



The Relevance of the Concept of Buddhism for World Peace in 21st Century

Dr. Bhagayashree A. Deshpande

Professor (Law), Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh College of Law, Amravati.

Abstract

Buddhism / Buddha's concept of peace has cultivated in medieval period and continued its significance in modern period and in 21st Century. The declared foreign policy of India was based on Panchashila, in itself a Buddhist term, which allows for the possibility of peaceful co-existence between people of different ideologies.

Buddhism has an intimate association with the concept of peace. In 21st Century, the world is in urgent need of peace, love, kindness. But it originates in the minds of the people and then spreads in the society, nation and the world. Non violence is the foundation of Dhamma.

In Buddhism, Dhamma has three meanings viz. the teaching of Buddha, the law of nature and the way of life. Basis of non-violence are respect for all life, law of karma, love and kindness. The whole teaching can be summed up in 3 parts: The 4 Noble Truths, The 8-Fold Path, and The 3 Marks of Existence.

Lotus of the true law is also referred as lotus sutra. It beautifully explained the concept of peace through Buddhist ideals of peace. Kalachakra, one of the greatest divisions of Tantric Buddhism, in Sanskrit means "Tantra of the Wheel of Time". Kalachakra is part of an elaborate system.

UNO promotes for human rights and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without discrimination. Buddhism also propounds principle of non-discrimination. Buddhism has elaborated the concept of non-violence in comprehensive manner. UNO also maintains the principle non-violence through the principle non-interference.

Thus, Buddhism and UNO principles both protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms in 21st Century. Both are relevant and significant to maintain peace, develop



cooperation and protect human rights through the principles of and equality, peaceful methods, non-violence and non interference.

The role of concept of Buddhism is vital in world peace and relevant in 21st Century through Buddhist principles and the principles of UNO on world peace.

Keywords: Buddhism, world peace, non-violence, Lotus Sutra, Kalachakra.

Introduction

“Buddhism is not just a religion of the past or a mere faith as many have thought, but it is a time-tested scientific religion and philosophy which, in the context of the present world-situation, is more relevant today than ever before for establishing world peace.”¹

“Victory breeds hatred. The defeated live in pain. The peaceful live happily, giving up victory and defeat.” (Dhammapada 201)

Buddhism / Buddha's concept of peace has cultivated in medieval period and continued its significance in modern period and in 21st Century. The term 'Panchashila' which is terminology from Buddhism allows for the possibility of peaceful co-existence between people of various religions, beliefs and ideologies. Buddha has been a great force for peace in the world. Buddha's policy of peace, self-sacrifice, kindness and charity moulded the lives of numerous saints in medieval India while in modern India too, some great leaders like Gandhi and Nehru have undoubtedly been guided by Buddha's teachings. The declared foreign policy of India was based on Panchashila, in itself a Buddhist term, which allows for the possibility of peaceful co-existence between people of different ideologies.²

Buddhism has an intimate association with peace. In its long history we hardly find any evidence of violence, killings, religious hatred. Buddhism -wields only one sword, the sword of wisdom and recognizes only one enemy i.e. ignorance.³

For us in India, the land of Buddha's birth, Buddhism is an outstanding representative of our religious tradition, a tradition of peace and harmony. Humanism, which was a hallmark of Buddha's teachings crossed all racial and national barriers and became a great force for peace in the world. The Master aimed at the development of a new kind of free man free from all

¹ Morgan, Kenneth W. (ed) ' The Path of the Buddha' at p. 12.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.



prejudices, intent on working out his own future with reliance on one's own self, i.e. attadipa. But today, more than ever before, we are suffering from "an exhaustion of spirit, an increase of egoism, individual and collective, which makes the ideal of a world society difficult to achieve".⁴

Buddhism has an intimate association with the concept of peace. In its long history we hardly find any evidence of violence, killings or religious hatred. "Buddhism wields only one sword, the sword of wisdom and recognizes only one enemy i.e. ignorance". This is, indeed, the testimony of history.⁵

In 21st Century, the world is in urgent need of peace, love, kindness.

