



BUDDHIST SOLUTIONS TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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Abstract

The current international conflict situation is still complicated and unpredictable. The world focuses its attention on the Russia-Ukraine war starting in early 2022, while dealing with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, competition between major countries and many other international issues. In 2020, while there was no solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, many Arab countries signed the Abraham Accords to normalize relations with Israel. October -2023, Hamas forces attacked Israeli territory, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) launched the largest military campaign ever in the Gaza Strip. Currently, the conflict between Israel and Hamas forces still continue to have more complicated developments. The consequences of the war in these areas have caused serious influences to the global economy, especially the energy problem, which has led to price escalation, increased inflation leading to an impact on meals in every family while many areas of the world are still experiencing food shortages. In addition to many soldiers on both sides and part of the civilian population died, the military infrastructure was devastated. People face a humanitarian crisis as more than millions of people leave their homes, cross borders, and flee to neighboring countries in search of safe haven. Refugee-receiving countries also face challenges in terms of social issues, as they must mobilize. In fact, Peace or non-war is the aspiration of mankind all over the world from time immemorial because living a life in peace brings a life of freedom, abundance and happiness. From the Buddhist point of view, peace is the highest happiness and the Buddha taught the elimination of war in many of his teachings, especially in methods of preventing war from within the human mind. This is Buddhist Solutions to Conflict Resolution. The quintessence of the Buddha's teaching, his purpose in spreading the Dharma, his attitude towards other religions and his compassion for sentient beings, towards them born so he is worthy to be honored as a messenger of peace.

Key word: Buddhist, conflict, solution

INTRODUCTION

War or conflict is understood in many different ways, but simply understood as fighting, is the use of force by the strong to subdue the weak. Its consequences are to cause suffering, death and unhappiness for others. That's what people who love a peaceful life never want. Human history has recorded many fierce wars that many countries have experienced. Preventing war and sustaining peace is not only the job of international thinkers and leaders, but also all social, religious and peace-loving organizations. War and invasion originate from the insecurity of the aggressor, thereby causing insecurity for the person being invaded. To solve this problem, more than 2600 years ago, the Buddha taught us that the core problems leading to war are greed, hatred, and delusion with their roots in ignorance. He gives advice on people to eliminate ignorance in his philosophical views through his teachings combined with spiritual training methods to increase awareness and practice compassion, respect for people, and love living beings, practice non-violent life to prevent war as well as create peace. Humanity is still daily, hourly faced with conflicts over territory, ethnicity, religion. Many ethnic groups continue to suffer the pain and loss caused by war. The greed and lust of a part of the angry people are the cause of many bloody wars, causing incalculable tragic consequences for the innocent. Against this background, the world has many ways to prevent and resolve conflicts and wars.

I. BUDDHIST CONCEPT OF WAR AND PEACE

According to *Wikipedia* dictionary, War is a degree of armed conflict between states, governments, societies, or paramilitary groups. The Oxford English Dictionary defined "war" is as:

-A state of armed conflict between different countries or different groups within a country.

- A state of competition or hostility between different people or groups.

- A sustained campaign against an undesirable situation or activity.

In the world, there have been many conflicts and wars such as the first and second world wars. There are many causes of conflict, but in general, wars start from the following eight main causes: - Economic benefits

- Territorial interests

- Religion

- Nationalism

- Revenge

- Civil War

- Revolution

- Defensive War¹

From the Buddhist point of view, the sources of all defilements such as desire (moha), hatred (lobha) and delusion (dosa) are considered as the root of all human conflicts. Conflict begins with attachment to material things: pleasure, property, land, wealth, economic monopoly, and political supremacy. Buddha taught that pleasure will lead us to seek more pleasure, which in turn leads to conflict between people, including rulers, and eventually to disputes and wars. He taught that: **craving is the cause and condition for the king to fight against the king, the Kshatriyas to compete with the Kshatriyas, the brahmins to compete with the brahmins, the house-holders to compete with the house-holders; in the family father, mother, children, brothers and sisters fight with each other; Friends also compete with friends. When they engage in disputes, arguments, and fights, they attack each other with their hands, they attack each other with bricks and stones, they attack each other with sticks, they attack each other with swords. Here they go to death, to near-fatal suffering².**

Contrary to war, which is peace, Buddhism with a non-violent stance always shows the view of ending causes rather than effects. So in Buddhist thought, sustaining peace is very important. The Buddha made very clear that the purpose of his teaching was not to argue with other religious leaders and not to compete with opposing theories. There is no dispute in His teaching. He just showed the way to enlightenment, and the liberation of all suffering.

In the *Dhammapada*, he also teaches his disciples to give up their grudges, and to take revenge because this causes sentient beings to continuously create bad karma, so that revenge never ends and sentient beings stay in Samsara ring never ends:

He abused me, he struck me, he overpowered me, he robbed me. Those who harbor such thoughts do not still their hatred (Dp3)³

Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world. By non-hatred alone is hatred appeased. This is a law eternal (Dp.5)

For the Buddha, a man who conquers thousands of enemies on the battlefield cannot be compared with a man who has conquered himself, because self-conquest is the ultimate victory (Dp.103). A person who is in control of himself often lives in control. And a well-controlled and subdued self becomes a valuable and reliable fulcrum, which is hard to find. A person who sits alone, walks alone without boredom, knows how to control himself, such a person can live comfortably in the deep forest. Such a person will be a trustworthy Teacher, he will then be able to subdue himself well and then teach others to be well subdued. Therefore, the Buddha advised each person to tame himself. Only those who are skillful in self-regulation, those who are not distracted, know the way to stop arguing, quarreling, and aggression and know how to live in harmony, friendliness, and live happily in peace.

The Buddha advises us the best way to avoid arguments and conflicts, that is not to give rise to delusions, and wrong views. And in case they do arise, then the best attitude is not to rejoice, to welcome and to cling to them. This attitude will put an end to struggle, strife, war, and unwholesome states. Every war brings boundless suffering. Victory breeds hatred, defeats taste suffering. Therefore, the best method is not to use war to resolve conflicts, but to find all peaceful means to end disagreements and conflicts. Therefore, in order not to create new conflicts, it is necessary to stop arguing with anyone.

There is a story with a Brahmin named Akkosaka Bharadvaja went to the Blessed One, after coming, spoke unkind words, talking bad, slandered and taunted the Blessed One. Having heard this, the Blessed One said to the Brahmin Akkosaka Bharadvaja that **if you slander us, we will not accept it from you, in this way the Brahmin, the matter goes back to you. This, brahmin, only goes back to you. Brahmin, whoever slanders back, reviled back when he is slandered or reviled, in such way, brahmin, he is considered to have enjoyed his life and shared with you. But we do not enjoy this thing with you, do not share it with you, so, brahmin, all these things go back to you, and all things go back to you.⁴**

By this way, one will restrain anger, which is the cause of conflicts. Those who are not angry are truly peaceful.

He who restrains his rising anger as a skilful charioteer checks a speeding chariot, I call a true charioteer; other charioteers only hold the reins. (Dp.222)

Conquer the angry one by not getting angry (i.e., by loving-kindness); conquer the wicked by goodness; conquer the stingy by generosity, and the liar by speaking the truth. (Dp.223)⁵

Greed and hatred are the direct causes of conflict or war, but in fact the core cause is still ignorance, it is this delusion that sentient beings do not understand impermanence (*anicca*), no-self (*anatta*) and suffering (*dukkha*), so we keep chasing after the gains and losses, not knowing that the greatest victory is the victory over our own desires.

II. METHODS OF WAR PREVENTION AND PEACE SUSTAINING

The main values of Buddhism known as eternal holiness are compassion, charity, empathy, and peace of mind. Along with this characteristic must also be mentioned patience or endurance. These values are all directly related to reducing conflict, this practice has the first effect of making disputes less likely to arise. We need to put other people's thoughts and stances to observe, thereby adjusting our actions from body, speech and mind.

