



Till the World is With Peace*

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu

Dear followers of the **dhamma**, today, I will give the thirteenth lecture of the *Āsāha-pūjā***series, held consecutively every Saturday. This will be the last lecture, in this series, entitled “Till the World is With Peace.” In previous lectures, I have shown you the crisis of the world, its cause, and the nature and origin of world peace based on the Noble Eightfold Path (Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration). Any society or anyone adhering to the Noble Eightfold Path will be endowed with right knowledge (**nāṇa**) and be free from all difficulties. This kind of freedom is called peace. Each individual is a social unit responsible to promote peace in his/her society. The lecture today will thus focus on the qualities of an individual, a political system, and the relationship between the government and citizens contributing to social peace and happiness.

Human beings today blindly believe in the power of economics. They think that an economic success would lead a nation or the whole world to peaceful happiness. In fact, economics is the foundation of selfishness. An economic success without a moral restraint usually encourages human beings to struggle for more possessions and destroy others for their own benefits. Thus, both individuals and the government should learn to cultivate their moral qualities in order to make the economic success contributive to peace in their country.

An individual who is able to be a peace maker should be, in the first place, well-educated, especially in morality. Educational system nowadays can be compared to a dog whose tail is cut off because it emphasizes only on an academic knowledge, intellectual capacities, technology, and so on, promoting more selfishness and regardless of the knowledge of the **dhamma** (morality) that guides human beings to right

thoughts and right conducts. Education should be directed to cultivate humanity and make all humankind righteous and peaceable.

Secondly, a peace maker is a healthy person, physically, mentally, and spiritually. In order to be healthy physically, one should be free from all excessive enjoyments and indulgence. To be healthy mentally is to be free from all defilements and fetters. And to be healthy spiritually is to be free from false conceptions and blind faith. Those who are unhealthy are slaves of their own selfishness, defilements, worldly enjoyments, and other trivial elements of life. They disregard and abhor the **dhamma**. We can establish a peaceful society if we have more healthy social members.

Thirdly, a peace maker should come from a righteous and peaceful family. The righteous and peaceful family is a family whose members conduct themselves according to the Buddha's teaching of the Six Directions (six kinds of social relationship). These family members should know how to behave toward their parents (the front), teachers (the right), spouse and children (the back), friends (the left), their superior (the upper direction), and their inferior (the lower direction). Human beings today do not realize that they have some duties and obligations to others. For example, the superior do not know that they should treat the inferior with loving-kindness; children do not know that they should respect and take a good care of their parents, and so on. A peace maker, on the other hand, is the one who treats other social members and behaves properly toward others according to the Buddha's teaching of the Six Directions.

Fourthly, a peace maker should live with a good economic plan. S/he is moderate in living, spending, and possessing. S/he is neither too poor nor too rich. S/he lives comfortably enough to work for the good of him/herself and others. Whenever s/he has more than s/he needs, s/he donates the rest to others. This is the **setthi**'s way of life in the time of the Buddha. "**Setthi**" literally means "the noblest." Nowadays, we have only selfish capitalists who always oppress

and take advantage of poor people. We cannot find the **setthi** who are philanthropic and righteous. The **setthi** in the time of the Buddha treated his slaves as well as other human fellows. They worked together, ate the same kind of food, observed the Buddhist Sabbath together, and so on. Especially, the **setthi** then built alms-houses to serve poor people, ascetics, and all the needy. A peace maker should adopt the spirit and practices of the **setthi** in the Buddha's time so that all social members could live happily and peacefully together.

Fifthly, a peace maker should know and practice the **dhamma**, the life-saving duty of all human beings. Those who deny to practice the **dhamma** (duty) cannot survive happily in this world. On the contrary, those who follow the **dhamma** always enjoy working, performing their duty, and so on. God will help only those who help themselves first. In short, the life-saving duty of all human beings is to help one another and to be free from selfishness and self-attachment (**tua-koo-khong-koo**). There are two kinds of duty, worldly and transcendental. Worldly duty (**lokiya**) is the duty to survive on earth. Transcendental duty (**lokuttara**) is the duty to escape from all worldly difficulties and oppressions. Both kinds of duty encourage human beings to live in this world without being enslaved by it. Since we are living in the world of suffering and temporariness, we should free our mind from all attachments, the primary causes of all-suffering. Anyone who can be free from all attachments knows that duty is dhammic and is willing to do duty for duty's sake. S/he is the peace maker we need.

Sixthly, a peace maker should be unselfish and altruistic. S/he realizes that all human beings are fellows of birth, old age, sickness, and death; thus, it is useless to cause trouble to one another. S/he knows that we have to co-operate with one another in order to establish a peaceful and affectionate society, the ultimate society called **Sriariya-maitreya**.

Seventhly, a peace maker should be a moral person in his/her thoughts, words, and actions.

Morality (**sila-dhamma**) literally means that which promotes normal conditions. Those who think, speak, or act morally are those who behave according to the normal condition of life leading to the peaceful happiness of all beings. On the contrary, those who act against normality certainly disturb and cause trouble to others. Thus, morality is necessary to keep the world in normal condition. Particularly, it is an indispensable property of a peace maker whose goal is to realize peace on earth.

