



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Loving-Kindness and Compassion as a Component of Non-Violence: A Buddhist Perspective

Shedup Tenzin, Department of Indo-Tibetan Studies, Visva-Bharati

OM MANI PADME HUNG!

Homage to *Avalokiteśvara*, the deity of compassion or the manifestation of Buddha's compassion.

Every major religious traditions of the world carry the message of love, compassion and inner peace whether theistic or non-theistic religion. Nevertheless, it is a universal truth that each and every sentient-being is in need of inner peace whether they are believer or non-believer but the fact is that we do not know how to achieve the happiness rather we destroy our own happiness like enemy. Similarly, though we do not want suffering but we runs after the causes that bring us suffering.

As Shantideva said in the first chapter of *Bodhicaryavatāra*¹

sdug bsngal 'dor 'dod sems yod kyang//
sdug bsngal nyid la mngon par rgyug//
bde ba 'dod kyang gti mug pas//
rang gi bde ba dgra ltar 'joms//

The English translation would be as follows;

Though you wish to abandon suffering,
Instead you are hankering after the suffering itself,
Though you wish to achieve happiness,
But you destroy your happiness like an enemy out of delusion.

The term non-violence is the literal translation of Sanskrit word *Ahimsa* which is the common message that all the major religious traditions of the world carries.

Non-violence is not simply refer to not harming others but actively and peacefully helping others. It is not simply the absence of violence. Non-violence, compassion and love are interwoven and interrelated. Genuine non-violence is not possible without the compassion and loving-kindness according to Buddha. According to Buddhist point of view, the action of non-violence would not be completed or effective unless one does not possess the basic understanding of Loving-kindness (Sanskrit: *Maitri*, Tib. *Byams pa*)

¹ Ngulchu Thogmey. *Bodhicaryavatara and its Commentary*, Sarnath: Sakya Students' Union, CIHTS, 1983, p. 4

and Compassion (Sanskrit: *Karuna*, Tib. *sNying rje*). In fact, both of these two motivations are necessary for developing the person with altruistic heart that is to say 'Bodhisattva' in Sanskrit which can be literally rendered in Tibetan as *Byang chub sems dpa'* or the 'Enlightened One' in English. However, these two important motivational factors are falls within the category of one of the two components namely "Method" (Tib. *Thabs*) and "Wisdom" (*Shes rab*) which are indispensable for achieving the exalted wisdom or the supreme state of complete enlightenment i.e. Buddhahood. "Method" in the Mahayana Buddhist scriptural context refer to Loving-kindness and Compassion, and the Wisdom here refer to the direct understanding of emptiness or direct realization of emptiness or ultimate nature of reality. So, the technical definition of Loving-kindness is "the motivation that wishes to place all sentient-being in the state of ultimate happiness". With regard to the motivation of Loving-kindness, you are looking at the sentient-being well-being from the aspect of their happiness. The definition of Compassion or rather Great Compassion (Sanskrit: *Mahākaruṇa*, Tib. *sNying rje chen po*) is "the motivation that wishes to free all the sentient-being from the ocean of *samsara* or the cyclic existence". So with regard to the motivation of Great Compassion, you are thinking of sentient-being from the aspect of their suffering nature.

Hence, it is with this notion that the Tibetan Buddhist scriptures claimed the "View" (Tib. *lta ba*) of Buddhism as *Interdependent Origination* (Tib. *lta ba rten 'byung*) and the "Action" (Tib. *spyod pa*) as *Non-violence* (Tib. *sPyod pa 'tshé ba med pa*). Moreover, the Buddha said in the *Sūtra* called *Dri ma med par grags pas bstan pa'i mdo* (Sanskrit *Vimala kirti nirdeśa sūtra*)²,

"thabs kyis ma zin pa'i shes rab ni 'ching ba'o//

thabs kyis zin pa'i shes rab ni thar pa'o//

shes rab kyis ma zin pa'i thabs ni 'ching ba'o//

shes rab kyis zin pa'i thabs ni thar pa'o//

The English translation would be as follows;

The Method which is not accompanied by Wisdom is bondage,

The Method which is accompanied by Wisdom is liberation.

