

## Buddhism: The thought of peace

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### Abstract

In today's war torn hostile world, peace has become a sought after personal, social and universal need. Community and individual survival is largely dependent on peace. As a social construct and a building block of society, peace stems from love, compassion, tolerance, selflessness, and a lack of unrest due to desire, aversion and delusion. Peace is the result of end of suffering of all kinds, an amity withheld by forbearance, and a sense of understanding of self and others on multiple societal levels.

The idea of peace is simple and yet is found less than practical to apply. War is the progeny of unrest, and unrest stems from very human traits of desire and yearnings. Uncontrolled and misdirected ambition often leaves an individual far from inner peace. An obstinate drive to obtain things that are often unnecessary often disturbs the very basis of world peace – individual peace.

This disturbance resonates between fellows going through common sufferings and having common mindsets, not to mention, we as humans are always impressionable, and hive mind psychology often denies us to think for ourselves. As a result an individual unrest aggravates and takes larger scales and levels, and ultimately disturbs world peace.

**Keywords:** Buddhism, ICARUS, Dhamma, Ambedkar

### Introduction

Peace is mankind's basic need since the birth of civilization. Peace is often wished and prayed for, and appears in the most rudimentary greetings of most languages. Goes without saying, since the time man has learned the art of communicating, man knows the importance of peace and wishes it upon others. Peace has been propagated as a community guideline through the ages in the form of wishes and prayers, sermons and lessons, literature and art, beliefs and norms on personal, familial, religious and political

levels. And yet there have been times when yearnings and aversion and the lack of understanding have led humanity to destroy peace. Irrational beliefs and propaganda have taken center stage and driven humanity to yearn for superfluous things at the cost of peace and harmony.

Bringing peace entails the end of all suffering. This has to be accompanied by a sense of tolerance and justice. A rational flexible mind open to diverse ideas and beliefs as long as they are unprejudiced and scientific, is often at peace.

Suffering may not always be fair. While eradicating suffering on personal and social levels may bring about peace, it simply isn't feasible due to the possibility of the nature of suffering being unjust. In this case acceptance and tolerance are required to save the day. Putting peace over power, putting love over loathing, putting forgiveness over vengeance are a few principles that go a long way in cementing the walls of peace.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is a century of science and technology. It is not far from factual that most of this technology descended from war and conflict. Strategic weaponry was developed in virtual and physical forms to take down powers. Every now civil device of science was born out of a device of war. Computers, the internet, trains and transport, communication frameworks and schemes and the intelligence mechanisms that made all this possible saw their inception and gained impetus during wartime. A nation's scientists determined a nation's fate in war. Technology was largely a military initiative and investment, fueled by the intent to destruct and not construct.

Today we live in a world that runs by science and can very well be destroyed by it. Eternal world peace has become a pipe dream and we live on the cusp of war breaking out at any strike of the clock. We breathe in the air of terrorist possibilities. Our nations toil not for the enrichment of its downtrodden but for seizing and hoarding of war resources. This feeding frenzy for war defenses and offenses has put us at perpetual risk of an attack and often fuels disorder and distrust. Strife between communities continues.

A record of such tension was the Cold War. Latent tension between powers and potentials gave rise to a war like situation and the world was on the brink of seeing about an actual worldwide war. The lack of understanding between warring parties, and the insecurity brought about by the

knowledge of existence of war resources and a prospective to destroy, is enough to fuel war. War machines, manpower, mass explosives, weaponry, intelligence and espionage devices – the existence of such paraphernalia alone is a potent trigger for war. Propagation and maintenance of harmony has thus become a challenge to even the renowned pacifists and idealists of the world.

Manufacturing, collecting, developing and hoarding mass destructive war devices under the guise of national defense is a realized trend. Utilizing provinces of science – chemistry, atomic research and development, applied mathematics and computation, electronic and electrical engineering, mechatronics, bioengineering and the collective power of the above mentioned is all being transpired to bring about a third world war. Offense maneuvers are being collected to secure the namesake of defense. Powers and aspiring to be more powerful and intimidating, sparing no effort to be prepared to retaliate and dominate beyond the proverbial tit for tat.

These risks and open threats to peace and harmony are a major challenge to the millennial world's pacifists. New peace ideas and reconstruction of pacific ideals needs to be brought about. Existing foundations of peace laid down and beta tested centuries ago need to be reinforced. Humankind needs guidance to and a reformation that leads to straying away from war insecurities and war itself.

In today's world raised by science and technology it is expected that these developments enrich the life of people and prolong the life of the planet. While most technologies are now applied to civil uses, these same mechanisms can be deflected to military uses in no time. Social media that connects people of various nations can as well become the greatest international intelligence and can be used strategically to threaten and destroy people and their

interests. Life enriching gadgets can instantly turn on people and one can never know when.