Eighthly, a peace maker should have the right view (**samma-ditthi**). S/he should think, believe, and understand things correctly and properly. Modern people usually take “**samma-ditthi**” lightly because they do not know and understand the real sense of the word. **Samma-ditthi** is the fundamental knowledge of morality. One cannot conduct oneself morally unless one understands the real meaning and value of morality. According to the Buddhist doctrine, one can be free from all suffering if one has the right view (**samma-ditthi**) guiding one to practice accordingly. The knowledge of **samma-ditthi** is epistemological demonstrating how and why one needs to act morally. It gives justification for the enduring practice of morality. Without the knowledge of **samma-ditthi**, one can hardly control oneself and overcome other external obstacles in the struggle toward one’s moral perfection

Ninthly, and finally, a peace maker should have a “cooled” life. S/he is cooled down from all disturbances and desire. Whenever defilements are eliminated from human mind, his/her life is “cooled down (**nibbana**).” **Nibbana** which can be experienced in this life is generally understood as two stages of a peaceful life, the ordinary stage and the ultimate stage. The ordinary or worldly stage of **nibbana** is the “cooled” life of ordinary people. The ultimate stage of **nibbana**, on the other hand, is experienced by holy people (**ariya**) or saints (**arahant**). The amount and intensity of defilements in the mind of ordinary and holy people signify the degree of their “coolness.” The cooler their lives are, the less

defilements they have in their mind, and vice versa. One needs to practice meditation and cultivate mindfulness in order to be alert and ready to save oneself from the domination of defilements. If all human beings have “cooled” lives, the whole world will certainly be in peace.

Apart from each individual’s moral virtues, an appropriate political system is no less crucial for promoting peace. The right system of politics and economics is dhammic socialism (**dhammika-sangama-niyama**) in which both the rich and the poor work together for the benefits of the entire society. The dhammic socialism contributes most to the growth of natural resources. It aims primarily at the benefits and the progress of society, not of individuals. It serves the rich as well as the poor and makes them live happily together in the same society. We need a political system which provides peace and happiness to all people without the use of weapons and coercive power. We need the Parliament whose members are righteous and work only for the good of the people. A good political system should permit only one political party working for the whole nation. A political system with more than one political party tends to encourage internal conflicts among their members. Thus, the nation with several political parties can hardly find peace and prosperity. If all members of the Parliament are righteous and unselfish, it will be unnecessary to have opposition parties to countercheck the government. The righteous government party alone is able to fulfill its work for the good of the nation. Considering the government and the opposition parties today, one can find that they do not perform their duty properly. The opposition parties try to oppose the government by all means. Similarly, the government party works merely for the benefits of its members. No party works for the people. In fact, all political parties should adhere to the **dhamma**. The government, the Parliament, the magistracy, and so on, in the administrative system, should be with morality (**sila-dhamma**). **Sila-dhamma** is the principle and the foundation of all nations. A moral nation is a nation with appropriate

culture, religion, tradition, and government system. All members should work with **sila-dhamma**. In order to provide **sila-dhamma** to all national bureaux, we should establish the Ministry of Morality. This Ministry will be able to inculcate **sila-dhamma** in all officers and government workers and encourage them to work for the benefits of the people.

We do not want merely a democratic government. We need a dhammic, democratic government in which all members adhere to morality. The meaning of "morality" includes that of culture. Culture means that which contributes to progress. The word "culture" in its original Pali sense is ambiguous. Culture (**vaddhana**) means the progress of either good or evil things. It signifies an increase of something, e.g., the increase of hair on one's head. Nevertheless, in order to develop our country, we should take "culture" in a positive sense. "Culture" should promote peace and not war. And "religion" should also teach the people to love peace. We should establish a proper educational system promoting humanity and the moral intellectuals. "**Manuṣya** (human being)" in its original sense means the "noble heart." The right educational system should endow students with noble hearts. It should make one a good student for one's instructor, a good child for one's parents, a good friend for one's friends, and so on. It should make one a perfect human being and not just a sentient being.

Furthermore, we should have a good ecological system. A good ecological system deals not only with the eradication of material pollution but also with all aspects of social life and establishments. It is better to have a small social unit than a big one since the former can be easily managed, regulated, and taken care of. If we can regulate our social units both physically and mentally, we will be able to bring peace and happiness to all social members.

I would like to emphasize that the Buddhist doctrine can provide us with a good ecological system, an appropriate political system and government, and moral and peaceable people. The

doctrine of the Noble Eightfold Path enables us to think, speak, and act properly. It is the foundation of righteousness and morality of both the individuals and the society. The knowledge and practice of the Noble Eightfold Path can free us from all difficulties. Gods and spirits cannot help us solve our problems. We must help ourselves by performing our duty according to the Noble Eightfold Path. In short, the world will be with peace if it is composed of moral people, an appropriate political system, and a righteous government.

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***Āsālha-pūjā is the Buddhist worship on the full-moon day of the eighth lunar month in order to commemorate the First Sermon of the Buddha and the Foundation of the Buddhist order.*

