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**Buddhism and Non-Violent World:  
Examining a Buddhist Contribution to Promoting the Principle of  
Non-Violence and a Culture of Peace**

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**Introduction**

This paper examines a Buddhist contribution to promoting the principle of non-violence and culture of peace. The opposition to violence has been one of the cardinal principles of Buddhism, which is stated in the Dhamapada<sup>1</sup>: “All tremble at violence; all fear death. Seeing others as being like yourself, do not kill or cause others to kill. All tremble at violence; life is dear for all. Seeing others as being like yourself, do not kill or cause others to kill.”<sup>2</sup> Further, Buddhism since its beginning has developed the analysis of psychologically-oriented suffering including violence by means of eradication of its cause and achievement of internal serenity<sup>3</sup> and this paper

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<sup>1</sup> Dhamapada is a collection of sayings of the Buddha.

<sup>2</sup> Fronsdal, G. (2005). *The Dhammapada: A New Translation of the Buddhist Classic with Annotations*. Boston: Shambala: 35.

<sup>3</sup> Burton, D. (2002). Knowledge and Liberation: Philosophical Ruminations on a Buddhist Conundrum.

explores how the Buddhist analysis of human mind deepens the psychological dynamics of violence and unfolds internal dimension of peace for more humane world.

To this end, three sections constitute this paper. The first section expounds the Four Noble Truths doctrine that is the core of Buddhist teaching. Based on the analysis, the second section examines a Buddhist view of dynamics of violence. The upshot of this section is to delve into how our socially/culturally conditioned mind turns into a root cause of violence. And the third section unfolds a Buddhist path to overcoming violence and promoting a culture of peace.

### **Methodological Considerations**

There are two things that should be considered before the discussion. Firstly, as widely recognized, Buddhism is categorized into three major schools – Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. Each of these schools further has sub-schools that have developed distinct teachings and traditions along with the shared objective, that is, uprooting suffering. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine all of those schools in detail and to take up all their teachings to analyze their contributions to the development of the principle of non-violence and culture of peace.

Therefore, the paper employs the following texts and teachings to develop the research: Dhamapada, Surangama-Sutra<sup>4</sup>, Nagarjuna<sup>5</sup>'s Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness, Catustava or Four Hymns to Absolute Reality, and Mahasatipatthana Sutta or The Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness. However, it must be emphatically noticed that although it embraces those texts and teachings to unfold the argument, it does not represent the entire Buddhism. Rather, it is merely one of the possible ideas of Buddhist contribution to the principle of non-violence and culture of peace as other texts and teachings would lead us to develop the arguments distinct from

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*Philosophy East and West*, 52 (3): 326-345.

<sup>4</sup> Surangama Sutra is a sutra in Mahayana Buddhism. Especially it has been influential in Chinese Chan Buddhist school.

<sup>5</sup> Nagarjuna is one of the most important Buddhist philosophers, who lived between the second and third century. Nagarjuna is a founder and exponent of Madhyamaka philosophy that centers on sunyata (emptiness) doctrine to achieve liberation from suffering. Regarding the details of Nagarjuna's works and Madhyamaka philosophy, Murti's *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism: A Study of Madhyamika System* would be helpful.

the one explored here.

Second point that needs to be deliberated is the meaning of violence. This paper takes up Johan Galtung's three types of violence to examine. Direct violence refers to hurting somebody directly. War, deadly armed conflict are good examples. Structural violence can be defined as "the cause of the disparity between the potential and actual, between what could have been and what is."<sup>6</sup> The potential level of realization is what is possible with a given level of insight and resources.<sup>7</sup> So, if insight and resources are dominated by a group or class or used for other objectives, the actual level is below the potential level and violence is present in the system.<sup>8</sup> In short, the violence is built into unequal power relations in the social structures, which causes uneven life opportunities between/among individuals or groups of individual.<sup>9</sup> Cultural violence is characterized as any kind of symbols such as religious dogma, political ideology, language, art, science, law, media, education and so on that provides self-serving justification for direct and structural violence.<sup>10</sup> Based on the Galtung's view of violence, this paper considers violence as any form of dehumanizing behavior – whether it be direct, physical, structural, or cultural – that harms another and hampers his/her seeking for self-actualization. This paper analyzes how our own minds can become a root cause of such violence.

