who gave rise to a mind of hate towards them would not be carrying out my teaching”. Here He also indirectly encourages compassion for all life, human and non-human for non-violence. He also said that even if someone is killing you, hating him would be contrary to the Dhamma. In this context, the famous story of Aṅgulimālā can be presented as a living example for it. We all know that Aṅgulimālā being misguided by his teacher killed 999 innocent people and was to kill one more for making a garland of fingers. Having intuited his potential Tathāgata Buddha went to talk to Aṅgulimālā, even though he was warned by almost everyone not to do so. Aṅgulimālā saw the Buddha coming and ran towards him in waving a knife. However, no matter how fast he ran, and even though the Buddha was walking at his normal pace, Aṅgulimālā couldn’t catch up to Him. He eventually called out to the Buddha to stop. “I have stopped Aṅgulimālā, you stop too,” Buddha replied. Aṅgulimālā asked how it was possible since the Buddha was still walking. Buddha famously replies: “Aṅgulimālā, I have stopped forever, I have abstained from violence towards living beings. But you have no restraint towards things that live. That is why I have stopped and you have not”. Aṅgulimālā relents and realizing the error of his ways, he takes refuge in Buddha, and becomes a monk. He changed his name to “Ahimsaka” (non-violent one) to reflect his new identity and change of heart. From the story we can take lesson to apply the concept of non-violence to today’s world.

Apart from the above description, we must know that Sākyamuni Buddha is invoked by name “The Compassionate One”. The reason is that He does welfare to sentient beings being overpowered by compassion because He gave up violence in all respects. He is also called by another name “Jina (The Victorious One)” because He got victory over four kinds of Mara (evil spirits) including Klesha-Mara that consists of ignorance, violence, attachment and so on.

In short, non-violence and violence, both are mental factors that accompany the mind. In order understand, non-violence, we need to understand its accompanying factors too. As we need to understand suffering to understand happiness, so we need to understand violence to understand non-violence. It is because these two are mutually interdependent and acquirable qualities. There are four principal factors of violence— ignorance, hatred, selfishness and greediness. Among these four, ignorance is non-understanding of reality. In fact, violence basically takes place due to ignorance. Secondly, hatred gives birth to pride which then causes one to be the supreme one among all. It never allows him to be obedient, loyal and disciplined. Thirdly, selfishness makes him biased, and does not allow him to think of others’ welfare.⁶ And fourthly, greediness gives birth to more desires and

⁵ Negi, Wangchuk Dorje. *Dhammapada*, Sarnath: CIHTS, Varanasi, p. 582

⁶ All whosoever who are happy in the world
Are (so) through the wish for the happiness of others;

dissatisfaction.⁷ On the contrary, for non-violence, the cultivation of correct understanding is inevitable. This understanding can assess and examine the actuality and reality of thing and situation. The correct understanding accompanied by compassion gives birth to the real sense of non-violence.

Buddha's teaching says, "Doing no evil whatsoever, practise virtue perfectly, tame your mind completely, this is the teaching of the Buddha".⁸ We should not do evil acts; we should do positive acts, because we want happiness and that comes from doing positive acts, while suffering comes from doing negative acts. Thus, Buddhism is a teaching which is very much related to human behaviour and is divided into philosophy and conduct. The conduct here is not to harm other fellow beings. This is the behaviour of Buddhists. The philosophy is that your happiness is related to other people. Therefore, cherish people around you, do not harm them and as a result you will gain happiness. On the other hand, if you harm others ignoring their happiness, you would suffer as suffering does not come in causelessly. Since we have obtained this precious human birth, we have to make this life meaningful and constructive. When we talk about doing positive acts and refrain from negative acts, we do so not because Buddha had told us to do, but because the Buddhist teaching is based on the natural law of cause and effect. When Buddha taught Four Noble Truths, He also explained where every suffering comes from and remedies to overcome the suffering. Our happiness arises in dependence on causes and conditions; suffering too arises in dependence on causes and conditions, this is the law of causality. The happiness whatever we experience in this very life, be it material prosperity, good health and better education all come as a result of accumulating the necessary causes and conditions. Thus, different causes and conditions arise in direct relation to human behaviour, which is inextricably related to our way of thinking. We encounter different feelings because of our different patterns of behaviour and our different behaviour arises because of different mental attitude. As mentioned above, we all are equal in wanting happiness right from the state of dream and not wanting suffering. If we happen to ask cruel and aggressive persons whether they really want to fight, their answer would be negative. This is because, they also want happiness but under certain circumstances they are compelled to be violent.

We usually indulge in destructive activities because we are overpowered by negative emotions like ignorance, attachment and anger. Ignorance is so strong that despite of wanting happiness, we are compelled to engage in destructive activities. In short, we should always engage in constructive activities and try to be the contributing factor for peaceful society.

Today, we live in a restless world where our safety and security are our main concerns. Our discontentment and endless desire have given birth to various social and national conflicts and confrontations. People are passing days in suspicion, in fear that leads us to the state of turmoil and instability. Therefore, there is a great need of tolerance

While all whosoever who are miserable in the world

Are (so) through the wish for the happiness of themselves. [7: 129]

⁷ It has been excellently said by the Teacher of Gods and Men

That among all wealth, contentment is the best.

(So) be fully content. If you know contentment,

Even if you possess no wealth, you'll be perfectly rich., *Suhrillekha*, Verse No. 34

⁸ Negi, Wangchuk Dorje. *Dhammapada*, Sarnath: CIHTS, Varanasi, 2003, p. 22

and communal harmony, so that peaceful co-existence among the people from diverse faith can be possible. It is said that “A moment of patience in a moment of anger saves you a thousand moments of regret”. In today’s materialistic world, ethics and morality are being upturned. The need of ethics arises from the fact that man is not perfect by nature, he has to train himself to be a good human being. Morality becomes the most important aspect of living and Buddhist ethics is deeply rooted in natural law which is useful and acceptable to the modern world.

In the meantime, if we take examples of recent terror attacks in France, America and other parts of the world which took hundreds of innocent lives in the name of religion and political ideology; this is to be reiterated that violence has no solution to this. But, the world believes that only way to fight terrorism is to deploy more forces and supply arms and ammunitions which has brought mankind to a state of total destruction. The arms race between super power nations like America, Russia, China, Britain and India created chaotic situation and banished peace from the earth. If we do nothing about it, the next war will be the end of the world where there will be nobody turning out to be victorious nor victim only dead bodies.

The past 20th century witnessed two major incidents at the end of era. The Chinese annexation of Tibet in 1959 and Israel-Palestine border dispute. In both the cases, two prominent leaders of the world Dalai Lama and Yasser Arafat fought for the cause of freedom but with totally different approach. H.H. the Dalai Lama on the one hand, has been advocating non-violence as his means for freedom struggle whereas on the other, Yasser Arafat, leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) fought for almost 40 years leaving behind irreparable loss to the mankind and met his end in year 2004. He said: “The peace for us means the destruction of Israel. We are preparing for an all-out war, a war which will last for generations” “Whoever thinks of stopping the uprising before it achieves its goals, I will give him ten bullets on the chest”.⁹ H. H. the Dalai Lama’s holistic approach of non-violence made him a symbol of peace and harmony throughout the world. He has been tirelessly following the means of non-violence in his freedom movement and constantly admiring Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation time and again. In his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, he narrated: “I would like to take this opportunity to explain the zone of *Ahimsā* or peace sanctuary concept, which is the central element of the Five Point Peace Plan. I am convinced that it is of great importance not only for Tibet, but for peace and stability in Asia. It is my dream that the entire Tibetan plateau should become a free refuge where humanity and nature can live in peace and harmonious balance. It would be a place where people from all over the world could come to seek a true meaning of peace within themselves, away from tensions and pressures of much of the rest of the world. Tibet could indeed become a creative centre for the promotion and development of peace.”

Likewise, H.H. the Dalai Lama has been relentlessly advocating the concept of non-violence” for free Tibet movement for more than four decades ago which has received due recognition from the world leaders today. His holistic approach of non-violence made H.H. the Dalai Lama as an icon of peace in the world. Dalai Lama added: “I consider non-violence to be compassion in action. It does not mean weakness, cowering in fear, or

⁹ Biography of Yasser Arafat

simply doing nothing. It is to act without non-violence, motivated by compassion, recognizing the rights of others”. Christian counterparts are also peace loving people and Jesus Christ taught his followers to demonstrate love for others and one major way to demonstrate love is through a life of peace and non-violence. He wants his followers to put trust in him for protection and to be noted for their peace and love for others. There are various forms of non-violence according to the different religious traditions of the world. It includes:

- To refrain from hurting other beings,
- Abstaining from animal and human sacrifice,
- Practice of forgiveness and tolerance,
- Peace and equanimity towards oneself and others,
- Abstaining from eating meat and animal products,
- Hunting animal and using them as a means of entertainment,
- Avoid action of all kinds in which animals are subjected to unnecessary pain and cruelty as we see these days.

