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## BUDDHIST MESSAGE FOR GLOBAL PEACE

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**Abstract :** The world is now in a very critical situation. It is on the verge of destruction. Man is responsible, and has always been responsible, for the destruction of his own civilization in different ages. In cruelty and violence man surpasses even the most dreadful beasts of jungles. Man's non-ending desires for material gains, man's ill-will and hatred towards others and man's envy at other's gain and prosperity are the root causes for his constant tension and unrest. This mental unrest does not confine itself to the individual level only, but gradually it spreads and engulfs the whole family, the whole state and the whole nation. This is the reason why the whole world now is burning, within and without. Man, rich or poor, suffers within and without. Family, rich or poor, suffers within and without. State, rich or poor, suffers within and without. None is happy in the world, be one richest or the poorest. The material worldly gains and prosperity cannot give mental peace to a man. Because his desire for more better gains and more better prosperity haunts his mind day and night. Sometimes he forgets that he is a dwarf and hopelessly longs for touching the moon. His ignorance and delusion make him thinking: "The whole world may perish one day, but I will survive. All may die one day, but I will not. I will drink life to the lees.... to thousand of years, to millions of years." He longs after such a panacea which will make him immortal thus to enable him enjoying worldly pleasures. There lies the tragedy of the human fate. Just look around the world. What is going on?

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**Introduction :** That universal principle that larger fishes will swallow the smaller ones reigns supreme. Now the strong exploit and oppress the weak. There is arms-race between one nation and the other, while a third nation comes forward in the guise of a peaceful settler and returns by looting both the fighting nations. Sometimes we find that some big power engages her agents secretly throughout the world just to create divisions among friendly nations so that they start fighting with each other, and that big power one day appears as a rescuer and ultimately fills her pocket with the loots from the fighting nations, and make them bankrupt. This reminds us of the famous old Indian tale when a monkey comes forward to equally divide a cake for which two cats were fighting, and ultimately he himself consumes the whole cake while the cats were surprisingly gazing at their friend in disguise. Thus we find in the present world that the big powers are doubly benefited. Firstly by secretly selling arms and weapons to the weaker nations and secondly by receiving rewards for their role played as the rescuer of the fighting nations. This is what is going on in the world. The big powers, who decide the fate of millions of human beings, are spending an enormous sum of money on the development of still new and new types of sophisticated weapons, while millions and millions of people in different corners of the world are languishing in inhuman conditions and dying an untimely death from inexplicable poverty, malnutrition and diseases. Thus the big powers, the war-mongers are pushing the

humanity into disaster and destroying the age old human civilization. It is painful to note that the great souls who are advocating for peace are either got assassinated or made their voice silenced by giving them covetable prizes or by conferring on them world - renowned Titles.

**Peace Possible or Not** : It is not that peace is unattainable, but it is very difficult. Peace is possible if the root causes of the unrest, as mentioned above, can be eradicated. The causes are : a. Non-ending desires for material gains and prosperity b. Ill-will and hatred towards others c. Ignorance and delusion regarding the realistic of life. If we minutely observe and study we will find that all the causes have their roots in the mind itself, in the individual mind. We can realize that if our minds are calm, we will have peace within and thus we can overcome desire, anger, ill-will, hatred and greed. The oft-quoted proverb says : Charity begins at home. If the individual mind has become calm and peaceful, it will help other members of the family to become calm and peaceful. Thus if every family becomes peaceful the entire society will be peaceful. If all the societies are peaceful, the State will be peaceful. If all the States are peaceful, the entire Nation will be peaceful. If all the Nations are peaceful, the whole World will be peaceful. But the question is : How to make this individual mind calm and peaceful? The answer is given by the great religious teachers of the World. They say: if all the evil conditions have their roots in the mind, all the good conditions also will generate only in the mind. So to eradicate evil conditions from the mind, good conditions are to be generated therein. The Preamble to UNESCO's Constitution therefore declares "Since war begins in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed." But this is very difficult to generate good conditions instead of the bad ones in one's mind. Because human mind now is generally covered with the thick clouds of ignorance and delusion. In the fast changing world man has little time to think over what he is doing and what he is going to do. Man's circumstances make him blind of differentiating good from evil. To his deluded mind evil appears to be good and good appears to be evil. As a result he commits inexpressible evils for which not only he himself has to feel the consequence, but also he makes the entire nation and the whole world suffer. There are instances in the history that one man's crime is enough to jeopardize the peace of the entire humanity. At the same time one's pure and serene mind endowed with loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity can make the whole world peaceful. All the great religious teachers, therefore, gave importance to the purity of the individual mind.

**Concept of Peace In Buddhism:** In the earliest period of the recorded history the Buddha was the first great man who advocated for peace, non-violence and equality. He preached his doctrine to guide the suffering mass in attaining eternal peace being fully liberated from the worldly sufferings due to innumerable series of birth and death. He did not concern much for the peace in the physical level, rather he concerned for the mental peace within, which is vital in leading a peaceful life in this world, in attaining peaceful life hereafter and finally in attaining eternal peace in Nibbana. The Buddha's principles for peace are universal in nature, as they are applicable to all human beings. For universal

disease, he prescribed a universal medicine. To him the root causes of human sufferings, human unrest and human unquiet are universal. They are greed, envy, hatred, anger, delusion, lustful desires and prejudices. So for the eradication of these evils he prescribed the noble and universal medicine of Sila - Samadhi - Panna which is popularly known as the Noble Eightfold Path. Of the trio, Sila - Samadhi - Panna, Sila or morality comes first on which the entire structure of peace, individual or universal rests. If human beings claim to be the best species among living beings, they should observe morality i.e., they should purify their bodily and vocal actions by abstaining themselves from killing, stealing, committing adultery, telling lies, consuming intoxicating objects and from adopting unrighteous means of livelihood. This Sila is the prerequisites, the foundation for both Samadhi or Equanimity of Mind and Panna or Insight. According to the Buddha, if Sila or morality is not observed properly, one cannot expect achieving lasting peace, in the individual level or in the universal level. If this Sila-foundation remains weak or becomes weak, the entire structure of peace will collapse today or tomorrow. On the other hand if the Sila-foundation is strong, one can attain Equanimity of Mind when one can at least experience the taste of peace. In the philosophical term this is called Samadhi In an equanimous mind Panna or Insight arises. One's vision becomes perfect and pure as regards the reality of life. He realises that everything is impermanent and subject to decay and death, everything is suffering, within and without, and nothing is substantial. If this naked truth of the realities of life is realised, one will definitely abstain oneself from the evils like greed, lustful desire, envy, hatred, anger, delusion and prejudices, and this abstention will make one's life peaceful. Thus if this medicine of Sila - Samadhi - Panna is applied universally, there will remain no disturbances in the world and the people of the world will be able to live happily and peacefully. For the common people, however, the Buddha prescribed another composite medicine of Brahmaviharas or lofty behavior of the human mind. The Brahmaviharas are four in number, viz., loving kindness (= metta), compassion (= Karuna), sympathetic joy (=mudita) and equanimity (=upekkha). But in this case also Morality (=Sila), as mentioned above, is to be observed as the prerequisite of the Brahmaviharas.

The fruitfulness of the practice of the Brahmaviharas depends only on the solid foundation of Morality. If Morality is not observed, the practice of the Brahmaviharas will be ineffective. Now, let us give an idea how the Brahmaviharas are to be practiced and how they help in maintaining individual peace as well as world-peace. Loving kindness (= Metta) : Loving kindness or benevolence is the love in its pure form. In the Pali Suttanipata and the Khuddakapatha there is a discourse called "Metta - Sutta" where the Buddha gives the most conspicuous illustration of loving kindness. It is the love of mother towards her only child. The Buddha says: "Mata yacch niyam putt am ayes' ekaputtam anurakkhe /Evam pi sabbabhutesu manasam bhavaye aparimanam/"--Just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk of her own life, even so let one cultivate a boundless love towards all beings. Regarding "beings" the Buddha's idea is so lofty that he means all beings, be they longest, biggest, medium - sized, be they short, fat or smallest,

