



Conflict Resolution
and
Buddha Dhamma

Lionel Guruge



CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES
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Conflict Resolution and Buddha Dhamma

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The Centre was established in 1996 with the belief that the active involvement of civil society would be essential and that its contribution be ensured for a discourse on public policy.

The Centre is committed to initiating new research programmes on critically analyzing public policies, identifying alternatives and giving effect to them.

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A Word....

Lionel Guruge's booklet on the application of Buddhist principles to resolve conflicts is no doubt a resourceful means to the art of the present day governance.

Had at least one of those principles been applied to resolve the ongoing ethnic conflict in this country, all ethnic communities would have enjoyed the fruits of peace.

Unfortunately, today the country is forced to suffer as the majority of its people pay only lip service to Buddhism.

The booklet which cites various sutras and scriptures provides an

effective answer to
problems of a
superstition driven
society.

The universal truth
treated in these
Sutras will be an
inner light for
anyone.

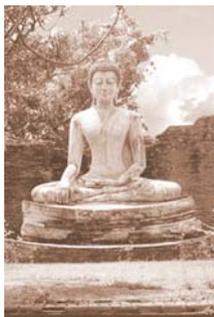
S.G.Punchihewa

Importance of Buddhism in Resolving Conflicts

It is justifiable to describe the land of Bharatha as a place of widespread armed conflict at the time Prince Siddhartha was born. At the same time this era was marked by the presence of many philosophies and also sages of various standards who sought inner salvation. Following enlightenment, Gauthama Buddha far from keeping himself confined to mere individual liberation extended his effort to deliver society as a whole from terrible conflicts and other evils that plagued it. The way he brought the Sakya – Koliya dispute to a



The Samadhi Buddha Statue in Sri Lanka



Buddha Statue in
Ayuththaya,
Thailand

settlement stands in evidence to this.

The Buddha was critical of race, caste and religion being exploited to extol or demean people. In this sense Buddhism constitutes a philosophy that advocates absolute non-violence and also a humanistic doctrine that refutes all sorts of human discrimination.

In place of these humanitarian values enshrined in Buddhist philosophy, the continuing emergence of tendencies that provoke discord and conflict in society is a matter for regret. In a country where the Buddhists are the majority, the emergence of such trends that retard social progress instead of the profound philosophy in Buddhism causes anxiety within the ranks of genuine Buddhist laity and learned Bhikkus. It is a matter for regret that certain individual

Bhikkus in the course of their sermons convey to the audience feelings of hatred that tend to nourish war, whilst Buddhism is accepted as a noble philosophy of non-violence that exposes the horrors of war.

Consequently, the situation necessitates a serious dialogue between the Bhikkus and the laity including those interested in peaceful co-existence, on the humanitarian vision of Buddhism and its all time validity.

This booklet is designed with that objective in mind. If it helps to establish a society which values peace, mutual co-existence and humanitarianism, then I think, I have fulfilled my mission.

Lionel Guruge

Outreach Unit

March 11, 2007



Buddha Statue from China

Conflict Resolution and Buddha Dhamma



Buddha Statue from
China

“To this day from the days of yore, war had originated in the mind of man. Therefore it is in the mind of man that peace should be brought to exist.”

This is stated in the Charter of the United Nations Organisation. The idea though presented as a novel proclamation in recent history, was already embroiled long long ago in the teachings of the Buddha. This means that the mind constitutes the base for both vice and virtue alike. One should establish mental peace within oneself first. Then only can one establish it in others.



“..One should first create peace in one’s mind before trying it on others.”

“However much the Devas, Asuras, Nagas and Ghandharas and various others wanted to live in conditions sans anger, enmity, and hatred and without resorting to arms, they still continue to live in

conditions of hatred and anger and resort to arms.”

*“KING SANYOJANA NOO NO,
MARISA DEVA MANUSSA
ASURA NAGA*

GANDABBA YE CHANNE SANNI

*PUTHUKAYA, THE AVEKA
ADANDA*

*ASAPATTA, AKKIYA PAJJA
VIHAREMU*

AVERINOTHI ITHIVA NESANG

HOTHI, ALUWA PANA SAVERA

*SADANDA SASAPATTA SAKKIYA
PAJJA*

VIHARANTHI SAVERI NO “THI ?

