

Buddhism for International Peace

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People across the world today live in fear, anxiety and mistrust. There are nations who possess enough weapons to destroy our world many times. They exist in constant mistrust of each other. The extent of mistrust, hatred, jealousy and rivalry is such that even a world war is likely to erupt any time. It is time for us, therefore, to get alarmed of the nature of threat the mankind is faced with and do something about it. It has to be a multi-dimensional in approach and as many parties as possible should be communicated for cooperative action.

Sociologists have observed that even religions have functioned as a factor in causing wars in spite of the potential they claim in creating peace. Almost all religions at their conceptual level are rich in peace concepts. And the present leaders, no doubt, would agree that, in spite of those beautiful concepts, enough harm has been done to global peace in the name of religion. It is high time, therefore, religions join together in whatever possible way to bring peace to the world.

Buddhism especially has enormous potential in this, as the Buddha has inculcated us with powerful concepts and shown their practical benefits at all levels. It was why at the dispute over his relics arose among some Indian kings a Brahmin intervened and asked how unreasonable it to fight over the relics of a master is who was called santivado - a peace philosopher.

At theoretical level Buddhism presents peace promoting teachings which are constructive in creating mind-set of peace within individuals. For instance, the Buddhist technique of metta meditation begins with self love and culminates in universal love. At practical level the concepts of compassion, non hatred, forgiving, sympathetic joy, equanimity etc are helpful to evade friction.

The Buddha even went to the extent of leaving the monastery and going to forest all alone when there erupted disunity to incite his Sangha to be united. Moreover, he intervened and made peace when some kings were ready to fight. It is recorded that the Buddha had extended his peace mission to international level by involving in a peace mission in Sri Lanka. It was the inspiration of the Buddhist teachings on peace that made Emperor Asoka give up war and become a peace promoter. Thus the Buddhists are equipped with ideal peace philosophy and have encouraging past examples in peace missions.

Unfortunately, though, even some Buddhists are presently accused of not keeping to their ideals in their behaviour. Recent reports in a few Buddhist countries have made some critics accusing them as intolerant and aggressive. So we have to be self critical to some extent and reflect on the ways of actively engaging in world peace. It is time to be more positive in achieving peace, learning from the past and envisaging a graceful future.

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