

BUDDHIST EDUCATION: THE NOBLE PATH TO PEACE

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ABSTRACT

Buddhist Education is a training system based on the Tri Sikkha, the Three Principles of Training, namely, Precept, Concentration and Wisdom. The precept or Sila is laid down to train and develop physical and verbal behaviors, the concentration or Samadhi for training and developing the mind, and the wisdom or Panna for developing human's intelligence. The practice results in achieving both global peace and the internal peace of human's mind.

Even in the matter of peace, Buddhism always teaches, 'Peace cannot be achieved merely through a word of requests as chanted and prayed by followers of the Theistic religions, but peace can be attained by following the path that leads to peace.' The path leading to peace is called the 'Noble Eightfold Path' or 'Majjhima Patipada' in Pali term, which can be summarized as Tri Sikkha.

As Buddhism holds that inner or mental peace is more important than external or outside peace, i.e., the absence of wars and public uprisings. This is because the root causes of all the external wars are the mental defilements dormant in the bottom of human mind. If all the defilements can be eradicated partly or completely, the world will be in peace. The more defilements are destroyed, the more peaceful the world becomes. The Noble Eightfold Path must be brought into practice. That is why Buddhism is the noble path to peace. And this path is widely open for, and welcome to, all human beings.

Keywords: Buddhist Education, Buddhism, Peace

INTRODUCTION

The rise of Buddhism amidst the occupant religion, i.e., Brahmanism or Hinduism, nearly 3000 years ago, rendered an earthquake-like effect on the then society, whilst having caused an abrupt change in the prevalent paradigm, that was conservative and obsolete, to the newly discovered theory that bases humans' destiny on their own actions instead of the power and might of God or gods as had been believed and trusted by people of those days. Several revolutions, reforms and new inventions in terms of faiths, beliefs and rituals, were formulated and created. Not only did humans receive the benefits from the newly proclaimed religion, but also the fellow living beings like draught animals and pets were liberated from killing in the sacrificial rites as most-wanted offerings to the Deity. Indeed, it is a kind of bold challenges waged by Prince Siddhartha, who later became enlightened as the Buddha, the founder of Buddhism.

As generally admitted, Buddhism is the 'Religion of Peace' and its teachings are regarded as the 'Messages of Peace'. Through its long history of over 2500 years, no war is historically recorded to be staged by, or even related to, Buddhism. Jan Willis wrote in her article, 'Buddhism and Peace', saying, 'I believe that Buddhism offers practical methods to help us deal

with a violent world and to develop lasting peace, first within ourselves and then systemically." and "At its core, Buddhism is a religion of peace."

There is a Buddhist verse saying, "Natthi santiparam sukham (Peace transcends all kinds of bliss.)" There are still more Buddhist proverbs dealing with peace uttered by both the Buddha himself and his followers, in various occasions and various places. Take for example some verses like, "One who expects the rise of peace should discard his needs for sensual pleasures." and "One's mind finds no peace, neither enjoys pleasure or delight, nor goes to sleep, nor feels secure while the dart of hatred is stuck in the heart." (Santideva's great work, the Bodhicaryavatara, Ch.6, verse 3) and "Hatred is never appeased by hatred. Hatred is only appeased by Love (or, non-enmity). This is an eternal law." (Dhammapada verse No.5)

All this is reflected in the UNESCO Constitution that says as follows:

The Governments of the States Parties to this Constitution on behalf of their peoples declare: (1) That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed; (2) That ignorance of each other's ways and lives has been a common cause, throughout the history of mankind, of that suspicion and mistrust between the peoples of the world through which their differences have all too often broken into war; (3) That the great and terrible war which has now ended was a war made possible by the denial of the democratic principles of the dignity, equality and mutual respect of men, and by the propagation, in their place, through ignorance and prejudice, of the doctrine of the inequality of men and races; (4) That the wide diffusion of culture, and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace are indispensable to the dignity of man and constitute a sacred duty which all the nations must fulfill in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern; and (5) That a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and that the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.

In order to make it clear that Buddhism is not only the religion of peace by itself, still its founder was the peace-lover, its teachings are the path that is noble and reliable to lead those who follow them to peace, from the primary to the advanced level, the ultimate goal, viz. Nibbana, and encourage and urge people to tread the path of peace so that the world can achieve peace in real sense, the paper will deal with the issue progressively.