-DEEGA NIKAYA 2-8-357

SAKKHAPANNA SUTTA



Buddha Statue from Sri Lanka



This is a very subtle clarification.
Everybody wishes to live in peace.

*“Everybody likes
to live in peace..”*



Buddha Statue from China

They talk of it publicly. Yet how far they are willing to go in that direction is a question. Buddhism cites craving as the root-cause for this. When personal benefits supersede that of the common, people get tempted sometimes to take up arms in competition. Then the unarmed will have to do the same thing in defense. Thus conflicts begun at micro level could sometimes develop into genocidal wars .

Buddhism gives mental peace the pride of place. Peace can be established within oneself first, and then extended to the family. To this end, one should get rid of greed, ill-will and ignorance.

According to western axioms, there are four methods of conflict resolution. They are,

1. Mediation
2. Decisive Settlement
3. Ordered Settlement
4. Informal Settlement



“Buddhism gives the pride of place to mental peace.”

Buddhism exemplifies how these methods were used in practice,

long before they were identified and denominated in the West.

Veludwara Suththa says that one should think of others in comparison with ones own self. Accordingly what one does not like others to do, one would not. If what brings disunity is not to one's liking, others too would dislike it.

Those who dedicate themselves to the well being of society are classified in the Sanyuktha Nikaya as follows:

1. One who understands others while safeguarding oneself.
2. One who safeguards oneself while safeguarding others.

The first transmits his good qualities and virtues to society and works to disseminate and develop them.

The second practices non-violence, compassion and loving kindness in respect of society.



Buddha Statue from Temple of the Tooth, Sri Lanka



“Accordingly, what one does not like, others too would not..”



Buddha Statue from Sri Lanka

Satisfying one's requirements to the detriment of other is not right. Acts of individuals should comply with the interests of the society.

Vaseththa Suththa in the *Suthra Nipatha* describes in detail the effort exerted by *Vasetta*, to refute the argument brought by the Brahmin *Bharadwaja* to the effect that one's superiority or inferiority is determined by birth.

Assalayana Suththa gives an in-depth account of casteism and its rigid authority.

Accordingly, no one is superior or inferior to another in terms of class, caste, religion or race. And any conflict based on such discriminations is altogether repugnant to Buddhist principles.

Buddhism and Co-existence

There is a popular notion to the effect that Buddhism remains an extra worldly path of liberation and that therefore one should strive hard through self denial in pursuance of extra-worldly goals. For the worldly life is non-static. The increasingly popular stream of meditation programmes have largely contributed to promote this idea, as one can observe.

Buddhism however teaches that one's liberation lies within oneself and that it rests upon one's mind solely.

The middle path and the noble enlightened path are the basic principles of Buddhism. Accordingly leading human life towards oppressive aims in keeping with provocative and extremist sentiments and ideas is a path alien to Buddhism.



Buddha Statue from
Taiwan



*“The middle path
and the noble
eightfold path are
the sine qua non
of Buddhism.”*



India, Kushinagar,
Buddha Statue

Early Buddhism, it is believed valued austerity, prosperity and tolerance. Accordingly the contents of teachings of the Gauthama Buddha rejected casteism, racism and all other forms of discriminations.

Assalayana Sutta in Majjima Nikaya provides a precious dialogue regarding the futility of casteism.

"To what caste does a child born to a Kshathraya (the military caste) and a Brahmin (priestly caste) mother belong" the Buddha queried. Accordingly the Buddha exposed the futility of the contention of Brahmins that they were superior to others."



"Ancient Buddhism always promoted austerity, prosperity and tolerance.."

According to *Vaseththa Sutta* diversity in human society is simply man-made and is desired from an occupational syndrome. Buddhism describes the accumulation of wealth for personal aggrandizement as immoral. Emphasis is laid on the need for all natural as well as man made resources to be treated as common property.

The Buddha once learned that a Bhikku, by the name of Upananda was hoarding and being miserly in his possession of the robes received from the laity. Thereupon the Buddha summoned and gave him valuable advice thus:

"Meaningless is the thought of getting attached greedily to textiles that are bound to decay. Everything is prone to destruction. Your hoarding robes is unjustifiable when there are Bhikkus who find it difficult to obtain a robe. Distribute generously all those robes among the Bhikkus who found it difficult to obtain robes."