Objectives

- (i) To study and analyze Buddhism in association with the concept of peace.
- (ii) To explain the basis of Dhamma and non-violence.
- (iii) To discuss the core of Buddhism, code of conduct and maintenance of peace.
- (iv) To analyze the concept of lotus of the true law / lotus sutra, kalachakra / wheel of time and their relevance in 21st century.
- (v) To analyze and justify the co-ordination between message of Buddhism and principles of UNO.
- (vi) To comment on Buddhism and world peace.
- (vii) To draw conclusion and suggest suitable suggestions / recommendations.

Hypothesis

The role of concept of Buddhism is vital in world peace and relevant in 21st Century through Buddhist principles and the principles of U.N.O. on world peace.

Research Methodology

Research Methodology adopted for the writing of this research paper / present research paper is Doctrical Research Method / Methodology.

Buddhism and Concept of Peace

According to Buddhism, concept of peace is with very broad ambit. It is not merely confined with the absence of war. But it originates in the minds of the people and then spreads

⁴ S. Radhakrishnan's Foreward to P.V. Bapat (ed), 2500 years of Buddhism pp. XIV, XV.

⁵ Op cit., p. 398.



in the society, nation and the world. Lord Buddha referred peace as 'Shanti' which includes love and the kindness - i. e. metta. Buddha taught us that peace comes from within and not from outside.

Concept of peace also includes compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity, non-violence etc., i.e. Karuna, mudita, upekkha, ahimsa. Metta, karuna, mudita, upekkha are collectively referred as "brahmaviharas" i.e. divine abodes.

Lord Buddha provided path of peace and propounded that concept of peace can be achieved through path of speech viz. right speech, right action, right livelihood and right mindfulness (achieved through, meditation).

Basis of Dhamma and Non-violence

Non-violence is the foundation of Dhamma. In Buddhism, Dhamma has three meanings viz. the teaching of Buddha, the law of nature and the way of life. Basis of non-violence are respect for all life, law of karma, love and kindness.

There is a close inter-relationship / inter-linking between Dhamma and non-violence i.e. ahimsa. Dhamma without ahimsa is incomplete and ahimsa without Dhamma is weak. Once violence is removed, it will result into removal of suffering (dukkha), hatred / anger (dosa) and pain.

Law of karma says thus "as you sow, so you reap". If you hurt others, you create suffering for yourself. If you protect life, you create peace for yourself. If non-violence is followed it will result into good karma and will give sweet fruits.

Kaya ahimsa vacha ahimsa and mano ahimsa is the basis of Dhamma.

Lord Buddha said -

"All tremble at violence, all fear death. Comparing others to oneself, one should neither kill nor cause to kill" - (Dhammapada 129)

Behind the mental, behavioral and structural causes of violence and conflict, Buddhism goes even further to the ultimate fundamental cause leading to all the suffering inflicted by violence and conflict. Buddha attributes all our attachments, the resulting harming behaviors and the suffering hence caused, to the human ignorance (avijja) that is, we cannot see the world as it is and see our self as such. We are ignorant to the cosmic reality that everything in the world is inter-related, interdependent. Not adopting the Buddhist worldview, we thought we



are separate from others as an independent entity: our views are different from theirs; our properties are certainly not theirs. Hence we develop our attachments to views and desires through the reinforcing notions of "me" and "mine." We are not impartial in looking at things. We tend to focus on the harm that is done to us, instead of examining the whole event in its context with all the causes and conditions conducive to its happening. This ignorance to the principle of dependent origination alienates us from what really happens in the situation and the complex set of conditions around any given event, and thus rids us of the possibility of making correct assessment of the event and react accordingly in time. Without the lucidity to discern the causes, development and effects of specific events, we are inevitably causing conflicts and doing harm to others as well as ourselves all the time. Even wars between states come out of great fear and the collective ignorance (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2003). This ignorance is what Buddhism identifies as the very root cause of violence, conflict, and war, which prevents human beings to live a peaceful life.⁶

Core of Buddhism, Code of Conduct and Maintenance of Peace

Core of Buddhism is summed up in the 4 noble truths, the 8-fold path and 3 marks of existence.⁷ If those of 4 noble truths, the 8-fold path and the 3 marks of existence are followed by the individuals, it will result in to peace of mind. As world is composed of the states and the states are composed of the individuals, it will ultimately result into world peace.

Core of Buddhism -

The whole teaching can be summed up in 3 parts: The 4 Noble Truths, The 8-Fold Path, and the 3 Marks of Existence

1. The Four Noble Truths - Chattari Ariya Saccani

This is the diagnosis + cure of suffering.

Truth	Meaning	Example
1. Dukkha	Life has suffering, dissatisfaction	Birth, aging, sickness, death, loss
2. Samudaya	Cause of suffering is craving / attachment	We want things to stay permanent

⁶ Source. International Journal of Peace Studies, Volume 11, Number-I, Spring/Summer, 2006 at p. 97.

⁷ Ibid.



3. Nirodha	Suffering can end	By removing craving
4. Magga	The way to end suffering	The Noble Eightfold Path

Core idea: “There is suffering. There is a cause. It can stop. Here’s how.”

2. The Noble Eightfold Path – Ariya Atthangika Magga

The practical method. 3. Trainings :

A] **Panna – Wisdom**

1. Right View - Understand 4 Noble Truths, Karma.
2. Right Intention – Intention of non-harming, compassion.

B] **Sila Ethics**

3. Right Speech - No lies, gossip, harsh words
4. Right Action - No killing, stealing, sexual misconduct
5. Right Livelihood - Earn without harming others

C] **Samadhi - Mental Discipline**

6. Right Effort - Cultivate good thoughts, drop bad ones
7. Right Mindfulness - Be aware of body, feelings, mind
8. Right Concentration - Meditation, focus

3. The Three Marks of Existence - Tilakkhana

Everything in life has these 3 features:

1. Anicca - Impermanence: Nothing lasts forever
2. Dukkha - Unsatisfactoriness: Clinging to impermanent things = pain
3. Anatta - No-Self: There is no permanent, unchanging "soul" or "I"

The Buddha's intention in sending out his followers to propagate Buddhism was for the benefit and happiness of the people and for the welfare of the world. There was no use of force to convert people to Buddhism. The approach is to persuade people to have faith in the way of the Buddha, that is to be without evil speech, without evil actions", as the Buddha instructed his followers in the Ovadapatimokkha. In other words, missionary monks must go about their work peacefully, even in situations which would normally incite violence. They must have the



highest degree of tolerance and self-restraint. The Buddha encouraged his monks to have the virtue of tolerance.

The term peace, here, has both negative and positive meanings. In its negative sense, peace is an absence not only of war and conflict, but also of 'structural violence' such as social injustice, social inequality, the violation of human rights, the destruction of ecological balance, etc. In its positive sense, peace means the presence of unity, harmony, freedom and justice. Thus the concept of peace encompasses within itself the absence of conflict as well as the presence of harmony. Viewed in this way, the five themes of our group discussions in the Buddhist Summit fall within the scope of peace, they are: (1) Buddhist Unity, (2) Buddhism and World Peace, (3) Buddhist Education, (4) Buddhist Propagation, and (5) Buddhism and Social Welfare.⁸

Relevance of Lotus of the True Law / Lotus Sutra, Kalachakra / Wheel of Time in 21st Century

Lotus of the true law is also referred as lotus sutra. It beautifully explained the concept of peace through Buddhist ideals of peace. Lotus Sutra taught ethical path to achieve way of life which will result into peace. Lotus of the true law incorporates the ideology of peace.