I think the messages of Gandhiji, Dalai Lama, Mother Teresa and other eminent thinkers can play significant role in bringing peace and solace in the world. The mutual understanding and cooperation can bring some solution to the global issues. In order to bring peace on earth, tolerance must be practiced. Violence will create only intolerance. If we observe to establish peace and harmony among the fellow beings, we must learn the ways leading to extinction of anger, hatred, greed and intolerance; the roots of all evil forces. The zero tolerance policy of our country is obviously a national policy framed to combat terrorism. But, the outcome of the policy is yet another question to be answered. National security and integrity is always prioritized; but, violence and counter attacks can never bring lasting peace rather worsen the situation.

The Buddha’s advice does “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.”¹⁰

Mahatma Gandhi has always been a source of inspiration who strongly advocated the principle of non-violence in the process of freedom struggle. In 1930, he said “He would suck the poison out of a dying enemy of him if he was a victim of snake bite. *Ahimsā* is thus equivalent to positive compassion and love.”¹¹ Gandhiji’s greatness could be understood from his holistic approach of non-violence.

The objective of entire Buddhist teachings is to bring peace and harmony. According to the Buddha, there are three types of peace; the peace of this life, life hereafter and permanent peace. The peace of this life can be further categorized into outer and inner peace. The first one is to have peace between man to man, community to community and nation to nation where people live peacefully without fear of warfare. The inner peace is to keep away from conflicts driven by negative emotions and remain free from ill will towards others.

¹⁰ Negi, Wangchuk Dorje. *Dhammapada*, Sarnath: CIHTS, Varanasi, p. 197

¹¹ *Reading Gandhi*, p. 277

As a result of our material prosperity and good health, one may have certain amount of peace but that is not the lasting peace as sought. Unless the inner negative emotions like anger and hatred are pacified, there is no point to imagine peace as the inner anger and hatred can be the cause of outer conflicts. It has been correctly said “The fire of anger can burn down the forest of love.” Therefore, if there is inner peace, then outer peace can be expected consequently. Therefore, the practice of non-violence, loving kindness and compassion can really bring peace with little scope for disharmony in the society.

The peace of life hereafter is also difficult to be imagined. Buddha, therefore, advised to generate loving-kindness, compassion and harmony because all equal in want happiness and do not want suffering. The concept of Buddhism is not only confined to the human beings and animals but also towards the conservation of environment. Buddha was very conscious about the conservation of environment and advised his followers to protect the environment for our own welfare. He encouraged His followers to plant saplings and stopped them from randomly felling down the trees even for the purpose of construction of temples. Many of His staunch disciples were not allowed to cut *kusha* grass (Halfa Grass); if they did so, it was against the law. He further added that the destruction of natural resources can also lead us to the various calamities and disasters. Therefore, the current global warming, deforestation and diversion of course of rivers are the result of destruction of fragile environment. Thus, the teaching of Buddha can also immensely benefit the current environmental issues in many ways.

In order to see peace prevail on earth, one should also give due attention to universal brotherhood. For that to happen we need to analyze the political, social and religious ideologies which in some cases can be a complementing factors for world peace. The ideologies are thoroughly conceived and designed for the betterment of humanity. But unfortunately, these important aspects have been neglected or forgotten for the ego-centric interest of a nation. The current global issues are resulted from the biased self-centered policy of nations. The more powerful we are, the less unhappy we are but more prone to manmade disasters..

“It is said; do unto other as you would have other do onto you”. In the present world, there is no option but to live together in harmony and harmony requires mutual understanding, co-operation and feeling of universal brotherhood. Otherwise, the world will become a chaotic one, full of suffering and tension leading us to the destruction.

Applicability

We all know that the world where we live today is full of suffering, restlessness, dispute and chaos. In the quest of political stability, religious harmony and economic prosperity we are losing our age-old precious ideals. Every country is engaged in making their defense stronger equipped with nuclear power and etc. In some countries violence is the way of their daily life. Due to the rapidly increasing violence thousands of people are compelled to get migrated to other countries and thousands of them are homeless. In such situation, a question arises: can a moral principle of non-violence be practically applied in the harsh, irresponsible, selfish and irrational political world?