**-Dhamma Padaththa
Katha – Page 413**

Buddha dismissed those lives solely dedicated to personal economic and social advancement as quite worthless and urged the people to exert themselves on the social well-being in the larger interest of mankind.

Vanaropa Sutta urges investment in afforestation, cultivation of fruits, construction of roads and bridges,



Ayuththaya, Thailand
Buddha Statue



"Buddha dismissed those lives solely dedicated to personal economic and social advancement.."



Buddha Statue from
China

ponds, and housing for shelter which are listed as meritorious deeds.

Agganna Suthra provides a comprehensive analysis of the reasons that led to the limitedness of public resources which in turn gave rise to a division as 'haves' and 'have nots' leaving the poor to suffer. It also cites contributing causes for this state of affairs as the emergence of a state of unrest due to the efforts to utilize public resources for personal use; rise of the mighty over the feeble; appropriation of others' property through selfishness; and marking boundaries to stabilize public property.



*“Competition
for exploitation
of public assets
for personal
gain led to
unsettled
conditions”*

Statehood and Public Well Being

Buddhism cannot be considered as a teaching meant for a particular group of people. It has more than once emphasized the importance of rulers being virtuous, because the subjects too would follow suit when they act to the contrary.

Chakkavatti Sihanada Sutta in *Sutta Pitaka* could be cited as a classic example in this connection.

It is laid down in the *Sutta* that the monarch who is a righteous ruler shall ensure prosperity, fulfillment of the aspirations, unity and security of his subjects. No immoral acts would be tolerated. The poor should be cared for by giving wealth to them. Similarly people belonging to all castes, brahmin priests, and all animals would be looked after as well.

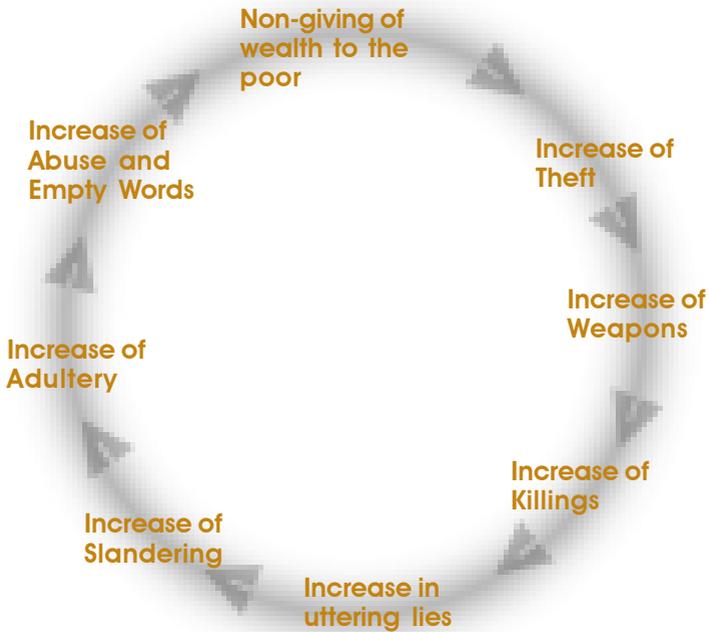


Indian Buddha Statue



“It is laid down in the Sutta that the monarch who is a righteous ruler shall ensure prosperity..”

The essence of these policies is called "SAKVITHIVATH". The possible anarchic conditions that would result from the non-compliance of these policies are well explained in *Chakkavaththi Sihanada Sutta*.



A *Sakvithi King* is supposed to be endowed with five-fold wisdom:

- Wisdom to understand good and bad instantly
- Wisdom to rule according to the Dhamma
- Wisdom to act within means
- Wisdom to act appropriate to the occasion
- Wisdom to fulfill the aspiration of the subjects



Laos, Chiang Chan Buddha Statue

"If the leader of the Caravan treads the wrong path, his followers too would. Similarly if a ruler behaves unjust his countrymen too would."-
AMBALATTIKA RAHULOWADA SUTTA

Buddhist literature is replete with instances in which Buddha preached on the merits of righteous rule.

KUTA DANTA Sutta Says:

"A righteous ruler would distribute wealth among the poor and help



"if a ruler behaves unjust his countrymen too would.."



Buddha Statue -
Kakunji O, Japan

invest in business. Those interested in agriculture and cattle breeding need encouragement. Inputs in the form of financing, implements and limited infrastructure facilities be provided. Traders and state employees need the state patronage to flourish in their trades.

Eventually fear and apprehension would disappear and give way to contentment. People would start enjoying themselves with their families and toddlers even while away from their homes.

Consequently economic prosperity, cultural revival, democratic ethos and tolerance become part and parcel of a just society.



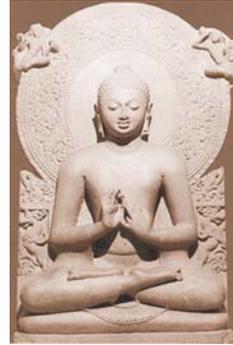
“A righteous ruler would distribute wealth among the poor and help invest in business..”

Maintaining Diversity Through Ganasangha

Monarchies as well as Ganasanghas ruled India during the time of Buddha. The constitution of Ganasangha widely differed from that of the monarchy. Ganasanghas had in fact opposed the monarchical system at times.

Rulers of the parts of the country where Ganasanghas had its writ established, assembled at the *SANTHAGARAYA*, an assembly hall to discuss matters of importance, among which administration and justice were foremost. Decisions reached at the *Santhagaraya* were binding on the governance.

"Ganaraja" was the head of a Ganasangha. One conspicuous difference between the monarchy and the Ganasangha was that, under the former, the individual was identified by his profession whilst the group mattered under the



Saranath, India



"The constitution of Ganasangha widely differed from that of its monarchy. ."



India, Dharmashala

Ganasangha. Of all Ganasanghas in ancient India, *Vajjis*, *Lichchavis*, and *Mallas* were the democrats at heart.

Ganasanghas were made up of members of the Kshathriya clan. It denounced Brahmin rituals and their caste stratification of society. Consequently, the Ganasanghas had to incur the wrath of Brahmins.

Principles of Ganasanghas

1. Members of Ganasanghas regularly assembled at the *Santhagaraya* to discuss matters of common interest.
2. Sit together, discuss together and rule by consensus.
3. Abide by the traditional rules, observe the norms of *Gana Gothra* – the Gana Clan.
4. Respect and protect the elderly.



“Ganasanghas were made up of members of the Kshathriya clan...”

5. They do not molest women.
6. They make offerings and pay homage at places of worship within their areas and outside.
7. They pay their due respect to priests within the Ganasangha and outside.



Buddhagaya, India

Observance of these principles, helped strengthen unity, independence and democracy within *Ganagothra*.

The practice of collective decision making did not certainly leave room for an iota of injustice to any clan. The situation did not permit inter tribal conflicts and feelings of hatred. Members of different clans entertained the feeling that the Ganasangha system of government safeguarded their rights and reflected the views of their representatives.



“The practice of collective decision making did not certainly leave room for an iota of injustice to any clan..”



Buddha Statue from Tibet

Democracy and freedom so treasured by the *Kshathriyas* was commended by the Buddha in His reference to *Vajji*, *Lichchavi* and *Malla* kings in many instances.

Following is an excerpt of a sermon to bhikkus as mentioned in *Parinibbana Sutta*:

“Oh, bhikkus, so long as you sit together and discuss your problems together as a matter of routine, you are assured of progress but no set-backs. Oh bhikkus, so long as you are bound together in unity you are assured of progress but no set-backs.”



“Democracy and freedom so treasured by the Kshathriyas it was commended by Buddha..”

Those were infact the democratic traditions followed by the *Ganasanghas* which Buddha wanted to introduce into the bhikku order.

However, if inter-tribal conflicts have escalated in a society nourished by Buddhist

teachings, it is because the practice of rule by Consensus as in the old Ganasangha system, as well as in a modern democracy, have disappeared.



Buddha Statue,
Japan

Bhikku Sanghaya, Jana Sanghaya



Buddha Statue,
Myanmar

“Sangha” denotes a collective. A Sanghaya is made up of more than four bhikkus who had received the higher ordination, the texts explain. As such all matters relating to discipline ought to be dealt with according to the concurrence of the bhikkus and public consensus.

The Sanghika tradition in the bhikku order lays the foundation for an easy and tolerant life capable of thinning out problems.