The Lotus, with its countless teachings, embodies an ideology of peace. The best foundation for world peace is universal responsibility towards equitable distribution of natural resources and thorough concern for future generations which can make the world one, a pure and peaceful land. The Lotus-sutra is absolutely nothing excluded from this teaching-mind, body, individual, society, mountain, river, tree, grass, bird, fish, animal or seed everything will be saved. The breadth and boundlessness of the Lotus Sutra is overwhelming. It is, undoubtedly, a profound teaching on peace.⁹

The 'Lotus' tells the story of Devadatta (Chapter XII), a disciple and also a cousin of Buddha, who subsequently defied the Buddha and broke away from Buddha's community of disciples. He indulged in the crimes of murder, slandering the Dhamma, causing dissensions

⁸ Distinguished Lecture delivered at the Second world Buddhist Propagation Conference (Buddhist Summit) held at Buddhamonthan, Thailand, November 10, BE 2543/ CE2000.

⁹ Nikkyo Niwano: "A Buddhist Approach to Peace", 1982, p. 17.



among Buddha's disciples and even attempting to kill Buddha on various occasions. Comparing the evil deeds of Devadatta with that of Buddha who endured them, we learn many valuable lessons. The story conveys a range of overt expressions of both violence and non-violence and one can easily make out as to which one is more powerful.

The spirit of the Lotus does not aim solely at the salvation of individuals or awakening them to the truth but ultimately aims at changing the whole society. This is symbolized by the words "to purify the Buddha land".

The Buddhist ideal culture of peace is described in chapter V. "The parable of the Medicinal Herbs" of the Lotus-sutra. It is stated here that in nature grow a great diversity of plants and trees. Receiving the equal blessings of earth and rain, they grow and blossom, each manifesting its own characteristics. This text, in which earth and rain are metaphors for Shakyamuni's impartial teachings and plants represent living beings, skillfully describes the nature of the culture of peace. "In social terms, the parable indicates how diverse cultures can preserve their distinctive natures while co-existing peacefully".¹⁰

Kalachakra in Buddhism means "Tantra of the wheel of time" which was developed with the motive to promote world peace.

Kalachakra (Wheel of Time)

Kalachakra, one of the greatest divisions of Tantric Buddhism, in Sanskrit means "Tantra of the Wheel of Time". Kalachakra is part of an elaborate system. It's a Tantric teaching that Tibetans consider very useful for eliminating or at least reducing war and is full of positive effects. It is reported that in 1953, His Holiness Dalai Lama received the Kalachakra Initiation¹¹ from Ling Rinpoche. This is one of the most important initiations in the Tantric tradition with special significance for world peace. Subsequently, His Highness has given Kalachakra initiation at different places in India and abroad, with the motive to promote world peace.

However, to achieve genuine world peace, we have first to create inner peace. This is only possible when we reduce our negative thoughts and increase positive attitudes by developing love and compassion, patience and understanding among human beings. Universal

¹⁰ Daisaku Ikeda, of cit.

¹¹ Encyclopedia of Buddhism. A Word of Faith, vol. X1, p. 347



humanitarian approach to world problems, then, appears to be the only sound basis for world peace.¹²

Cultivation of peace in the minds of people will result into world peace as the world is composed of individuals. The kalachakra practice is the Buddhist means of achieving the Boddhicitta and becoming the Buddha in one's own lifetime. Thus, world peace could be achieved if all individuals became Buddha in their own life time.

To conclude, one may say that Buddha's teaching of overcoming evil helped humanity in achieving peace. It had tremendous impact on the general and social being of the society thereby contributing to amity and social harmony. It revived the spirit of social solidarity by putting an end to social conflict. The noble mission of the Buddha helped not only India but also South-eastern and Far-eastern countries to create conditions for justice, political and socio-economic stability, fraternity, peace and social harmony.¹³

The message of Buddhism, and the principles on which it rests have assumed a new significance in today's world. Even peace of which U.N.O. speaks is but an indication that the world is gradually veering around the beliefs embodied in the religion of the Buddha.¹⁴

Co-relation between Buddhism and Principles of UNO

The UNO was established on 24th October 1945 after world war-II with main goal to maintain world peace. Buddhism has already explained and elaborated on the concept of peace and elaborated which includes world peace.

UNO puts emphasis to prevent war and to settle the disputes by peaceful ways. Buddhism speaks the same thing with very broader connotation. UNO speaks for the development of friendly relations between states (nations). Buddhism puts emphasis on cordial relations between the individuals through equal rights and self-determination of people which will result into world peace. One of the objectives of UNO is international cooperation and to solve economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems together. Buddhism teaches cooperation amongst individuals which results into international cooperation as world is composed of States (nations) and States are composed of individuals.