It is necessary to view society as it really is. In social and political life conflict is often unavoidable, and even at times good and necessary. Do not such believers have a

responsibility to attempt to oppose and remove social and political wrongs imposed by hostile violence? Is not submission to violence in the form of oppression and tyranny morally unacceptable? Does not an acceptance of principled non-violence require one to confront and attempt to remove such oppression and tyranny, not blindly but with good judgment, skill, and effectiveness? The basic issue becomes, at least in part, how believers in principled non-violence can move towards correcting those expressions of violence without themselves participating in violence. Can the belief in principled non-violence be applied in face of hostile violence in sufficiently powerful ways as to be at least as effective as violence in the same conflict?

Applying principled non-violence in the wider society is often very difficult, especially in extreme situations. It has often been assumed that “the world” necessarily operates by different means than are appropriate for individuals, especially those who believe in principled non-violence. Those means, it is thought, must be evaluated by different standards than those appropriate for individuals. Consequently, it is thought by some, the best that the believer in principled non-violence can do is to refuse to participate in the violence or perhaps protest against it.

Significance

The concept of non-violence has its own significance in terms of its philosophical principles and applicability. Here we must keep one thing in mind that peace, harmony and happiness do not shower down from the sky, nor do they grow up from earth. Since its negative parts are created by human beings in particular, effort must also be made to restore the positive part by eliminating the negative ones. Creating violence in the society ourselves, we cannot expect any divine power for solution. It is absolutely against the Natural Law. Thus, the concept of non-violence needs to be practised in true spirit in order to avoid war and cross border conflicts and confrontations in the world. At the same time, we can ensure peace and communal harmony in the world. Therefore, concept of non-violence needs to be made applicable in all our undertakings and it can undoubtedly go an extra mile in the process of resolving the differences and making the world free from violence. This world is becoming a global village and we all are its villagers. Within this village, there are many countries, races, cultures and languages being spoken. None of these hinder the development of a global village. Although there are differences based on geographical features, community structures, different food habits, religious belief, personalities and languages. However, none of these hamper the global peace and overall harmony. The only problem is some conservative cultures and people create conflicts by separating themselves from other races in the name of religion, culture and territorial boundary. It is, therefore, need of the hour and for our own survival that we must broaden our minds to embrace all nations, all races and all sentient beings as our siblings. Without this capacity and tolerance, how can we expect global peace and harmony? It is said “Pulling a piece of hair can provoke the entire body” Nowadays, the violence taking place in Syria, Jordan and Iraq which can affect the peace and harmony of Asia, Europe and destabilize the peace dialogue of other nations. Non-violence can be a small initiative towards the global harmony. But, we should not think it as an insignificant effort. The truth of a single seed should never be ignored as a tree grows and reproduces because of a seed.

Of course, there are good and bad seeds. Good seeds always grow well and create a bountiful harvest and the bad one grows poorly and farmers prefer good seeds. It is believed that the practice of non-violence if made practicable by the world prominent leaders for the worthy cause of a nation, we can undoubtedly aspire global peace and harmony and live happily as a global citizen.

The Buddhist practice of Bodhicitta¹² can help the people in long way to achieve basic unity and spirit of brotherhood among the believers of different religions. It is said “All suffering comes from yearning for your own happiness, the Perfect Buddhas are born from the intention to benefit others. Therefore, to truly exchange your own happiness for the suffering of others is the practice of Bodhisattva”.

Likewise, the Mauryan emperor great Aśoka (272 BC mid 3rd century) gave up war after he found truthfulness in Buddha’s teachings. He erected eighty four thousand Aśoka pillars enshrined with holy ashes of Buddha so that people come to know about the precious teachings of Buddha and to benefit them in all aspects. These pillars served the purpose of disseminating the teaching of Buddha and his own ideals. He never forced people to embrace Buddhism by using violent means but used to spread the message. Under his patronage, he sent hundreds of devotees in many countries to promote Buddhism.

In short, if the world follows ten wholesome acts of Buddhism¹³ and Eightfold Noble Path¹⁴ then we can have peace and harmony and make this world a better place to live in. I believe that the teaching of Buddha can play significant role at this particular juncture of the world where peace and harmony is needed for a better tomorrow.

¹² Ngulchu Thogme. *Thirty-seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*, Verse No.11.

¹³ Refraining from killing, taking what is not given, indulging in sexual misconduct, telling lies, divisive talk, harsh speech, idle gossip, covetousness, harmful intention and wrong view.

¹⁴ Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness & Right Concentration.

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