Chulla Wagga Sutta relates a story on the Sanghika tradition as follows:



“all matters relating to discipline ought to be dealt with according to the concurrence and consensus of the bhikkus..”

“One nobleman from *Rajagaha Nuwara* (City) sought the permission of the Buddha to put up monasteries for bhikkus and bhikkunis (nuns). Buddha who patiently listened to him responded thus: “Make it home for all bhikkus.”

A similar incident:

Once the queen consort of King Udeni offered 500 robes to Ven. Ananda. When the King queried as to how these would be dispensed, the venerable thera replied:“ King, these will be equally distributed among the Bhikkus. Their used robes will be handed over to Bhikkus whose robes are worn out. Such worn out robes will be given to make palliasses. Unservicable palliasses will be ground and mixed with clay to be applied on walls. (Chulawagga Pali 2, Page 561).



Buddha Statue
Myanmar, Bhagan

This is a clear instance which illustrates the working of the Sanghika System practiced among the bhikkus. It underscores the importance of sharing of resources in common by the community, and not by individuals alone.

Summed up, the Sanghika System in fact works for the common well being and not for personal ease and enjoyment. It also transcends everything-the differences between the Sangha and the laity, castes, tribes, clans etc.



“The Sanghika System in fact works for the common well being ..”

Collective Decision Making



Buddha Statue,
Thailand

Truth is one. There cannot be many truths. According to CHULLA VAGGA SUTTA in SUTTA NIPATHA, there cannot exist a second truth. It says thus,

"EHI EKANHI SANGHANG NA DUTHIYAMANTHI"

Any assertion that "this is the absolute truth; all others speak untruth" run directly counter to Buddha Dhamma.

Although there is only one truth, the approach to truth may differ according to individual and group identities, and the nature of individuals. However, in the odyssey in pursuit of truth, individuals and groups with different identities and makeup could get-together and participate in the collective decision making.



"Although there is only one truth, the approach to truth may differ .."

Mahaparinibbana Sutta records an occasion when Buddha

discussed this matter in the context of the laity and bhikku life.

“During Buddha’s sojourn at Girikula Pawwa, the Maghade King Ajasatte made plans to attack Vajjis and liquidate them completely. The king however, dispatched his emissary Maghada to ask for an audience with the Buddha and convey to Him his plans to slaughter the Vajjis.



Buddha Statue
Burma

The Buddha in the presence of the emissary addressed Ven. Anandha;

“Ananda, have you heard the Vajjis get-together and discuss their problems very often?”

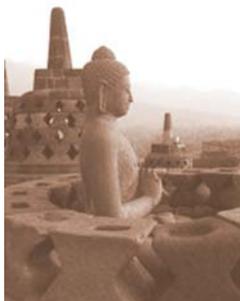
ANANDA: “Yes, Reverand Sir”

Buddha: “Ananda, so long as the Vajjis continue their tradition they are assured of progress and not decline. Ananda, have you heard the Vajjis get-together and engage in their activities in unison?”

ANANDA: “Yes, I have, Reverand Sir”



*“Ananda,
have you
heard the
Vajjis get-
together and
engage in
their activities
in unision..”*



Borou Budhur,
Indonesia

Buddha: "Ananda, so long as Vajjis continue this practice they are assured of success and not failures" the Buddha remarked.

Thereafter, a Brahmin named Vassakara pleaded with Buddha that unless the Vajjis are talked to and persuaded, they cannot be vanquished in war or their unity be split.

The tradition on the part of Vajjis in sitting together and discussing the matters to iron out differences and reach consensus helped strengthen their economic and social well-being.

Tolerance

Free thought and tolerance are two credentials attributed to Buddhism which are clearly reflected in *Kalama Sutta*.

Kalama's had the problem of priests and contemplatives who visited them and did expound and glorify their own doctrine but as for the doctrine of others they deprecated them, reviled them, showed contempt for them and disparaged them. The highly perturbed Kalamas visited Buddha and explained the intricacy of the problem they faced.

Buddha advised them:

"Oh, Kalama, do not go by legends, by traditions, by scriptures, by logical conjectures, by references, by analogies, by agreement through pondering rituals, by probability or by thought. It is only after judging merits or demerits of anything that one



Buddha Statue,
Vietnam



"Kalama's had the problem of priests and contemplatives who visited them and did expound and glorify their own doctrine.."



Burma,
Buddha Statue

will have to accept it or arrive at a conclusion. In other words, one should be able to separate chaff from the wheat!”

According to the *Paribibbana Sutta* the Buddha advised the bhikkus to treat the Brahmin priests with due respect and regard as they do toward their peers.

Once one Kevatta called over on Buddha and appealed to Him to direct one of his disciples to perform miracles so that the residents of Nalanda, a prosperous city would become more pious towards the Dhamma.

Buddha however, forthwith, turned down the requests and enlightened Kevatta on his unique method of Precept. Buddha proved himself the efficacy of his doctrine of precept through practice.

Upali, a follower of Mahavira, one day appeared before the Buddha to argue and persuade him into becoming a disciple of his guru.



“the Buddha advised the bhikkus to treat the Brahmin priests with due respect ..”

When he failed in his mission, he appealed to Buddha to make him one of His disciples. Buddha however, cautioned Upali that it would be better for people of his stature to think over and act with circumspection. Rejoiced much over the advice, Upali pleaded with Buddha to accept him as a follower of Dhamma and added that had he become a follower of any other great teacher, he would have been brought to public spotlight by taking round the Nalanda City in procession.



Buddha Statue,
Burma

Buddha advised Upali:

“Throughout, you have entertained Nigandhas at your abode and that this practice shall continue in future as well. I preached Dhamma to you not to make you my pupil. Your teacher shall remain your guru further.”

Buddhism stresses on the difference between individuals and the innate potential ingrained in man. According to Attakara Sutta man is endowed



“Buddhism stresses on the difference between individuals..”



Thailand,
Buddha Statue

with such qualities as fortitude, perseverance, and sagacity.

To put an end to the primeval argument that one's religion is superior to that of others, Lord Buddha cites the story of an elephant and a blind man:

"A king once summoned all the blind in the city and asked each of them to touch the elephant and explain what the animal was. Each of the blind who touched a particular limb of the elephant came out with his own explanation of the poor animal. Each one held his own view to be correct and dismissed others.



"Buddha's teaching is solely meant for protecting the common well being of the mankind.."

Buddha cited the above story in order to dispel the superstition in many adherents that their religion is true but all others are unfounded. Buddha's teaching is solely meant for protecting the common well being of mankind, but not one that could be narrowed down to selfish gains.

In Vanaropa Sutta, the Buddha explained to the world several

deeds which could naturally acquire merit such as gardening, afforestation, development of roads, supply of water for drinking and other purposes and provision of housing.

Yet it is nobody's business to find out as to what religion or race the beneficiaries of these meritorious acts belong to.

Today linguistic and cultural identities have become the main causes for secessionist movements in many multi-ethnic societies. The most formidable one seems to be the discrimination directed against the ethnic minorities by the ruling governments.

This applies to the ongoing conflict in Sri Lanka as well.

Discrimination based on language, caste, religion and regional identities appears to have occurred in Sri Lanka for some time. Discrimination is repugnant to the Buddhist principles of tolerance and regard for diversity, particularly in a country where



Buddha Statue,
Kampuchea



“..Today linguistic and cultural identities have become one of the main causes for secessionist movements..”



Kampuchea,
Angkor
Buddha Statue

70% of the population are Buddhists.

According to *Paththa Kamma Sutta*, in the task of providing food, housing, clothes and medicine, Buddhists are not warranted to differentiate between Buddhists and priests of other faiths. The term SAMANA BRHMANA implies priests of all faiths.

Buddhist Concept of Conflict Resolution

At the time of the advent of Buddhism, the intricate Indian society abounded in factional and religious strife, practices and teachings. Different religious groups glorified their own beliefs and faiths at the cost of others.

Invasions, armed conflicts, killings etc in pursuit of power were a common occurrence.

Maha Parinibbana Sutta relates how the Buddha intervened and prevented an imminent invasion of Vajji country by King Ajasaththa.

“When the armed cadres of the Sakya and Koliya clans were poised to attack each other and unleash bloodshed on the contentious issue of sharing the water from river Rohini for agriculture, the Buddha who came to know about the impending disaster visited the



Gal Viharaya,
Sri Lanka



“Different religious groups glorified their own beliefs and faiths at the cost of others...”



Vietnam

scene of conflict and questioned the rival forces:

Q: Why have all of you assembled here?