## **1 Introduction to Buddhism and analysis of the Four Noble Truths doctrine**

Buddhism is a religion and philosophy founded by the Buddha, Gautama and developed by other subsequent masters throughout its history. The central aim since the Buddha, who according to Bhatt and Mehrotra, "was led to philosophizing by an intense longing for the eradication of suffering" is to analyze and overcome the problem of suffering.<sup>11</sup> Especially, its main focus is on human mind and its relation to suffering

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<sup>6</sup> Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6 (3): 168.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Lawler, P. (1995). *A Question of Values: Johan Galtung's Peace Research*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne.

<sup>10</sup> Galtung, J. (1996). *Peace By Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*. London: SAGE.

<sup>11</sup> Bhatt, S. R. and Mehrotra, A. (2000). *Buddhist Epistemology* Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press: 2.

and its resolution. Mind as the core of Buddhism is stated in the Dhammapada: “All experience is preceded by mind, led by mind, made by mind. Speak or act with a corrupted mind, and suffering follows as the wagon wheel follows the hoof of the ox.”<sup>12</sup> It also states, “All experience is preceded by mind, led by mind, made by mind. Speak or act with a peaceful mind, and happiness follows like a never-departing shadow.”<sup>13</sup> Further, the Surangama Sutra states, “The Tathagata has always said that all phenomena are manifestations of mind and that all causes and effects including (all things from) the world to its dust, take shape because of the mind.”<sup>14</sup>

These statements do not mean there are no objects outside our minds. Rather, they imply that “the qualities of the things come into existence after the mind, are dependent upon mind and are made up of mind.”<sup>15</sup> The state of the world around us, which we tend to believe exists external to us, is a reflection of the condition of our mind.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, we need to look into our own mind, not external world to overcome suffering facing us, which is stated by Nagarjuna’s Hymns to the Jewel of the Mind: “The essence of happiness and suffering does not exist at all outside the mind.”<sup>17</sup>

On a Buddhist view, the cause of violence of any kind lies in our own minds and so making a critical analysis of the nature of one’s mind or the principles of epistemic function allows us to deepen internal dynamics of violence: knowing, first of all, reality as a mind-construct, critically reflecting how mind turns into the root cause of suffering and contemplating and enacting the way to resolve it constitute the core of Buddhism.<sup>18</sup> And the Four Noble Truth doctrine assumes the fundamental role in the analysis.

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<sup>12</sup> Fronsdal, G., *The Dhammapada*: 1.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Luk, C. (2001). *The Surangama Sutra*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal: 16.

<sup>15</sup> Lai, W. (1977). The Meaning of “Mind-Only” (Wei-Hsin): An Analysis of a Sinitic Mahayana Phenomenon. *Philosophy East and West*, 27 (1): 66.

<sup>16</sup> Ramanan, V. (1978). *Nagarjuna’s Philosophy As Presented in the Maha-Prajnaparamita-Sutra*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

<sup>17</sup> Tola, F. and Dragonetti, C. (1995). *On Voidness: A Study on Buddhist Nihilism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass: 135.

<sup>18</sup> Matsuo, H. (1981). *The Logic of Unity: The Discovery of Zero and Emptiness in Prajnaparamita Thought*. (Translated by Inada Kenneth). Tokyo: Hokuju Shuppan.

## **Analysis of the Four Noble Truths Doctrine**

The Four Noble Truths doctrine is the Buddha's first and foundational teaching<sup>19</sup> and the core of every school of Buddhism.<sup>20</sup> The Four Noble Truths are truth of suffering, origin of suffering, overcoming of suffering, and the path to overcome suffering.<sup>21</sup>

The first noble truth is that our life is basically filled with suffering and trouble.<sup>22</sup> However, the central aim of the first noble truth is not to reveal a pessimistic and hopeless view of life. Recognition of our existence being filled with suffering requires us to comprehend it in terms of what suffering actually is or what is the nature of the state of suffering. Put differently, the statement emphasizes the importance of knowing the fundamental unsatisfactory and agonizing feature of reality, which inspires us to engage in a deeper and more profound question of "What is the cause of suffering?"

The second truth proposes the cause of suffering.<sup>23</sup> It is attributed to craving, that is, a mental state leading to attachment, which is characterized as the tendency of mind to cling to certain specific objects or views.<sup>24</sup> Besides that, ignorance is proposed as a fundamental cause of suffering.<sup>25</sup> It is understood as our basic

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<sup>19</sup> Geshe Tashi Tsering (2005). *The Four Noble Truths: The Foundation of Buddhist Thought volume 1*. Boston: Wisdom Publications

<sup>20</sup> Yun, H. (2002). *From the Four Noble Truths to the Four Universal Vow*. Hacienda Heights, California: Buddha's Light Publishing.

<sup>21</sup> Pereira, J. and Tiso, F. (1988). The evolution of Buddhist systematics from the Buddha to Vasubandhu. *Philosophy East and West*, 38 (2): 172-186.

<sup>22</sup> Rahula, W. S. (1974). *What the Buddha Taught*. New York: Grove.

<sup>23</sup> Rubin, J. B. (2003). Close Encounters of a New Kind: Toward an Integration of Psychoanalysis and Buddhism. In Segall, S. R. (Ed.) *Encountering Buddhism: Western Psychology and Buddhist Teachings* (31-60). Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.

<sup>24</sup> Burton, D. (2002). Knowledge and Liberation: Philosophical Ruminations on a Buddhist Conundrum. *Philosophy East and West*, 52 (3): 326-345.

<sup>25</sup> Cho, S. (2002). The Rationalist Tendency in Modern Buddhist Scholarship: A Reevaluation.

misapprehension of the nature of reality<sup>26</sup> or lack of self-awareness and correct knowledge of reality.<sup>27</sup> The basic feature of ignorance is that we tend to see things including human beings as having permanent, or unchanging nature and stick to anything that reinforces our concept or view of permanence, pushing away or rejecting those views or ideas that deny or threaten it.<sup>28</sup> On Buddhist view, suffering or trouble facing us is mainly of psychological and subjective nature in its cause. Human mind itself is the locus wherein the gap between reality and the human hermeneutical reality represented in conceptual or linguistic rendering accompanied by desire, takes place, which brings out suffering including violence.<sup>29</sup>

The third truth claims by awakening to the root cause of suffering, human beings will be empowered to overcome its cause.<sup>30</sup> What is proposed here is since it stems from our own craving and ignorance, suffering can be resolved if they are properly addressed.<sup>31</sup> As both the causes of suffering and liberation from suffering are two different states but are created by minds,<sup>32</sup> the solution is up to us, which is stated in the Dhamapada: “Evil is done by oneself alone; by oneself is one defiled. Evil is avoided by oneself; by oneself alone is one purified. Purity and impurity depend on oneself; no one can purify another.”<sup>33</sup>

The fourth truth shows the way to overcome suffering and achieve mental well-being and serenity, which is generally called the noble eightfold path.<sup>34</sup> It is: right view<sup>35</sup>, right thought<sup>36</sup>, right speech<sup>37</sup>, right action<sup>38</sup>, right livelihood<sup>39</sup>, right effort<sup>40</sup>,

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*Philosophy East and West*, 52 (4): 426-440.

<sup>26</sup> Geshe Tashi, *The Four Noble Truths*.

<sup>27</sup> (Cho, *The Rationalist Tendency in Modern Buddhist Scholarship*

<sup>28</sup> Geshe Tashi, *The Four Noble Truths*.

<sup>29</sup> Park, Jin Y. (2008). *Buddhism and Postmodernity: Zen, Huayan, and the Possibility of Buddhist Postmodern Ethics*. Plymouth, United Kingdom: Lexington Books.