be they visible or invisible, living near or far, those who are boom and even those who will be born. Let all beings be happy. Let all beings living in the ten directions of the universe be happy. The spirit of loving kindness (= benevolence) and the spirit of tolerance are the two sides of the same coin. In the Pale literature there are numerous examples how the Buddha, in his Bodhisatta births, either as a man or as a beast, practiced and cultivated loving kindness and tolerance towards his enemies. In the Silavanta Jataka, the Bodhisatta was punished to death by the enemy-king. The Bodhisatta was miraculously saved, but he forgave his enemy and in ill-will he did not wish any harm to his enemy. In the Khantivadi Jataka, the Bodhisatta's hands and feet were chopped off one by one, but still he did not wish any harm to his enemy, the king of Kasi. In the Cula - Dhammapala Jataka, the Bodhisatta's father chopped off his hands and feet into four pieces and ordered to make him beheaded. But still the Bodhisatta did not wish any harm to his father. In the Chaddanta Jataka, the elephant - Bodhisatta showed another instance of tolerance. A hunter pierced through the naval of the Bodhisatta with a poisonous arrow. But still the Bodhisatta was neither angry nor arouse animosity towards the hunter. He rather asked the hunter as to why he was going to kill him. When he learnt from the hunter that the queen of Kasi was desirous of having his teeth, the Bodhisatta immediately uprooted the teeth and handed them over to the hunter. Similar instances of the Bodhisatta's tolerance are found in the Banarinda Jataka, Bhuridatta Jataka, Campeya Jataka, Samkhapala Jataka, Matuposaka Jataka, and also in the career of the Buddha's present and last birth. Thus we find that on the basis of the spirit of loving kindness and tolerance, the peace concept of Buddhism was established. Compassion (= Karuna) : This implies two things : (i) relenting at others' sufferings and (ii) willing to redress others' distress. Compassion, pity etc. are its synonyms. If Karuna is cultivated and practiced, evils like hatred, anger, envy, etc. cannot arise in one's mind. The Buddha himself was an embodiment of Karuna. His heart relented at the sufferings of all beings and tried his level best to redress their distress throughout his life.

Sympathetic joy (= Media) : Mudita is joy felt over others' good luck and prosperity. It is a benevolent attitude towards the prosperity of others. Where there is Mudita there is no envy or jealousy. The lofty behavior of Mudita should be practiced towards all, including enemies. But this is also not so easy to cultivate in mind such a noble spirit. Generally what happens, we become jealous at the happiness and prosperity of others. This generates ill-will and hatred which are the starting points of mental unrest and violence. Therefore, they are the basic enemies of peace. Equanimity (= Upekkha) : In the lofty behavior of Equanimity, all persons and things regarded with perfect equanimity and disinterestedness. With unshakeable equanimity the mind looks upon wealth and poverty, happiness and misery, free from agitation, free from inclination and aversion, steady and unmoved, beyond love and hatred, beyond joy and sorrow. The Buddha describes how one should practice Equanimity. In the Cula - Dhammapala Jataka there is an instance how in one of his previous births the Bodhisatta practiced and fulfilled the perfection of Equanimity. His father Mahapratapa was so angry with him that he caused to cut off his hands and feet into four pieces.

Bodhisatta's mother was crying bitterly. But still his father did not calm down. He rather asked his killer-man to make his son beheaded at once. Even at this moment the Bodhisatta was not angry and did not generate animosity against his father. He rather cultivated equanimity. From the above it is clear that the practice of the Brahmaviharas, which can be practiced even by the common people, can help eradicating from the mind the root causes of various conflicts and wars, both within and without. It is, however, not necessary that all the four Brahmaviharas [Metta, Karuna, Mudita and Upekkha] are to be practiced by the individuals. The practice of any one of them, befitting one's capacity and intellect, will serve the purpose.

**Hindrances To World - Peace In The Present Age a)Bigotry :** Religious and / or racial bigotry

**Hindrance to peace:** What is bigotry? This is the "attachment of disproportionate weight to some creed or view, irrespective of reason". This is born out of ignorance and prejudice. No human being is born a bigot, but his environment and lack of proper education makes him a bigot. This is the universal truth. Bigotry can be eradicated only by proper education and inter-religious dialogue. Instances will be found in all the countries to bear the evidence that a highly educated person, I mean a person with proper education, has been above all religious, sectarian or national barrier. Bigotry is generally found among the illiterate and less educated mass in any country.

**Fundamentalism:** Nowadays we often hear the cry of 'fundamentalism' and 'fundamentalist'. This is born out of misplaced religious fervors. Now this is a common factor among the followers of all religions: a Buddhist, a Christian, a Muslim, a Hindu, a Jain, a Sikh -- and who is not? But what is the reason behind this? Because all have deviated from the original teachings of their founder-master. Nowadays we worship, carry on head in procession or at best recite the sacred texts containing the fundamental teachings of our founder-masters. We seldom study them to know the contents therein, the question of practicing the teachings in our life does not arise at all. We care little to know what our Religious Teacher has preached, the question of knowing what other Religious Teachers have preached does not arise. We blindly follow what our monks, priests, sadhus, fathers and mallas direct us to do, teach us to follow and guide us to practice.