A: Venerable Sir, We are going to meet in war.

Q: Reason?

A: Water

Q: Of how much value is water?

A: Not much, venerable sir

Q: Of how much value is the planet earth?

A: It is inestimable, Sir

Q: Of how much value are the lives of soldiers engaged in fighting?

A: Inestimable sir.

Buddha: "Oh, Kings, why do you want to sacrifice the precious lives of the soldiers for the mere sake of worthless water?"

Enlightened, the Kings pledged that they would abandon the war.

– *RUNALA JATAKA IN JATAKATTA STORY*

The Buddha citing the *Chakka Vaththi Sihanada Sutta* on the deadly effects of recourse to weapons recommended three powerful weapons capable of protecting human society: Knowledge, Wisdom and Relaxation.



Swedagon, Burma

The Buddha outlined six principles as being capable of creating a society free from armed conflicts and capable of consolidating peace and co-existence.

- Compassionate deeds
- Compassionate words
- Compassionate thoughts
- Equal sharing of gifts among the near and dear
- A righteous life
- A correct vision

Mahavagga Paliya of Vinaya Pitakaya records the following incident:



“The Buddha outlined six principles as being capable of creating a society free from armed conflicts..”



Buddha Statue from Saranath, India

A rift occurred among the bhikkus due to disciplinary action against a bhikku on some minor matter. Buddha's advice to the bhikkus is worth recalling: "I see unity and harmony among the kings who inflict pain in others, kill people and invade others domains and pillage their wealth. Why is there no such unity and harmony amongst you?" the Buddha queried.

His advice to the warring bhikkus was based on the story of King Dirghayu.

King Brahmadata who invaded the kingdom of King Dirgayu, massacred the soldiers, pillaged the wealth and killed prince Dirgayu's soldiers as well.



"A rift occurred among the bhikkus due to disciplining action against a bhikku on some minor matter. .."

The Prince however, showed compassion to the king and forgave his crimes. The king returned compassion for the hatred of his enemies.

Despite the Buddha's admonition to desist from hatred and cultivate compassion, the warring bhikkus were still adamant.

Subsequently, the Buddha decided to leave for the Parileiya retreat. Before leaving the Buddha had to say "When all get together and make row none of them think that he is a fool. When the Bhikkus are split into two factions already why can't they think to the contrary?"

The Buddha met Arahath Anurudhdhe in the Parileiya forest and observed thus- "It is more pleasant to be in the forest than to be among quarrelling Bhikkus."



Bodhgaya, India

Harmony



Buddha Statue
from Laos

- **SAMAGGARAMA**
- **SAMAGGARATHA**
- **SAMAGGANANDI**
- **SAMAGGA KARANA**

“**S**AMAGGA” means deriving pleasure from harmony and unity. “Saptha Aparihaniya Dharma” formed part of the discourse on unity delivered to King Lichchavi by the Buddha. A king whose rule is based on the principles of *Saptha Aparihaniya* could possibly ensure a life of ease and prosperity for his subjects irrespective of caste and creed.



“A king whose rule is based on the principles of Saptha Aparihaniya could possibly ensure a life of ease. ...”

There is hardly any room for ethnic or religious strife in a country where rulers are committed to uphold Buddhist principles and ensure peaceful life for the subjects. There is however, a difference between the precept

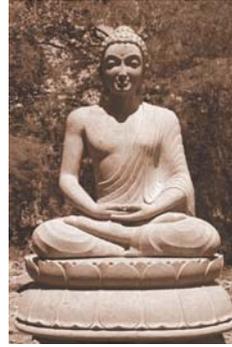
and practice in most of the Buddhist societies.

The relationship between statehood and Buddhism is also significant.

Legend has it that there were de-robed Buddhist monks and Tamils in King Dutugemunu's army whilst many Sinhalese soldiers fought on the side of Tamil King Elara. This is clear evidence that the war was not ethnically motivated. It was a national effort to wrest the crown from the ruling monarch. Attempts by certain elements to portray the Dutugemunu – Elara war as one between the Sinhalese and the Tamils are deplorable and misleading.

For centuries the Sinhalese and Tamils lived here together in harmony.

Attempts by certain quarters to promote the myth of an exclusive Sinhala-Buddhist state are bound to incur the displeasure of certain communities. One has to recount how the Sinhalese and the Tamils for centuries marginalized by the same source of cultural ethos lived together in peace.