Coverage of Peace

According to Buddhism, peace is in fact the full-final goal, to which all the practical procedures will lead the practitioners. However, before we move further to the practical procedure to achieve the finish, the coverage of peace would be firstly brought into light. As earlier mentioned, peace is, in Pali term, 'Santi' or 'Shanti', which is the synonym of Nibbana, the ultimate goal of Buddhism. Moreover, the term still implies, in its coverage, some other terms such as 'Security' and 'Freedom', both of which bear the same meaning as that of Nibbana, and in several occasions these two words were used in the Buddhist scriptures in place of Nibbana.

In the UNDP's 1994 Human Development Report, the definition of human or global security is expanded to include seven areas. They are (1) Economic security, (2) Food security (3) Health security, (4) Environmental security, (5) Personal security, (6) Community security and (7) Political security. So far as the issue of freedom is concerned, the UNDP has categorized it into two segments, namely, 'Freedom from Fear' and 'Freedom from Want'.

The former implies to emergency assistance, conflict prevention and peace building, while the latter involves hunger, disease and natural disasters. These two issues are very much agreeable with the Buddhist concepts about non-violence or Ahimsa and the hunger which is said to be the great disease for human beings (Jighaccha parama roga).

The Buddha as the Great Peace-Lover

Historically, in the ancient India there was situated a small northern state named Sakka, where the Sakya clan was the ruling monarchy. Eighty years before the Buddhist Era, Prince Siddhattha was born to King Suddhodana and his consort, Queen Mahamaya. The great hope of the dynasty to become a great emperor to expand the territory southwards to the Indian Ocean as predicted by leading advisory Brahmanas, the young prince was brought up, educated and trained to be an incomparable warrior. However, it is a good luck of the world that the prince was not doomed to be a war-thirsty king; on the contrary, he became a kind-hearted prince, who was a peace-lover instead. For instance, a prince Devadatta, his cousin born to the Koliya dynasty of the Koliya state, the twin state of Sakka, shot with an arrow a swan bird which fell down to the earth. Prince Siddhattha helped, out of his compassion, heal the bird's wound to save its life. When Devadatta asked for the bird, and claimed he was its owner, Siddhattha wisely retorted Devadatta, "Who shall be the owner of the bird, one who has given life to it or one who has destroyed its life?" No answer from Devadatta but the deeply-rooted enmity in his mind!

Not only did the prince grew up physically, but also his mind that was full of loving-kindness and compassion was increasing day after day to the extent that when his coronation opportunity drew nearer as King Suddhodana, his royal father, was becoming ageing and ailing, the young prince decided to leave behind all the worldly property and honors mostly needed by humans and become an ascetic in quest of the insight wisdom by which the world peace could be achieved. It is the prince's great vision to choose the path to peace instead of the path to peril, being determined to turn on the 'Wheel of Peace or the Dhamma' rather than the 'Wheel of Might', that will lead to the loss of innumerable lives of innocent people, who became the poor victims.

The history of the world told us that there have been numerous great kings and emperors born to the planet, Earth, such as Alexander, the Great, of the Greek Kingdom of Macedon, Emperor Napoleon of France, Emperor Asoka of India, and Genghis Khan of the Mongol Empire. So far, all of them were remembered just as the persons of the world history, without any influence over the present world. But in the case of Prince Siddhattha, it is absolutely different. Due to his decision to tread the opposite path, *i.e.*, the great renunciation instead of coronation, he was enlightened and became one of the great religious founders of the world, with approximately thousand million followers across the world. His destination would not be different from the other great emperors and kings of the world if he were to choose the same path as they did.

Buddhist Teachings: Messages of Peace

It is not an exaggeration to say that the rise of Buddhism is for peace, and all Buddhist teachings are the messages of peace. It is not merely the peace for human beings but the peace for all living beings, and not merely the peace for this world but for all the worlds. Ron Epstein said in his lecture, 'Buddhist Ideas for Attaining World Peace, "Buddhism teaches that whether we have global peace or global war is up to us at every moment. The situation is not hopeless and out of our hands. If we don't do anything, who will? Peace or war is our decision. The fundamental goal of Buddhism is peace, not only peace in this world but peace in all worlds. The Buddha taught that the first step on the path to peace is understanding the causality of peace. When we understand what causes peace, we know where to direct our efforts."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "We have only two choices: to peacefully coexist, or to destroy ourselves. 'Each and every day, we ourselves encounter--and generate--prejudicial attitudes and behaviors. If we are ultimately to survive at all on this tiny planet that is our mutual

home, we must learn to appreciate, and to value, each other as human beings and thus to live together in peace. While a general disarming of all nation states would seem the ideal, this process cannot be begun until we have first disarmed our own, individual hearts."

According to Buddhism, there are two kinds of peace, *i.e.*, external and internal peace. The former implies the physical and verbal behaviors that are harmful and lead to killing, stealing, sexual misconduct and lying, collectively called the world's dilemmas which are opposite to peace. The external peace is the symptom of internal peace that means mental or spiritual peace, without which peace can, by no means, be achieved or generated. This is because Buddhism gives a significant emphasis on mind, as the leader or originator of actions and speeches, saying, "Mind precedes all things; mind is their chief, mind is their maker. If one speaks or does a deed with a mind that is pure within, happiness then follows along like a never departing shadow" (Dhammapada 1).

According to Dr. Yoichi Kawada, Director of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy, Buddhism teaches people that the real source of happiness is inner peace. If our mind is peaceful, we shall be happy all the time, regardless of external conditions, but if it is disturbed or troubled in any way, we shall never be happy, no matter how good our external conditions may be. ... the Buddhist approach to peace starts from the fundamental act of surmounting these deluded impulses or inner poisons. The state of having brought these impulses under control, however, is not a static and private inner peace. Rather, it is limitlessly dynamic, expansive and evolutionary in its nature.

As earlier mentioned, the Buddhist teachings are the messages of peace, as the Buddha said, "Oh Bhikkhus! What I have taught you all are none but sufferings and the cessation of sufferings. None but sufferings that arise, and none but sufferings that decline." Moreover, there exist core teachings worth mentioning here. Take for example

- (1) The Law of the Dependent Origination, the essence of which is the interdependence of all living beings and indeed all phenomena. Dependent origination teaches us that all things occur and exist only through their interrelationship with all other phenomena and that this fabric of relatedness is of infinite extent both temporally and spatially. Herein lies the basis for the principle of mutually supportive coexistence of all beings so central to Buddhist thinking.
- (2) The Common Characteristics of Compounded Things, that deals with the equality of all living beings and things destined to fall under the changeability or Aniccata, the destructibility or Dukkata and the state of non-self or Anattata.
- (3) The Four Principles of Holy Abodes or Brahmavihara comprising Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy and mental Equanimity, and
- (4) The Noble Eightfold Path or Majjhima Patipada, the noble path to peace, which is the practical dimension indispensably needed for the peace to be achieved in real sense.

Practical Applications

Practically, Buddhism is also the religion of pragmatism. The Buddha always teaches, 'Peace cannot be achieved merely through a word of requests as chanted and prayed by followers of the Theistic religions, but peace can be attained by following the path that leads to peace.' The path leading to peace to be brought into light here is the 'Noble Eightfold Path' or 'Majjhima Patipada', without which it is certainly in vain.

The Noble Eightfold Path is composed of eight components. They are (1) Samma Ditthi-Right View, (2) Samma Sankappa-Right Concept, (3) Samma Vaca-Right Speech, (4) Samma Kammanta-Right Action, (5) Samma Ajiva-Right Livelihood, (6) Samma Vayama-Right Attempt, (7) Samma Sati-Right Mindfulness and (8) Samma Samadhi-Right Meditation.

In the Maggavibhanga Sutta (Analysis of the Path), the Buddha expounded the Noble Eightfold Path to his disciples as follows:

"And what, Bhikkhus, is right view? Whoever has developed wisdom regarding Dukkha, wisdom regarding the origination of Dukkha, wisdom regarding the cessation of Dukkha,

wisdom regarding the path of practice that leads to cessation of Dukkha-that one, Bhikkhus, can be truly said to have right view.

"And what, Bhikkhus, is right resolve? One whose mind is set on renunciation, whose mind has no room for anger, whose mind is focused on doing no harm-that one, Bhikkhus, can be truly said to have right resolve.

"And what, Bhikkhus, is right speech? One who does not lie, who does not speak words that divide one from another, who does not speak angrily, who does not speak of frivolous things-that one, Bhikkhus, can be truly said to have developed right speech.

"And what, Bhikkhus, is right action? One who does not kill, who does not steal, who does not misbehave sexually-that one, Bhikkhus, can be truly said to have developed right action.

"And what, bhikkhus, is right livelihood? Here, bhikkhus, a follower of the noble ones, having abandoned wrong ways of making his living, leads the rest of his life righteously. That one, bhikkhus, can be truly said to have achieved right livelihood.

"And what, Bhikkhus, is right effort? Here, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the desire and works energetically and persistently to forestall the arising of evil and unskillful qualities that are not arisen in him; he develops the desire and works energetically and persistently to be rid of those evil and unskillful qualities that have arisen in him; he develops the desire and works energetically and persistently to evoke in himself the skillful qualities he lacks; and he develops the desire and works energetically and persistently to mindfully maintain, strengthen and bring to fulfillment those skillful qualities that are arisen in him. That one, Bhikkhus, can be truly said to have developed right effort.

"And what, Bhikkhus, is right mindfulness? Here, Bhikkhus, aware of the body, a Bhikkhu sits in contemplation of the body, resolute, attentive, & careful, not distracted or distressed by the world; aware of feelings, he sits in contemplation of feelings, resolute, attentive, & careful, not distracted or distressed by the world; aware of the mind, he sits in contemplation of the mind, resolute, attentive, & careful, not distracted or distressed by the world; aware of phenomena, he sits in contemplation of phenomena, resolute, attentive, and careful, not distracted or distressed by the world. That one, Bhikkhus, can be truly said to have developed right mindfulness.

"And what, Bhikkhus, is right concentration? Here, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu, untouched by desire or impulse, having investigated the Dhamma rationally, finding joy and pleasure in seclusion, enters and abides in the first Jhana; with rational investigation stilled, his mind calmly concentrated in a single point, finding joy and pleasure there, he enters and abides in the second Jhana; unconcerned with joy, dispassionate and calm, mindful and attentive, comfortable in his body, he is at that stage of which the noble ones say, "He has a pleasant abode, with equanimity and mindfulness"- so he enters and abides in the third Jhana; no longer concerned with pleasure and pain, as earlier he had lost concern for joy and distress, with mindfulness purified by equanimity, experiencing neither pleasure nor pain, he enters and abides in the fourth Jhana. That one, Bhikkhus, can be truly said to have developed right concentration."

Of the eight components, the first two are classified as Wisdom or Panna, the four items in the middle are classified as Moral Virtue or Sila, and the last two are classified as Meditative Concentration or Samadhi. In the Mahaparinibbana Sutta, the Buddha, in discussing the Path, repeated again and again, "Such and such is virtue; such and such is concentration; and such and such is wisdom. Great becomes the fruit, great is the gain of concentration when it is fully developed by virtuous conduct; great becomes the fruit, great is the gain of wisdom when it is fully developed by concentration; utterly freed from the taints of lust, becoming, and ignorance is the mind that is fully developed in wisdom." •

In the practical procedure, all the eight components have to be blended or integrated in to one (Ekasamangi). It means that the practitioner is required to practice them all together, not one by one so that the mind will be so powerful that it can battle with the mental defilements or Kilesas and overcome them completely. As Buddhism holds that inner or mental peace is more

important than external or outside peace, *i.e.*, the war or public uprisings, because the root causes of all the external wars are the mental defilements dormant in the bottom of human mind. If all the defilements can be eradicated partly or completely, the world will be in peace. The more defilements are destroyed, the more peaceful the world becomes.

CONCLUSION

By constantly being mindful of your own thoughts, words and actions and by constantly trying to purify them, we can become part of the force for peace rather than part of the force for war. Teachings about karma indicate to us that no matter how just our cause, no matter how right our ideas, if they are accompanied by anger and hate, they will merely generate more anger and hate. If our minds are inundated with the emotions of war, we aid the cause of war, no matter how noble our cause. Buddhist teachings about karma indicate unequivocally that a fundamentally moral life is a necessary prerequisite for ridding our minds of negative emotions, for transforming them into selfless compassion for all. There are many selfless endeavors that we can take upon ourselves to stir the soup and help cool the pot. But we should remember to be constantly mindful of our own mental attitudes. If we are not, no matter how hard we stir, we may also be unconsciously helping to turn up the flames.

How do we change our own mental attitudes; how do we rid our minds of those strong negative emotions that cause turbidity in our minds? Part of the Bodhisattva Path consists of the practice of giving as an antidote to desire, greed, stinginess, and craving; the practice of patience as an antidote for anger; and the practice of wisdom as an antidote for foolishness.

There is a Buddhist saying that says, 'Expecting to attain to peace, one shall discard all the worldly baits (Lokamisaṃ pajāhe santipekkho).' and another one says, "Entangled by the bonds of hate, he who seeks his own happiness by inflicting pain on others, is never delivered from hatred." They imply that if one cannot overcome the needs for sensual pleasure, and hatred or anger, and he still falls under the power of Kilesas, the peace can, by no means, be achieved at all. And in order to get rid of the defilements, the Noble Eightfold Path must be brought into practice. That is why Buddhism is the noble path to peace. And this path is widely open for, and welcome to, all human beings, regardless of whatever religion they believe in or whatever races and nationalities they are, if they would like to build up a 'Peaceful World' in real sense, not merely a 'lip service' to win popularity.

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