<sup>30</sup> Yun, H. (2002). *From the Four Noble Truths to the Four Universal Vow*.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Park, Jin Y., *Buddhism and Postmodernity*.

<sup>33</sup> Fronsdal, G., *The Dhammapada*: 44.

<sup>34</sup> Rubin, J. B., *Close Encounters of a New Kind*.

<sup>35</sup> Yun characterizes it as a correct view of reality, that is, mutual interdependence and ultimate empty nature.

<sup>36</sup> It refers to a correct perception that our bodies will eventually decay and disappear and that our emotions and thoughts are temporal and impermanent.

<sup>37</sup> According to Rubin, it means speaking trustfully, sincerely, and compassionately.

right mindfulness<sup>41</sup>, and right concentration.<sup>42</sup> The upshot of the fourth truth is the synergistic effect of three core angles – ethical conduct (right speech, right action, right livelihood, and right effort), mental discipline (right mindfulness and right concentration), and wisdom (right view and right thought) need to be appreciated and practiced to overcome suffering.<sup>43</sup> This threefold approach to liberate ourselves from suffering is stated in the Dhamapada: “Like a good horse alert to the whip, be ardent and alarmed. With faith, virtue, effort, concentration, and discernment, Accompanied in knowledge and good conduct, mindful, you will leave this great suffering behind.”<sup>44</sup> When wisdom – an insight into the nature of things and events, that is, interdependence, impermanence, and ultimate emptiness of fixed, or unchanging attribute, mental discipline – the development of the ability to focus our minds on whatever object, view, standpoint we choose, which heightens the level of awareness of our internal dynamics, and ethical conduct – practicing a moral life with honesty, altruism, and compassion that lead us to take into account others’ feelings, perspectives, rights, suffering, and well-beings as well as our own are well integrated, we can overcome suffering and construct a harmonious relationship.<sup>45</sup>

Through self-observation, introspection, philosophical analysis of reality, and the practice of virtuous conduct, Buddhism strives to achieve mental transformation and psychological well-being. Philosophy, for Buddhism, is not a theoretical discipline detached from daily life but the very foundation of how we live our daily life.<sup>46</sup> How we view the nature of reality or how we understand the concepts and knowledge

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<sup>38</sup> It refers to refraining from needless killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct, Rubin, J. B., *Close Encounters of a New Kind*.

<sup>39</sup> It means living a reasonable economic life, an altruistic life, and a harmonious communal life.

<sup>40</sup> It means correct diligence in developing wholesomeness that not yet arisen, increasing wholesomeness that has already arisen, and preventing unwholesomeness from arising.

<sup>41</sup> It signifies constant awareness of phenomena that are happening at present and careful recollection of phenomena that occurred in the past, Rubin, J. B., *Close Encounters of a New Kind*.

<sup>42</sup> It refers to spiritual concentration and mental tranquility achieved through the act of meditation to recall the actions and thoughts in the past, perceive the dynamics of mind at present and cultivate goodwill and compassion. See Rubin, J. B., *Close Encounters of a New Kind*, and Rahula, W. S., *What the Buddha Taught*.

<sup>43</sup> Loizzo, J. (2006). *Meditation, Self-correction and learning: Contemplative Science in Global Perspective* (presented to Conference on Mind and Reality)

<sup>44</sup> Fronsdal, G., *The Dhammapada*: 38.

<sup>45</sup> Geshe Tashi, *The Four Noble Truths*.

<sup>46</sup> Szkredka, S. (2007). Reason as Employed by the Buddha: Its Originality and Mystical Foundations. *Hsi Lai Journal of Humanistic Buddhism*, 8: 181-200.

framing it affects how we speak, how we behave, and how we live a life. We participate in reality with our bodies, our speech, and our minds<sup>47</sup> and enhancing wholesome conducts along with transformation of mind becomes imperative. Ethics and mental transformation as a result of gaining a correct view of reality and sharpening the abilities to observe and control our mind dynamics are complementary to overcome suffering.