The Wisdom which is not accompanied by Method is bondage,

The Wisdom which is accompanied by Method is liberation.

Therefore, in order to achieve the two bodies of Buddha namely *dharma kaya* and *rupa kaya*, the both method and wisdom are to be practised in union without separation. The practice of method represents the accumulation of merit (Tib. *bsod nams kyī tshogs*) and the practice of wisdom part is the accumulation of wisdom (Tib. *ye shes kyī tshogs*). So, these two accumulations are to be fulfilled eventually to attain the complete enlightenment i.e. Buddhahood. As this theory is proved by the fact of sayings of Buddha in the above mentioned *sūtra*, similarly this statement can be justified from the words of Acārya Nāgārjuna as

² Kyabje Phabongkha Dechen Nyingpo, *Lam gtso rnam gsum gyi zin bris lam bzang sgo 'byed*, Sarnath: Gelugpa Students' Welfare Committee, 2002, p. 81

dge ba 'di yis skye bo kun//

Bsod nams ye shes tshogs rdzogs shing//

Bsod nams ye shes las byung ba 'i//

Dam pa gnyis ni thob par shog/

The English translation would be as follows;

By these virtuous actions

of accomplishing the accumulation of merit and wisdom,

May all beings attain two holy bodies!

which produced out of merit and wisdom

In this regard, Acārya Candrakirti further said that as the bird having both the wings can fly freely in the vast sky, similarly in order to go across the other shore of Buddhahood, we need to engage in the practice of both *bodhicitta* which is a part of *method* and the *wisdom* that realizes the correct view of ultimate nature. These two (*method* and *wisdom*) should go hand in hand or if these two are separated, it is like bird having only one wing or a broken wing cannot fly.

Being a Tibetan Buddhist follower, I had several occasions to listen to the two great personalities who are the great admirer of Mahatma Gandhi's principle of non-violence and they are none other than His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Prof. Samdong Rinpoche. His Holiness the Dalai Lama to whom I sincerely regard as my root guru and Prof. Samdong Rinpoche who happened to be our Director and teacher in the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies at Sarnath. His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the source of inspiration for millions of people around the world today who advocates the principle of non-violence, compassion and love. He is the living example of one of the great leaders of this century who is not only the proponent of non-violence but also sincerely practice non-violence for his freedom struggle. As a result, he was awarded a Noble Peace Prize in 1989.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama said "I consider non-violence to be compassion in action. It doesn't mean weakness, cowering in fear, or simply doing nothing. It is to act without violence, motivated by compassion, recognising the rights of others."

Under the spiritual guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Active Non-violence Education Centre (ANEC) (Tibetan: *'tshé med zhi ba 'i lta grub sbyong brdar bsti gnas khang*) was founded in Dharamsala in 2007 where the centre used to conduct conferences, workshops and awareness campaign etc.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has been saying that he would give up his leadership for Tibetan freedom movement if his fellow Tibetan will engage in the practice of violence as the means and method for struggling the freedom movement of Tibet. Keeping this in view, His Holiness declared the proposal of *dbu ma 'i lam* i.e. Middle Way Approach as the only means of negotiation through peaceful dialogue with Chinese government for gaining the autonomy.

Many countries of the world support and appreciate this Middle Way Approach of Dalai Lama.

More than 160 Tibetan people in Tibet has self-immolated for the sake of their freedom between 2009 and 2018. The self-immolators include young monks, nuns and layperson ranging from the age of 14 to the age of 64. Deeply inspired by the Buddhist culture of Tibet, these young Tibetan had a strong believe that their approach is the perfect way of demonstration through non-violence way. But His Holiness the Dalai Lama does not agree the self-immolation as the best way of demanding their freedom. He believes it as the violence means. Whereas Tsering Woesser, a famous Tibetan woman journalist and activist based in Beijing maintain that self-immolation is the act of *Bodhisattva* because they sacrificed their precious life for the sake of others' well-being. To support this theory, Woesser quoted a story of feeding the flesh of Bodhisattva to the starving tigress from the *Jataka Tales*, a tales of Buddha's previous lives while he was engage in the practice of Bodhisattva way of life. But there are Tibetan activists who do not agree with Tsering Woesser's view point and maintain that self-immolation is purely a violent action.

Though Jainism a great advocate of non-violence or *ahimsa* but this tradition supports the religious practice of voluntarily fasting to death by gradually reducing the intake of solid food or drinks known as *Sallekhana*, *samlehna*, *Samadhi-marana*, *sanyasana-marana*.

Another important thing which we need to consider is about the mercy killing or euthanasia. Whether this kind of action can be considered as non-violent according to Buddhism? Whether this is a lawful act or not depend on the laws of different countries.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama narrates his communication with one Tibetan monk who was imprisoned by Communist government of China for about 18 years. After released from serving the sentence in the prison, he came to India to have the audience of Dalai Lama in 1980's. He shared his experienced with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and said that he faced dangers several times while he was in the prison. To this, Dalai Lama asked what sort of danger you faced? The monk replied was, "I nearly lose my compassionate towards Chinese". So this indicates that this monk was engaged in genuine practice of compassion while serving the sentence in the prison. Because if you have a compassion towards your enemy, then that is regarded as the genuine or unconditional compassion.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama says "People are disturbed by violence and the desire for peace is increasing year by year. To achieve it we have to adopt a realistic approach, taking account of scientific findings that basic human nature is compassionate. After so much violence, what positive result has there been—none. Only more hatred. Violence is not the right method for solving problems".

In fact, Buddha sees negative emotions within one self as an enemy but not the person who possessed the negative emotions or *kleśa* as Aryadeva said in his text "*Catuhśataka*" (Tib. *bzhi brgya ba*)³

Acārya Śāntideva in the Vth Chapter of *Bodhicāryavatāra* on Guarding of Total Awareness (Samprajanyarakṣaṇa) says ⁴

³ *thub pa nyon mongs dgrar gzigs kyi//nyon mongs dang 'brel gang zag min//*

⁴ Ngulchu Thogmey. *Bodhicaryavatara and its Commentary*, Sarnath: Sakya Students' Union, CIHTS, 1983, p. 26

Sems can mi srun nam mkha' bzhin//

de dag gzhom gyis yong mi lang//

khro ba'i sems 'di gcig bcom na//

dgra de thams cad choms dang 'dra//

The English rendering would be as:

The mischievous beings are unable to destroy,

They are as countless as sky.

When the thought of (your) anger is destroyed,

It is like destroyed all the enemies.

Sa steng 'di dag kos g.yogs su//

de snyed ko bas ga la lang//

lham mthil tsam gyis ko bas ni//

sa steng thams cad g.yogs dang 'dra//

The English rendering would be as:

If one has to cover entire earth with leather,

It is impossible to cover with the leather

Rather it is equal to cover the earth

Merely by the sole of (leather) shoes.

Buddha has said in the Dhammpada;

'di na nam yang khro ba yis//

Dgra rnam zhi bar mi byed kyang//

Khro ba med pas zhi bar 'gyur//

'di ni g.yung drung chos yin no//

*Hatred never ceases through hatred in this world; through love alone they cease. This is an eternal law.*⁵

In other words, Anger can only be destroyed and conquered by genuine sense of love, and retaliation is not the solution that leads to peace. This is the universal law, the law of nature, the eternal law because it was true in the past, it is true in the present and it will be true in the future too.

The basic human nature is compassionate as it is proved by the recent scientific studies. This fact can be understood through the story of Angulimala. Though he was a criminal who murdered 999 people but

⁵ K. Sri Dhammananda. *The Dhammapada*, (incorporated stories with the verses) Kuala Lumpur: Sasana Abhiwurdhi Wardhana Society, 1988, P. 45

eventually he attained Arhatship. Through the story of Angulimala, we understood that no sentient-beings are by nature evil and no one is beyond redemption.

There is another interesting story which tells us about subduing the abusive brothers by the Buddha as appeared in the work of K. Sri Dhammananda, *The Dhammapada* as follows ⁶ ;

Once there was a brahmin, whose wife was in the habit of blurting out a string of words whenever she sneezed or when something or someone touched her accidentally. One day, the Brahmin invited some of his friends to a meal and suddenly she blurted out some words. Since she had attained the first stage of Sainthood, the words “*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhasa*” automatically came out of her mouth. These words of veneration to the Buddha angered her husband. So in anger he went to the Buddha hoping to put some challenging questions. His first question was “what do we have to kill to be able to live peacefully? And his second question was “what do we have to kill to be able to live happily? The Buddha replied, ‘O brahmin, to able to live happily and peacefully, one will have to kill anger (*dosa*). Killing one’s anger is liked and praised by the Buddhas and Arhants.’ The brahmin was so impressed and satisfied with the answer, that he entered the Order and later became an Arhant. When the younger brother heard that his eldest brother had joined the Order, he became furious. He went straight away to the monastery to abuse Buddha, but in turn the Buddha asked, ‘O brahmin, let us suppose you offered some food to some guests and they left the house without taking the food. Since the guests did not accept your food, to whom would that food belong?’ The brahmin replied that the food would be his. On receiving that answer, the Buddha said, ‘in the same way, O brahmin, since I don’t accept your abuse, the abuse would only go back to you’. The brahmin instantly realised the sagacity of those words and felt a great respect for the Buddha. He also entered the Order and in due course became an Arhant.

In fact Buddha sees negative emotions within one self as an enemy but not the person who possessed the negative emotions or *kleśa*.

The Buddhist canonical text of *vinaya* deals with the five precepts (Tib. *bslab pa’i gzhi nga*) that constitute the basic code of ethics to be undertaken by lay followers of Buddhism. They are 1) abstain from killing 2) abstain from stealing, 3) abstain from lying, 4) abstain from sexual misconduct and 5) abstain from intoxication. And also among the ten virtuous actions, (Tib. *lha chos dge ba bcu*) we come across the precept of abstaining from killing which is one of the three actions pertaining to body. Again there are 8 precepts known as *bsnyen gnas yan lag brgyad* i.e the 8 precepts of *upāsaka*. One among these precepts is abstaining from killing.

So, among these five precepts or eight precepts or ten precepts, the precept concern with the killing is to undertake the practice of abandoning taking all forms of life even the smallest insects.

According to Buddhism, the five conditions must be fulfilled to become the complete action of killings (*gzhi lnga*). The five conditions are 1) *gzhi/ base* 2) *bsam pa / intention* 3) *sbyor ba/application* 4) *nyon mongs/kleśa* or afflictive emotion 5) *mthar thug/ultimate*. This can be apply to all the other precepts as mentioned above.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 636

The subject deals with the *Ahimsa* or non-violence is a very complex especially to an ordinary people like us. There are cases where we as an ordinary people couldn't determine the subtle actions as the non-virtuous or virtuous actions.

These matters can only be confirmed with Buddha's omniscience wisdom. Therefore, interestingly, there is a tradition in Tibetan Buddhism that in order to identify the particular *pitaka* of particular scripture, the Tibetan lotsava or translator(s) made one single line of paying homage called ('*gyur phyag* in Tibetan) to either 1) *sarvajñāna* or the omniscient one or 2) Buddha and bodhisattvas or 3) paying homage to youthful Manjushree.

So, when the particular scripture deals with the *vinaya* rules or moral code of conduct pertaining to monks and nuns, then the '*gyur phyag* or paying of homage will be made to *sarvajñāna* or omniscient one because if any monk or nun transgress the minute and subtle code of ethics unknowingly can only be realized by the wisdom of omniscient one.