**Dogmas:** There are dogmas which are prevalent in different societies, such as Immaculate birth, Trinity, Monotheism, Revelation, Last Judgment, and the like. There are ecclesiastical authorities or clerical hierarchies demanding adherence to beliefs. There are punishments like excommunications for the lawbreakers, non-believers and those who will disobey the rites, rituals and prayers.

**World Politics Based On Selfish Desires :** Religion and politics now are intermingled. Sometimes the political leaders use "Religion" as the best weapon to fulfill their selfish desires. This is responsible for the communal disturbances which create distrust and unrest among the people. Say, for example, the Ram-Mandir-Babri Masjid issue stirred the politics not only of India but also of many countries, and the innocent citizens were victimized in India and abroad. Apart from this, the big powers of the world violate the fivefold principles of peace

which govern international relations: (i) mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; (ii) mutual non-aggression; (iii) mutual non-interference; (iv) mutual equality and mutual benefit and (v) peaceful co-existence. For the fulfillment of their own selfish interest they care little for the lives of the citizens of their own country as well as those of other countries in the world. They advocate the "Divide and rule" policy and thus create divisions among the peace-loving nations. They manufacture and supply many kinds of sophisticated arms and weapons and thus earning trillions of dollars. Their secret agencies are active in all the corners of the world to divide one country into several independent states and also to create distrust and war among the friendly nations.

**Individual Desires And Greed:** The last but not the least are the individual desires and greed for the enjoyment of worldly happiness with the help of the up-to-date amenities of life. Along with the progress of science, modern amenities of life are making a man crazy and mad. His desires have got no ending. But ultimately he has to suffer and repent. Because all desires of man cannot be fulfilled, as his resources are very limited. Thus dissatisfaction arises which breeds hatred and jealousy towards others' prosperity. Hatred and jealousy become responsible for mental unrest, murder, theft, adultery, drug-addiction and various other social evils. So no peace within and no peace without.

**Conclusion:** The concepts and means of peace, in the individual level as well as in the universal level, as found in the teachings of the Buddha, are applicable in all the ages and even today. Because what the Buddha preached was for the good and welfare of the entire mankind of all the ages. He did not establish any religion, in the real sense of the term; rather he preached a way of life, noble principles leading the followers to be good, honest and noble. He did not encourage abandoning one's present religious affiliation. Without abandoning one's present religious affiliation, one can practice the way of noble life as preached by the Buddha. No force was applied either to accept or follow his doctrine or to abandon the same. His was the principle of "Come and see" (ehipassiko) i.e., "come, see, learn and try; if you don't like you may go back". Even the Nibbana, the summum bonum, was described by him as

"beyond logical speculations" (atakkavacaro) and "to be realized individually by the wise" (pancetta veditabbo vinnuhi). His doctrine of Sila - Citta - Panna (= the Noble Eightfold Path) was meant for all human beings. But there was no assurance like "Surrender to me, I will liberate you from all the sins committed by you". Rather he said "you have to earn your own liberation by your own effort. No almighty power can liberate you from your sins and from your sufferings." The Buddha did not go against any ancient customs, beliefs and practices. He replaced nothing, rather he introduced something for the good and welfare of the entire humanity. This attitude of the Buddha inspired people of all classes, high and low, rich and poor, towards his doctrine. This attitude became instrumental, in latter days, in propagating and spreading Buddhism in various countries of the world. Even today Buddhism in the world is free from all dogmas. It presents no threat to any religion, caste or creed. It is free from bigotry or fanaticism and

fundamentalism. It rather advocates that the basic ethical concepts of all the major religions of the world are more or less common; the difference lies only in their interpretation as now they are being interpreted by the teachers and priests of the respective religions. The teachers and the priests should be educated to such a level so that they can acquire knowledge to

Examine critically their own doctrines and practices, without any bigotry or biasness, and also to examine critically the doctrines and practices of other religions, without any prejudice whatsoever. If this could be done, which is, of course, very difficult, the world will become an ideal place for all to live peacefully.

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