## 2 A Buddhist analysis of the dynamics of violence

The implication of the Four Noble Truth doctrine is that the main cause of problems facing us is mainly internal. Though external causes or conditions must not be ignored, looking at them alone and seeing them as exclusively externally created impedes us from deepening our understanding of the problems: examining the dynamics of our mind and its role enables us to grab the inner cause of violence to explore what kinds of mind or mind-state we should achieve to resolve it.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, this section delves into a Buddhist view of violence dynamics based on the idea that violence of any kind begins with our thinking or thought process.<sup>49</sup>

From time immemorial, human beings have developed conceptual thought as the main tool to make sense of the world of experiences in abstraction and to communicate them with fellow human beings.<sup>50</sup> As social beings, we are shaped by the beliefs and forms of truth conventionally accepted as valid and effective in the practical matter of social or cultural life-world.<sup>51</sup>

We build and accept frame of reference – certain patterns of worldviews, cultural values, political orientations and ideologies, religious doctrine, moral-ethical

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<sup>47</sup> Luisi, L. P. (2008). The Two Pillars of Buddhism – Consciousness and Ethics. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 15 (1): 84-107.

<sup>48</sup> Geshe Tashi, *The Four Noble Truths*.

<sup>49</sup> Park, Jin Y., *Buddhism and Postmodernity*.

<sup>50</sup> Ichimura, S. (1997). Contemporary Significance of Chinese Buddhist Philosophy. *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 24: 75-106.

<sup>51</sup> Wright, D. (1986). Language And Truth In Hua-Yen Buddhism. *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 13: 21-47.

norms, and so on – to construct conceptually framed reality to lead a meaningful life.<sup>52</sup> Relying on socially embedded habits of mind, we project certain pattern of conceptual categories upon reality and make experience conform to our systems of thought.<sup>53</sup> Any kind of collective circumstance molds our minds to conform to certain norms and determines the appropriateness or acceptability of a given state of awareness or communication in the social settings.<sup>54</sup>

Social conditionedness or acceptance of certain frame of reference is connected to a human eagerness for the establishment of sense of security and stable identity. According to Loy, security refers to “the conditions where we can live without care, where our life is not preoccupied without worrying about our life”<sup>55</sup> and that involves stabilizing ourselves by controlling and fixating the real including human beings with certain attributes or qualities. In our anxiety and quest for reassurance and security, we tend to reify situations and things and cling to and manipulate those reified conditions.<sup>56</sup>

However, on a Buddhist view, the potential danger lurks within the establishment of socially patterned frame of reference. The root cause of violence lies in our propensity to absolutize any particular frame of reference as universal or complete.<sup>57</sup> Once we build certain conceptual thoughts socially conditioning us and cling to them as complete, it causes us to fixate the real – objects, persons, groups of people, events, and so on – with some supposedly permanent or unchanging attributes or qualities.<sup>58</sup> Forming the sedimented and habitual ways of seeing the real with fixed

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<sup>52</sup> Mezirow, J. (2003). Transformative Learning as Discourse. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 1(1): 58-63.

<sup>53</sup> McEvelley, T. (1982). Early Greek philosophy and Madhyamika. *Philosophy East and West*, 31 (2): 141-164.

<sup>54</sup> Goleman, D. (1993). Psychology, Reality, and Consciousness. In Walsh, R. and Vaughan F. (Eds.) *Path Beyond Ego: The Transpersonal Vision* (18-21). New York: Penguin Putnam.

<sup>55</sup> Loy, D. (2002). *On the Nonduality of Good and Evil: Buddhist Reflections on the New Holy War* Accessed 15 August 2012: 8.

[http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/Miscellaneous/NonDuality\\_Good\\_and\\_Evil.htm](http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/Miscellaneous/NonDuality_Good_and_Evil.htm)

<sup>56</sup> Mipham, J. (2002). *Introduction to the Middle Way: Candrakirti's Madhyamakavatara with Commentary by Jamgon Mipham* Boston: Shambhala.