India



“Legend has it that there were Buddhist monks and Tamils in King Dutugemunu’s army whilst many Sinhalese soldiers fought on the side of Tamil King Elara. ..”

Co-Existence, the *raison d'etre* for Peaceful Life



Buddha Statue from Nepal

Sri Lanka is a country where the majority are Buddhists. There is also substantial representation of minority Hindus, Muslims and Christians. Buddhism itself is a legacy from India. Legend has it that the origin of the Sinhalese starts with the advent of Prince Vijaya and his retinue from India. With the passage of time, language, religion, life-styles and such other cultural endowments from India began to have a strong foot hold on the Island.



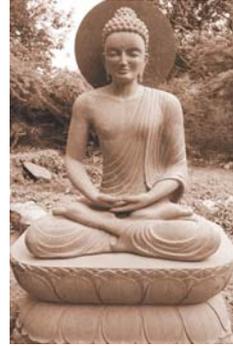
“Legend has it that the origin of the Sinhalese starts with the advent of Prince Vijaya and his retinue from India...”

Tamil speaking peoples of different ethnicities, time and again migrated to Sri Lanka from neighboring India and continued to live in harmony with the native Sinhalese.

Does not what we discussed above point to the fact that there is symmetry and co-existence among the different ethnic people who cannot be

alienated from the country's mainstream of culture, religion, languages and castes? Prof. Anuradha Senevirathne in his study of ethnic relations states:

"According to our historical records the Sinhalese and Tamil people cannot claim themselves to be pure "Sinhala" or pure "Tamil". The terms "Sinhala" and "Tamil" are used only to denote separate identities. The Sinhala people living in the north-central, east and central hill country are an admixture of Veddhas and Tamils. On the other hand, Tamils are a nation made up of South Indian Cholas, Pandyan and Pallawas. They all inter-mingled with the Sinhala people in the past and with Muslims and Burghers at present. According to history, the majority of the Sri Lankan Tamils are not Chola Dravidians but have descended from Pandyan and Keralans. The majority of the people of Kerala origin claim Sinhala identity. Some people with a very clear South Indian origin but belonging to Sinhala castes appear for the defence of the Buddhists.



Buddha Statue from India



"On the other hand, Tamils are a nation made up of South Indian Cholas, Pandyan and Pallawas..."



Buddha Statue in Thailand

(THE THEN SINHALESE & TAMILS LIVED IN THIS WAY – PROF. ANURADHA SENEVIRATHNE – SARASAVI PUBLISHERS – 2001 – PAGE 75)

Sri Lanka's last king, Sri Wickreme Rajasingha was of Telungu origin in the Dravidian languages family. Many Sinhala Buddhists held responsible positions in his royal court. The limited representations of Tamils in both the State Council and the Parliament combined with the failure to resolve their grievances within the parliamentary framework could be attributed to recurrent ethnic flare-ups.

Whilst discriminations on language grounds still survive, the opportunist politicians twice frustrated the passage of the Reasonable Use of Tamil Language Act.

Devolution of power is a constitutional device adopted to fulfill the aspirations of different communities in a multi racial polity. It ensures justice to all. In India, the Tamil speaking people are concentrated in Tamil Nadu.



“Sri Lanka’s last king, Sri Wickreme Rajasingha was of Telungu origin in the Dravidian languages family..”

Failure of all proposals for devolution of power primarily designed to accommodate Tamil aspirations, paved the way for the ongoing ethnic war to take its toll on the country.

The concept of devolution of power is not something alien to the country.

Until the advent of British rule and the subsequent amalgamation of provinces Sri Lanka had a political structure in which power was devolved in the three regions-Ruhuna, Maya and Pihiti. Today power has been devolved through Provincial Councils and Pradeshiya Sabhas to a certain degree.

History bears testimony to provincial rule by princes in ancient Sri Lanka.

Buddha reiterated the importance of right word (SAMMA VACA) as an effective mechanism for resolving differences and conflict among people.

SAMMA VACA means right word which always helps pacifying



Buddha Statue in Thailand



“The concept of devolution of power is not something alien to the country...”



Buddha Statue in
Afghanistan

warring factions and strengthening
the bond of harmonious co-
existence.