All are afraid of the stick, all fear death. Putting oneself in another's place, one should not beat or kill others. (Dp.129)

In history of formation and development, along with its spread, Buddhism has never been accompanied by violence or caused suffering to any individual or region. The Buddhist precepts encourage practitioners to abstain from acts of violence and war. Not to kill is considered a paramount precept in all Buddhist traditions. According to the Brahmanical Bodhisattva Precept of Mahayana Buddhism tradition, in addition to the precept of not killing living beings in any form, anywhere, or at any time, the Bodhisattva practitioner must also observe the precepts as contemptuous as does not trade in killing tools or murder weapons, until they do not act as brokers, causing wars between nations to break out⁶. In *Vaniija Sutta*, the Buddha also said: *"a lay follower should not engage in these five trades. What five? Trading in weapons, trading in living beings, trading in meat, trading in intoxicants and trading in poisons"*⁷

Because of compassion and loving kindness, the Buddha taught lay people not to trade weapons to maintain peace and happiness in the present nor to create bad karma. Moreover, what will be happened if the world no longer sold weapons? The most obvious result of a gun disappear is simple: no one will ever die from gunfire. The second is less conflict for the police, third is less terrorism. In addition, the direct medical costs, the rehabilitation costs for the victims, but also the legal system and the victim's lost income and even the cost of life is reduced.

Not only preventing bad karma by action, Buddha also taught us to change our mind with good karma

...Others can do harm, we are here to do no harm

...Others may have anger, we will not have anger here

...Others may be resentful, we here will not hold grudges⁸

In *Kakacūpama sutta*, The Buddha taught the method to end conflicts among members of the Sangha: There are five issues of attention that you can use when speaking to others: "Timely or untimely, truthful or untrue, soft or rough, beneficial or unhelpful, with loving-kindness or with anger". **Monks, when speaking to others, you may speak at the right time or at the wrong time. Monks, when speaking to others, you may speak truthfully or speak untruthfully. Monks, when speaking to others, you may speak softly or speak harshly. Monks, when speaking to others, you may speak beneficial or unhelpful words. Monks, when speaking to others, you can speak with loving-kindness or with anger. Here, monks, you should learn as follows: "We will keep our minds unstained, we will not utter evil words; we will live with compassion, with loving-kindness, with an inner mind free of anger. We will pervade this person with a mind that is connected with loving-kindness. And with this person as an object, we will pervade the whole world with a mind that is connected with loving-kindness. generous, boundless, without hatred, without anger⁹.** These methods are not only applied in monasteries but can be effectively applied in the family and society

The true fact that violence is effected by aggressive surroundings: unhappy family, bad friends and conflict society, so in the *Sigālaka sutta*¹⁰, the Buddha taught about the responsibilities and how to behave between the members in the family, friends and others in society. For example, people should love and respect their spouse, teach their children or students with love, and avoid associating with bad guys. The punishment, if any, should also focus on transforming one's mind rather than applying offensive measures. Besides, The Buddha also showed us how to choose friends to make. We should make good friends and avoid the bad friends.

In addition to, another essential practices in Buddhism to control emotion and prevent violent tendency are meditation and and apply Brahma-Vihara in our daily life. The brahmavihārās (sublime attitudes, lit. "abodes of brahma") are a series of four Buddhist virtues and the meditation practices made to cultivate them. They are also known as the four immeasurables (Sanskrit: apramāṇa, Pāli: appamaññā)¹¹. The Brahma-viharas are:

Loving-kindness (Pāli: mettā, Sanskrit: maitrī) is active good will towards all; sincere and genuine wish for the welfare and happiness for all living beings without exception, without any selfish motive or expectation. In other word, it is unconditional love towards oneself, friends, foes without any preferential love. It is the antidote to anger and hatred Compassion (Pāli and Sanskrit: karuṇā) results from metta, it is identifying the suffering of others as one's own; One helps others without expecting anything in return, shares sorrows with others and showing compassion to those who are misfortunate. This counteract cruelty and harmfulness towards others. Empathetic joy (Pāli and Sanskrit: muditā): is the feeling of joy because others are happy, even if one did not contribute to it, it is a form of sympathetic joy; one feels happy when they see others being successful, prosperous and happy. This is antidote to jealousy and envy especially towards enemies. Equanimity (Pāli: upekkhā, Sanskrit: upekṣā): is even-mindedness and serenity, treating everyone impartially¹². It is a balanced and even state of mind that arises on seeing that all beings will reap the results of their wholesome and unwholesome kamma. Understanding that we inherit our own deeds. The practice of upekkha discards cravings and aversions. One is neither attracted by desirable objects nor is averse to undesirable objects.¹³

