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BUDDHIST CONTRIBUTION IN THE QUEST FOR PEACE

The turbulent world today is in great need of spiritual healing. Notwithstanding the advanced material developments, the whole world is submerging in to a whirlpool of corruption, disaster and adverse calamities. Social evils such as violence, aggression, bribery, smuggling, drug trafficking are making this samsaric predicament worse than ever. We are amidst the age of five deteriorations; human minds are growing more corrupt and evil through the influence of vehement passions for material gain. Sin and evil go unabated in most part of the world wiping out spiritual serenity. Dharma through which millions have enlightened is now in a very critical state.

Since the law of Karmic retribution and reward is inevitable and certain, the dire consequences of non-virtuous acts have ripened and continue to haunt the world. Everywhere, people are afflicted with trials and tribulations, poverty and pain, woes and worries. All these are wrought by the unwholesome sins and evils that we have committed out of desire, hatred and ignorance to satiate the sensual cravings of our non-existent self. The cyclones of Bangla Desh, the famines of Africa, the outbreak of the brutal war in the Gulf, the agonising AIDS in the west and all such mishaps are the apparent signs of humanity's vanishing merit for from merits alone prosperity arises as it is said in the Lalitvistara Sutra :

" The merits give joyous results and dispel suffering. A person with merits can also accomplish his wishes."

Among the disasters, the destruction of precious human lives in war is the gravest that we humans as superior animals deliberately commit. Is it not a heinous crime and a great blunder to kill thousands wilfully when an incidental murder is a crime that has to be expiated with severe punishments? This must be stopped for ever and a superb remedy for this holocaust is shown by the compassionate Buddha, our lord, teacher and saviour.

As we are told, the compassionate Buddha was once at the banks of river Rohini, where the troops of the Shakyas and the Koliya clans lay bound to clash in a war after their dispute over the distribution of the water of river Rohini. Buddha while surveying the world with compassion saw this manoeuvre for the destruction of many precious human lives and thus intervened in their massacre, asking " Human blood or water, which one of them is more precious ?" The monarchs ashamed of their short-sighted folly, disarmed and confessed before the compassionate lord. Buddha then taught them a sermon on the evils and demerits of a war. The legacy of Buddha, " Hatred cannot be overcome by hatred, but by love alone " and

" Scorn not those who scorn you,
Abuse not those who abuse you,

Reville not those who revile you,

Hurt not those who hurt you " were never needed so badly as we need today in our age when the world is hovering over the brink of nuclear catastrophe, moral annihilation and spiritual bankruptcy.

In addition to the belligerent tendencies of corrupt human minds, the heretical conceptions of killing and fighting in the

name of religion add fuel to the fire. At such times, we need to look back into history to find and rejoice at how Buddhism has contributed to world peace by obviating violent conflicts. Emperor Ashoka, for instance, was a war-monger before he embraced Buddhism, but became one of the greatest righteous rulers on earth later. From this we can infer that the sole source of peace and harmony is the sacred Dharma, but unfortunately the sun of Dharma has reached the western horizon ready to set. The responsibility of maintaining a radiant Dharmic sun rests on the shoulders of each one of us individually than to a huge community or order. How do we uphold it? As Vasubandhu puts it:

"The sacred Dharma of the lord are two;

That of the doctrinal and ethical,

They are to be upheld and expounded,

They are both to be practised."

Dharma is of two types: the first doctrinal Dharma which are the scriptures and the spoken words, and the later ethical Dharma being the practical form of the doctrines. It is through learning and erudition in the Buddhist corpora, we uphold the doctrinal Dharma and through sincere practice and meditation of these doctrines we uphold the ethical or the practical Dharma. In brief, Dharma for us to propagate is what the compassionate Buddha proclaimed in this verse:

"Not committing any sins,

Doing wholesome virtues;

Disciplining one's mind fully,

These are the Buddha's teachings."

Of all the ranges of profound and vast teachings, the exquisite Buddhist trait of love and compassion to all the beings, irrespective of human or non-human is very much in demand today. Buddha's compassion and regard for all sentient beings excel other religious concepts of animals being created as humanity's servant and food, thus employing them for torturous duties and eventually ending in the slaughter houses. Today, even among humans there is dearth of love and affection. It is time that we strive to show the world the need for altruism, prove through valid reasonings as Shantideva states in his Bodhisattvacharya avatara:

"I must dispel others' sufferings,

Because they are suffering, like my suffering.

I must benefit others,

Because they are sentient, like my body.

Here he says that whatever sufferings must be dispelled by oneself, like one's own suffering. The sufferings of others are also sufferings, therefore must be dispelled by oneself. Whatever is sentient must be benefitted by oneself, like one's own body. Other beings are also sentients, therefore, must be benefitted by oneself.

Unlike the ancient world, the people in our times are more shrewd and astute, less god-fearing and faithful. No religions based on superstition, hallucination and blind faith but the rational teachings of lord Buddha alone can withstand the test and the analysis of our times. Buddha himself declared to his neophytes:

