

Religion Resource for Peace or Reason For Conflict-

Buddhist Perspectives

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Albert Einstein's remarked: **"If there is any religion that could cope with modern scientific needs, it would be Buddhism"**.

Let me show why and how:

Buddha means "the enlightened one" who has achieved a state of perfect spiritual enlightenment in accordance with the teachings of Buddhas.

Buddhism in its current form is one of the great religions of the world based on teachings and inspiration of one man who became Buddha from Siddhartha reaching the state of "the Enlightened One". This great philosopher preached the highest philosophy with deepest sympathy for all sentient being without putting forth any claims for himself. The Buddha taught a way to salvation or deliverance that is open to all and that depends on an individual's own understanding and actions (karma), not on faith, caste, ritual, or divine grace.

Buddha talked of four noble Truths which are as follows:

- 1) Dukkha or Suffering,
- 2) Samudaya or cause of suffering, i.e. attachment or misplaced desire (tanha) rooted in ignorance.
- 3) Nirodha: or an end of suffering, which he called Nibbana (or Nirvana (in Sanskrit), literally meaning blowing out (of the fires of greed, hatred and delusion) and
- 4) Maggo or the path that leads out of suffering, known as the Noble Eightfold Path viz. right view, right thought, right speech, right conduct, right vocation, right effort, right attention and right concentration.

Buddhism is a religion of tolerance because it preaches a life of self-restraint. Buddhism teaches a life based not on rules but on principles. Buddhism was never meant for persecution or maltreatment of others with different belief system. The Teaching is such that it is not necessary

for anyone to label himself as a Buddhist to practice the Noble Principles of this religion. ”

Buddha devised an integrated system that addresses both intellectual and pragmatic concerns simultaneously. That is the Middle way. Middle path helps creating a culture of peace. Tendency toward extremism has been fueling most of the conflicts around the world.

When Nagarjuna, the 3rd century Indian Buddhist scholar was asked to summarize Buddha’s teaching, he replied, “Ahimsa”-Non-violence Non violence is the most basic teaching of the Buddha. Buddha taught we create karma: through body, speech and mind. Every action originates in the mind and is then expressed through either speech or bodily act. For a violent action to occur, there must first be a wish in one’s mind to commit the action and mental violence is of three types: greed, hatred and ignorance.

Buddha taught his followers that there are four types of verbal violence: divisive speech, gossip, harmful words, slander and three types of physical violence, killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. And since violence has its origin in the Three Poisons of greed, hatred and ignorance, to act nonviolently we must overcome these poisons by cultivating paramitas or transcendental actions, for ex. generosity, morality, patience, effort, mediation and wisdom.

Look how he abused me and beat me,
How he threw me down and robbed me.”
Live with such thoughts and you live in hate.
“Look how he abused me and beat me.
How he threw me down and robbed me.”
Abandon such thoughts and live in love.
In this world hate never yet dispelled hate.
Only love dispels hate. This is the law ancient and inexhaustible.”
Dhammapada

Such is the Buddha's advice to those who preach the doctrine of antagonism and ill-will, and who set men to war and rebellion against one another.

Peace cannot exist on this earth without the practice of tolerance. To be tolerant, we must not allow anger and jealousy to prevail in our mind. The Buddha says, 'No enemy can harm one so much as one's own thoughts of craving, hate and jealousy.' (Dhammapada 42)

Here is a quote from a modern Saint Swami Vivekananda, "Man was loving God and had forgotten all about his brother and sister. The man who in the name of God can give his very life, can also turn around and kill his brother in the name of God. They would sacrifice the son for the glory of God, would rob nations for the glory of God, would kill thousands of beings for the glory of God. This was the first time they turned to the other God-Man. It is man that is to be loved. Buddhism is the first wave of intense love for all men-the first wave of true unadulterated wisdom".

The world is like a mirror and if you look at the mirror with a smiling face, you can see your own, beautiful smiling face. On the other hand, if you look at it with a long face, you will invariably see ugliness. Similarly, if you treat the world kindly the world will also certainly treat you kindly. Learn to be peaceful with yourself and the world will also be peaceful with you.

Human mind is given to so much self-deceit that he does not want to admit one's own weakness. He/she will try to find some excuse to justify action and to create an illusion that he/she is blameless. If a person really wants to be free, he/she must have the courage to admit own weakness. The Buddha says:--

'Easily seen are other's faults; hard indeed it is to see one's own faults.'

Nonviolence can provide a very effective response to global conflict by peacemaking i.e. keeping people from attacking each other; peace building refers to the entire range of long term approaches to developing peaceful communities and societies based on principles of co-existence, tolerance, justice and equal opportunity; peace keeping diminishes the most acute conflagrations of violence.

Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnamese monk who coined the term Engaged Buddhism, says, "To prevent war, to prevent next crisis, we must start

right now. If we and our children practice ahimsa in our daily lives, if we learn to plant seeds of peace and reconciliation in our hearts and minds, we will begin to establish real peace and in that way, we may be able to prevent the next war”.

Middle Path is well described in E.F.Schumacher's book "Small is Beautiful":

"While the materialist is mainly interested in goods, the Buddhist is mainly interested in liberation. But Buddhism is the Middle Way and therefore in no way antagonistic to physical well being. The keynote of Buddhist economics is simplicity and non-violence. Schumacher's comments 'It is a question of finding the right path of development, the Middle Way, between materialist heedlessness and traditionalist immobility, in short, of finding Right Livelihood'".

Modern world conflict is embedded in the class based capitalist society where rivalry is prevalent in the name of competition for more profit and ownership as opposed to egalitarian vision of Buddhism that guarantees a peaceful coexisting society unitedly aspiring towards Nibbana.

“Killing is the beginning of all sufferings” Buddha; but unfortunately this important precept is conveniently ignored. Today, with modern armaments, man can kill millions within one second, that is, more than primitive tribes did in centuries.

Very unfortunately some people in certain countries bring religious labels, slogans and banners into their battlefields. They do not know that they are disgracing the good name of religion.

'Verily, O monk,' said the Buddha, 'due to sensuous craving, kings fight with kings, princes with princes, priests with priests, citizens with citizens, the mother quarrels with the son, the son quarrels with the father, brother with brother, brother with sister, sister with brother, friend with friend.' (Majjhima Nikaya)

We can happily say that for the last 2,500 years there has never been any serious discord or conflict created by Buddhists that led to war in the name of this religion. This is a result of the dynamic character of the concept of tolerance contained in the Buddha's teaching.

The time has come for us to think on a deeper level, on the human being level, and from that level to respect and appreciate the sameness of ourselves and other sentient being. We must build closer relationships by mutual trust, understanding, respect, and good will, regardless of differences in culture, philosophy, religion, or faith.

Quoting Buddha:

“May all beings be happy.

May all be joyous and live in safety

Let no one deceive another, nor despise another, as weak as they may be

Let no one by anger or by hate wish evil for another

As a mother, in peril of her own life, watches and protects her only child,

Thus with a limitless spirit must one cherish all living beings

Love the world in its entirety-above, below and all around.

Without limitation.

With an infinite goodness and with benevolence.

While standing, or walking, sitting or lying down, as long as one is awake

Let one cultivate Loving-Kindness.

This is called the Supreme Way of Living-Metta Sutta”

Let me end with quote from Kolki:

“There is nothing called holy or just war; war means killing and sufferings; If humans ever need a war that must be war against lies that have plagued our once pristine world since the Trojan War”!

Thanks.