In *Mahā Rāhulovāda sutta*, the Buddha taught Rahura that: *by practicing loving-kindness, whatever is of anger will be eradicated... by practicing the compassion, whatever is harmful to the mind will be eliminated... by practicing the empathetic joy, what is not happy will be eradicated... by practicing the equanimity, what is in the mind of hatred will be eradicated... by practicing the impurity, what is carving will be eradicated*¹⁴

The brahmavihārās is vast, immeasurable, boundless, covering the entire dharma world. It is the mind that is free from all the narrow attachments of the common psychology of love, hatred, anger, and pride. It helps people calm inside, and mindful in their speech or in action will obviously be more friendly, and tend to solve any conflict, if arising, in harmony. This has been proved in the ever-lasting example of Indira Gandhi in India, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Master Venerable Thich Quang Duc in Vietnam history... Being mindful, loving and respecting all beings are core values Buddhism emphasizes for a non-violence world. Due to the practice of the four immeasurables, greed, hatred and delusion are also eliminated and wars do not arise. Compassion, loving kindness, empathetic joy and equanimity do not alter our capacity to perceive clearly, but more precisely, when we realize that we are living in harmony with everyone and there is no difference. The Teaching of Dependent Origination (paṭiccasamuppāda) emphasizes people's mutual relationship with each other. If we knew we were relatives from so many lives, there would be no more killing or making wars. In conclusion, Violence is now dominant in our modern society. But this does not mean we don't have the solution for this issue. When understanding clearly the root causes, we will easily know how to prevent. The Buddhist world aims to be a world of solidarity and peace, developed by each person's efforts in their self-discipline and ability to contribute to building and developing a peaceful society for everyone. That is why the United Nations recognizes Vesak as a cultural and religious festival of the world. It is a tribute to the Buddha, affirming that the Buddha's thought and teachings are in line with the United Nations' guidelines, in line with the development trend of progressive humanity, and join hands in building a peaceful and friendly world and develop together. One of those solutions is to uphold the Buddhist idea of peace and friendship, to educate and direct people to act for the peace and happiness of fellow human beings, taking that as a common goal for society civilized. Only by building a peaceful and peaceful world can people be free of anger and greed. As the Buddhist we should address and practice the Buddha teachings in daily life. That will be a good example for many people. If everyone understands and applies the Buddha' teachings, I believe that the world will not exist the violence.

¹<https://owlcation.com/social-sciences/The-Main-Reasons-For-War>

²Majjhima Nikaya, p.179

³Dp: Dhammapada

⁴Samyutta Nikaya, Abuse, p.255-256

⁵Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc. Translated by. Acharya Buddhakarakhita. The *Dhammapada*: The Buddha's Path of Wisdom

⁶ See the Precepts in the Sutra of the Upasaka Precepts Spoken by the Buddha which was translated into Chinese in North Liang Dynasty by Tripitaka Master Dharmakṣema (385-433) from central India. English translation by the Buddhist Text Translation Society

⁷*Anguttara Nikaya*, p.790

⁸Majjhima Nikaya, P.123

⁹Majjhima Nikaya, p.217

¹⁰Digha Nikaya, p.461

¹¹Bodhi, Bhikkhu, 2000, p. 89

¹²Merv Fowler, 1999,p. 60–62

¹³ See, Peter Harvey (2012). *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices*. Cambridge University Press. pp. 154, 326

¹⁴ *Majjhima Nikaya* p. 527

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