Mankind and nature are both at immense risk and in this world of weapons that can be seen or sensed or even breathed, humankind needs humanity more than anything else. In the face of war, humankind needs to learn and experience compassion and love. On the brink of destruction, humankind needs to learn creation. In the midst of insecurity, humankind needs understanding, acceptance and empathy. In the heat of tension, humankind needs a flow of newly tailored ideals of calm and contentment. Replacing struggles with debates and ideas, acceptance and tolerance seeding on the ground of rationality and open mindedness, the realization that the vicious circle of answering war with wars is redundant and detrimental, and a general pavement of the path of mutual harmony and prosperity is imperative.

The need for peace is not new. Ideals and doctrines have been placed forth for the establishment of peace in the previous centuries. The greatest thinkers of the world have been promoters and progenitors of peace. Social leaders and religious teachers have laid down principles contributing to the peaceful interaction of humans on personal and societal scales. Religious beliefs seek to triangulate the causes of human suffering and attempt to eliminate them, hereby attempting to instill peace in human life. An eternal peace paradigm needs to be devised.

One such paradigm has been laid down by the Buddha in as early as the fifth century B.C.

***“Hatred does not cease through hatred at any time.***

***Hatred ceases through love. This is an unalterable law.***” – The Buddha

In Pali:

***“Na hi verena verāni sammanī dha kudācana***

***Averena casammanti esadhammo sanantano.***” – The Buddha

An interesting statistic here to note is that Buddhism won the Best Religion in the world award in 2009. In advance to their annual Leading Figure award to a religious figure who has done most to advance the cause of humanitarianism and peace, the Geneva-based *International Coalition for Advancement of Religious and Spirituality (ICARUS)* chose to bestow a special award on the Buddhist Community.

Criteria included factors such as promoting personal and community peace, increasing compassion and a sense of connection, and encouraging preservation of the natural environment. Groehlichen continued “The biggest factor for us is that ICARUS was founded by spiritual and religious people to bring the concepts of non-violence to prominence in society. One of the key questions in our voting process was which religion actually practices non-violence.”

When presenting the information to the voting members, ICARUS researched each of the 38 religions on the ballot extensively, offering background, philosophy, and the religions role in government and warfare. Jonna Hult, Director of Research for ICARUS said “It wasn’t a surprise to me that Buddhism won Best Religion in the World, because we could find literally not one single instance of a war fought in the name of Buddhism, in contrast to every other religion that seems to keep a gun in the closet just in case God makes a mistake. We were hard pressed to even find a Buddhist that had ever been in an army. These people practice what they preach to an extent we simply could not document with any other spiritual tradition.”

Indications of a growth in the volume of interest in Buddhism are noticeable in some

sections of the Indian people. Along with it there is naturally a growing demand for a clear and consistent statement of the life and teachings of the Buddha. Anyone who is not a Buddhist finds it extremely difficult to present the life and teachings of the Buddha in a manner which would make it a consistent whole. Depending on the Nikayas, not only the presentation of a consistent story of the life of the Buddha becomes a difficult thing and the presentation of some parts of his teachings becomes much more so.

### **What Others Have Understood about Buddha and different views of the Buddha's Dhamma**

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar says, "To understand Buddha's Dhamma one must understand all the three- Dhamma, Adhamma and Sadhamma." It is imperative to mention here that one of the three books which form a set for the proper understanding of Buddhism is Buddha and his dhamma. The other two books are (1) Buddha and Karl Marx, and (2) Revolution and Counter Revolution in Ancient India.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in his book Buddha and his Dhamma speaks about Buddha's own classification of Dhamma. According to him The Buddha adopted a different classification of Dhamma. The First category he called Dhamma. He created a new category called Non-Dhamma (Adhamma) though it went by the name Dhamma. He created a third category which he called Saddhamma. The third category was another name for Philosophy of Dhamma.

To understand His Dhamma, one must understand all the three-Dhamma, Adhamma and Saddhamma.

This divergence of views is astonishing. Many other views regarding Buddhism could be collected.

The man who has a fancy for certain thing (feels a desire, liking or attraction of a certain thing.)

Some of these views are of those men who have a fancy for certain things. Such are those who regard that the essence of Buddhism lies in Samadhi or Vipassana, or Esoterism. The other views are the results of the fact that the majority of the writers on Buddhism are students of ancient Indian history. Their study of Buddhism is incidental and occasional. Some of them are not students of Buddhism. They are not even students of Anthropology, the subject matter which deals with the origin and growth of religion. The final question which arises is: What are the teachings of the Buddha?

The answer found by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar is that- No two followers of the Buddha or the students of Buddhism agree.

The different views of the Buddha's Dhamma we found are:

- To some Samadhi is his principal teaching.
- To some it is Vipassana ( a kind of Pranayam)
- To some Buddhism is esoteric. To others it is exoteric.
- To some it is a system of barren metaphysics.
- To some it is sheer mysticism.
- To some it is selfish abstraction from the world.
- To some it is a systematic repression of every impulse and emotion of the heart.

After going through the different views, the question that arises is- "Did the Buddha have no Social Message?"

When pressed for an answer, students of Buddhism refer to the two points. They say- "The Buddha taught Ahimsa" and "The Buddha taught Peace."

They mention only "Ahimsa" and "Peace". They can't find the social message due to their feeling, liking, and attraction for certain things because they were not

students of Buddhism and neither students of Anthropology and their study is incidental and occasional. (It is not regular or dealt with the origin and growth about certain subjects like Buddhism and Buddha's philosophy and so on.) That is why they did not find the answer for Buddha's social message. They have buried Buddha's social message and philosophy.

**Following questions are hardly ever raised in discussing the Buddha's Dhamma:**

- Did the Buddha teach Justice?
- Did the Buddha teach Love?
- Did the Buddha teach Equality?
- Did the Buddha teach Liberty?
- Did the Buddha teach Fraternity?

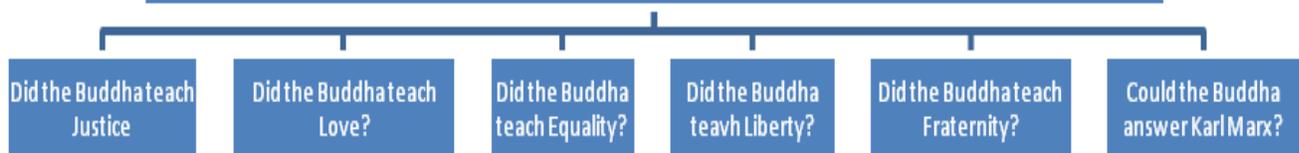
- Could the Buddha answer Karl marx?

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's answer is that the Buddha has a social message. What Others Have Understood about Buddha Different views of Buddha's dhamma, this divergence of views is astonishing.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar said, Buddha has a social message. He answers all these questions. But they have been buried by modern authors. The social message entails the practicality of peace in human life and therefore is an vital facet of the Buddha's teaching, central to the need of peace in this day and age.



**Following questions are hardly ever raised in discussing the Buddha's Dhamma:**



The Buddha, or as he was then known, Siddharth Gautama, demonstrated the establishment of peace without bloodshed in his youth itself. When war was about to break between two clans Sakya and Koliya over the use of river resources, Siddharth voted against the idea of aggression by appealing in the Sangha to downvote the idea of war, and tried to convince that a war would not befit the interests of either clans, let alone both.

Siddharth Gautama was only twenty-nine when he underwent Parivraja (Renunciation). People admired him and sighed for him; saying : " Here was a Sakya blessed with high lineage, noble parentage, possessed of considerable riches, in the bloom of youthful vigour, accomplished in mind and body, brought up in luxury, who fought his kinsmen for the sake of maintaining peace on earth and goodwill towards men." Here was a Sakya youth who when outvoted by his kinsmen refused to submit but preferred to undergo voluntary punishment which involved the exchange of riches for poverty, comfort for alms, home for homelessness. And so he goes with none in the world to care for him and with nothing in the world which he could claim as his own.

"His was an act of supreme sacrifice willingly made. His is a brave and a courageous act. There is no parallel to it in the history of the world. He deserves to be called a Sakya Muni or Sakya Sinha."

Over the span of his life the Buddha repeatedly validated the idea of resolving war without carnage, and sought after eliminating the cause of conflict, Dukkha, or sorrow. Buddhism preaches the elimination of war and suffering that leads to war, and renounces vengeance and breaks the circle of suffering caused due to constant retribution.

***“For someone looking from a distance, it appears as if Buddhism in India had been***

***destroyed. That Buddhism in India is extinct. But in reality, although it may appear as though the leaves have been shed and the branches are lifeless, it’s only Autumn for Buddhism and the roots are still just as strong. Given time and change in season, given onset of favorability, this tree shall blossom into full glory again. We cannot ignore this optimistic possibility and cannot stop to hope for it.”*** – Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar

### **Conclusion**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century world needs to tackle war at its roots and nip it in the bud instead of letting it brew and leech out our energy and resources, and most importantly, our humanity and lifetimes. It needs a peace construct that breaks out of the loop of anguish before it grows and aggravates and damages. The world needs compassion. The world needs tolerance. The world needs rationalism and acceptance. The world needs Buddha’s humanity heritage. The world needs the Buddha’s peace.

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