¹² Vision of Peace'. Dalai Lama's address to the Conference on 'Seeking the true meaning of peace' in San Jose Costa Rica, 1989. News Tiber May-August, 1989 p.7

¹³ Encyclopedia of Buddhism, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 349

¹⁴ 2500 years of Buddhism, op. cit. p. 414



UNO promotes for human rights and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without discrimination of race, sex, language and religion. Buddhism also propounds principle of non-discrimination. Buddhism has elaborated the concept of non-violence in comprehensive manner. UNO also maintains the principal non-violence through the principle non- interference.

Thus, Buddhism and UNO principles both protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms in 21st Century. Both are relevant and significant to maintain peace, develop cooperation and protect human rights through the principles of and equality, peaceful methods, non-violence and non-interference.

Buddhism and World Peace in 21st Century

Teachings of Buddhism give us practical solution for the maintenance of world peace in 21st Century in the context of war, terrorism, and armament. 21st Century has become an age of war. The whole world is observing the worst evil effects of Iran and America-Israel conflict/war. To settle that issue, to follow the path of Buddhism has become very much relevant and significant. To follow the four noble truths, eightfold path and three marks of existence as propounded by Lord Buddha has become a need of an hour to maintain world peace in 21st century.

Buddha said-"Peace comes from within. Do not seek it without." World peace cannot come from a single treaty or resolution. It comes when majority of the individuals choose an option of peace instead of violence in their daily life. Buddhism teaches us that practical training. It provides a path for peaceful conflict resolution and world peace. It teaches us universal brotherhood which results into world peace.

As Buddha said - "Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle, and the light will not diminish. Happiness never decreases by being shared. That is the true path to world peace.

Conclusion

Teachings of Buddhism are eternal and offer to timeless solutions on the basis of peace, non-violence, compassion, interdependence, non-discrimination, non-interference and like that. Buddhism propounds for the inner peace which is the foundation of world peace.



The role of concept of Buddhism is vital in world peace and relevant in 21st Century through Buddhist principles and the principles of UNO on world peace.

Suggestions /Recommendations

- (1) Buddhism / Buddhist teachings should be included in school and university curricula as a part of value education.
- (2) Countries with Buddhist heritage should take lead on peace forums at international level.
- (3) Buddhist concept in life style of the individuals should be adopted.
- (4) Buddhism and Buddhist teachings should be shared widely through digital platforms.
- (5) Government should support Buddhism through conferences / workshops as a part of peace building
- (6) Government should encourage for empirical studies on the theme Buddhism and world peace.
- (7) NGOs should encourage the people to adopt Buddhist life style.

References:

1. Lotus Sutra (Tr.) Betrand Waston, Sadguru Publication, Delhi, 1959.
2. Buddhism for Today: a modern Interpretation of the Threefold Lotus Sutra-Newano, Nikkyo, Weather Hill, New York, 1980
3. Kalachakra Tantra and Other Texts - Raghuvira and Lokesh Chandra, 2 Vols. Delhi, 1966
4. The Buddhists: Encyclopedia of Buddhism, 5 Vol.
5. Encyclopedia of Buddhism: A World Faith (ed.) M. G. Chitkara, Delhi, 1999.
6. Buddhist Peace work: Creating Cultures of Peace, Boston, MA; Wisdom Publications.
7. Thich Nhat Hanh., Creating True Peace, Ending Violence in Yourself, Your Family, Your Community and the World, New York: Free press (2003).
8. Thich Nhat Hanh, 1999" Ahimsa: The Path of Harmlessness" (1999).
9. His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 2001, "The Human Approach to world Peace", Vol. 8, No. 2.
10. Galtung, Johan, Buddhism: A Quest for Unity and Peace
11. Dr. Bhagyashree A. Deshpande Public International Law, (Ed. 2024) CLP, Prayagraj.