According to some modern Tibetan historians, Songtsan Gampo (Wylie: *Srong btsan sgam po*) the 33rd in the line of Tibetan emperor embraced Buddhism in the 7th century AD due to the fact that the pre-Buddhist cult known as Bonpo engaged in the practice of sacrifice on various occasions namely marriage ceremony, death ceremony, or when someone get sick, sacrifice animals as an antidote to cure the illness and so forth were prevalent in those days. So in order to stop Bon's rituals of sacrifice animals, the King Songtsan Gampo sent his ministers to India to bring the Dharma which is fundamentally based on *Ahimsa* or Non-violence.

In the Buddhist monastery, there is a tradition of practicing monsoon retreat for the duration of three months which is known as *varṣāvāsa* in Sanskrit and *dbyar gnas* in Tibetan.

So, how the concept of *varṣāvāsa* began?

Initially the strength of monks and nuns were quite few in number and they do not put up in one particular place or the temple rather they keep on moving from one region to another for the sake of benefiting beings through preaching the Buddha dharma. During the monsoon period, the travelling of monks got frequently affected and also during this season, many insects got unintentionally harmed and killed during the travelling. Some monks complain this problem to the Buddha. Hence, Buddha advised his monks not to travelling during the rainy season and stay at one fix place or temple.

This is how the *varṣāvāsa* began and it extends for three lunar months. It begins on the 15th day of the waxing moon of the 8th Lunar Month, and ends on the 15th day of the waxing moon of the 11th Lunar Month. This corresponds approximately from early July through late of October in the Gregorian calendar. Now a day the monsoon retreat is observed in the monasteries of Tibet, Bhutan, and Indian Buddhist Himalayan regions etc. for a month and half. In short, the concept of *varṣāvāsa* or *dbyar gnas* basically began with the Buddha's compassionate motivation and unconditional love of saving the lives of insects during the monsoon time. Out of love and compassion towards beings, Buddha has initiated the system of monsoon retreat.

There is another inspiring story about how Acārya Asanga got visualized the Maitreya Buddha as a result of generating genuine compassion towards the wounded dog. Asanga meditated for twelve years in order to get the visualization of Maitreya but due to the lack of proper meditation on compassion, it took him whole twelve years to accomplish his purpose. Eventually he had a vision of Maitreya Buddha while he was compassionately attempting to save the worm on the wounded dog's body. Maitreya said, "I am right there in the beginning from the day one with you while start your meditation. But now that your bad karma has removed by the power of your compassion, you can able to see me".

Mahatma Gandhi as we all knows that he was the pioneer of non-violence movement and gained India's freedom by means of non-violence to which Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and His Holiness the Dalai Lama greatly admired and followed his path of *Ahimsa*.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was well known for advancing civil rights through non-violence who was inspired by his Christian faith and the non-violent principle of Mahatma Gandhi. He won the Noble Peace Prize in 1964 for protest against racism through the path of non-violence.

Just two days before Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated he gave talk on 22 March, 1959 where he says "It is no longer a choice between violence and non-violence in this world; It is non-violence or non-existence." He said that there's no option before us today between violence and non-violence. This option was out-dated. Today the option before us is only between non-violence or non-existence. There is no third option.

References:

1. K. Sri Dhammananda. *The Dhammapada*, (incorporated stories with the verses) Kuala Lumpur: Sasana Abhiwurdhi Wardhana Society, 1988
2. Kyabje Phabongkha Dechen Nyingpo, *Lam gtso rnam gsum gyi zin bris lam bzang sgo 'byed*, Sarnath: Gelugpa Students' Welfare Committee, 2002
3. Lama, Dalai, Desmond Tutu & Douglas Carlton Abrams. *The Book of Joy*, Cornerstone Publishers, 2016
4. Lama, Dalai & Howard C. Cutler, *The Art of Happiness*, Connecticut: Easton Press, 1998
5. Lama, Dalai. *The Power of Compassion*, London: Thorsons, 2007
6. Lama, Dalai. *The Way of Freedom*, Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers India, 1995
7. Thogmey, Ngulchu. *Bodhicaryavatāra and its Commentary*, Sarnath: Sakya Students' Union, CIHTS, 1983