<sup>57</sup> Gomez, L. (1976). Proto-Madhyamika in the Pali Canon. *Philosophy East and West*, 26 (2): 137-165.

<sup>58</sup> Chang, C. C. G. (1971). *The Buddhist Teaching of Totality: The Philosophy of Hwa Yen Buddhism*.

perspectives on what and how things are and are not restricts patterns of awareness and limits our intentional range and capacity for meaning-making commitments.<sup>59</sup>

Further, when we build some particular thoughts or standpoints and claim completeness for the perspectives constructed, that causes us to be dogmatic, exclusive of other views or thoughts.<sup>60</sup> As fixed idea of identity becomes strong and extreme, it tends to be exclusive of other identities, or views of identity and drives us toward extreme behaviors against those with distinct attributes of identity. The extreme attachment to our own views can elapse into polarity or negation of other views, values and ultimately of people who are different from us.<sup>61</sup> Once the views or perspectives socially conditioning us have come to be clung to as absolute, we are prone to feel threat, fear, anger, or hatred to those with distinct frames of reference, which can provide us with self-serving justification for creating or sustaining asymmetric relationship, which leads to social injustice or discrimination,<sup>62</sup> wherein disparity between/among groups or individuals with regard to the access to political, economic, and social activities to gratify their basic needs and seek self-actualization becomes normalized.

What should be discussed further is the basic mode of thinking in committing violence. Though becoming conditioned by social frame of reference is natural and essential to us, as Wade<sup>63</sup> insightfully claims, it is fundamentally of dualistic nature of thought (right/wrong, good/bad, black/white, to name a few) and divides the world into 'in-group' and 'out-group'. Further, those in dualistic thought are informed by the principle of the excluded middle<sup>64</sup> or 'either-or' stance.<sup>65</sup> This logical stance in nature prioritizes one over the other by sharpening dichotomous relationship between in-group

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University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

<sup>59</sup> Hershock, P. D. (2006). *Buddhism in the Public Sphere: Reorienting Global Interdependence*. London: Routledge.

<sup>60</sup> Ramanan, V., *Nagarjuna's Philosophy As Presented in the Maha-Prajnaparamita-Sutra*.

<sup>61</sup> Der-lan Yeh (2006). The Way to Peace: A Buddhist perspective. *International Journal of Peace Studies*, 11 (1): 91-112.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Wade 1996

<sup>64</sup> Fenner, P. (1994). Spiritual Inquiry in Buddhism. *ReVision*, 17 (2): 13-25.

<sup>65</sup> Nagatomo, S. (2000). The Logic of the Diamond Sutra: A is not A, therefore it is A. *Asian Philosophy*, 10 (3): 213-244.

and out-group, whereby an imbalanced attitude invested by extreme in-group self-interest and desire is favored and promoted. The subject, relying on the strong in-group consciousness, becomes the generative factor for creating the discriminatory and oppositional relationship.<sup>66</sup>

Once we see the other as something disconnected from us, it becomes easier to propagate violence upon those outside the boundary.<sup>67</sup> In dualistic logical and epistemological structure, we tend to project negative qualities upon the outside and see them objectively belonging to them,<sup>68</sup> which promotes self-righteousness to take discriminatory attitude and commit violence to them. Further, the mind in dualistic stance swings from extreme to extreme, which drives us to cling to dead-ends,<sup>69</sup> whereby the values, ideas of one's group are not viewed as one of many alternatives, but the only right one; other possibilities are dimly conceived or denied as wrong,<sup>70</sup> which leads to cultural violence. As explained, cultural violence is seen as any form of socially/culturally constructed discursive thought that legitimates and rationalizes direct and structural violence. As our frame of reference becomes absolutized and clung to and dichotomous in-group and out-group relations sharpen, the purview of social/cultural discourse comes to be restricted and our range for building discourses that bridge inter-group division becomes limited, which ends up aggravating divisive and discriminatory discourses.

The upshot of a Buddhist analysis of violence dynamics is not to reject the social conditionedness. Rather, the main target that needs to be critiqued is our tendency to become enmeshed in a specific conceptual position or frame of reference and cling to it as complete.<sup>71</sup> Social conditionedness, though essential to our lives, in its

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Hart, T., Nelson, P. L. and Puhakka, K. (2000). "Introduction." In Hart, T., Nelson, P. L. and Puhakka, K. (Eds.) *Transpersonal Knowing: Exploring the horizon of consciousness* (1-9). Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.

<sup>68</sup> Wilber, K. (1993). *The Spectrum of Consciousness*. Wheaton, Illinois: Quest Books.

<sup>69</sup> Ramanan, V., *Nagarjuna's Philosophy As Presented in the Maha-Prajnaparamita-Sutra*.

<sup>70</sup> Wade, J. (1996). *Changing of Mind: A Holonomic Theory of the Evolution of Consciousness*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.

<sup>71</sup> Muller, C. (1998). Innate Enlightenment and No-thought: A Response to the Critical Buddhist Position on Zen. Paper presented at the International Conference on Son, Paekyang-sa, Kwangju, Korea, August 18-22, 1998.

dualistic nature, can cause us exaggerate differences between people, create supposedly firm boundaries between ‘in-group’ and ‘out-group’ and reify those into fixed and independent entities segregating from one another by imputedly intrinsic and insurmountable differences,<sup>72</sup> which leads us to violence and impedes constructing a harmonious and constructive relationship.

### **3 Examining a Buddhist path to a culture of peace**

#### **Mindfulness as a method to address violence**

Since our socially conditioned minds that have been absolutized as complete turn into the root cause of violence, the methods need to be sought to break the absolutized conditioned state.<sup>73</sup> Once we become conditioned by certain frame of reference, we tend to remain identified with it and kept imprisoned in the state, which constricts the purview of our thought and hampers constructive interaction with out-groups.<sup>74</sup> So the first step is to disidentify ourselves from the conditioned state to make it conscious and reflect on it. Mindfulness is proposed as a practical method.

Mindfulness refers to disciplining the mind by focusing on a certain object of thought and be letting go of all thoughts and emotions, and witnessing whatever arises in consciousness.<sup>75</sup> For instance, Mahasatipatthana Sutta shows, “A monk abides contemplating body as body, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world; he abides contemplating feelings as feelings; he

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<sup>72</sup> Waldron, W. S. (2003). Common Ground, Common Cause: Buddhism and Science on the Afflictions of Identity. In Wallace, A. (Ed.) *Buddhism and Science: Breaking new ground* (145-191). New York: Columbia University Press.

<sup>73</sup> Muller, C., Innate Enlightenment and No-thought.

<sup>74</sup> Welwood, J. (2000). Reflection and Presence. In Hart, T., Nelson, P. L. and Puhakka, K. (Eds.) *Transpersonal Knowing: Exploring the horizon of consciousness* (85-111). Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.

<sup>75</sup> Kabat-Zinn, J. (1994). *Catalyzing Movement Towards a More*

*Contemplative/Sacred-Appreciating/Non-Dualistic Society* Accessed 15 August 2012

<http://www.contemplativemind.org/programs/academic/kabat-zinn.pdf>

abides contemplating mind as mind; he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world.”<sup>76</sup> The practice of mindfulness means the practice of objectifying the contents of our consciousness, thoughts, feelings and reactions flowing from our minds to observe without being absorbed or controlled by them.<sup>77</sup> By steadying the mind, the abilities are developed for moment-to-moment awareness of internal states such as feelings, emotions, thoughts, attitudes, and so on.<sup>78</sup>

The practice of mindfulness cultivates our first-hand awareness and experience of social conditionedness of our thinking and knowing, which helps us become less identified with our habits of mind and standpoint.<sup>79</sup> Mindful disengagement enables us to create a space in our own minds for the development of enlarged awareness, attentiveness to broader dimensions of how mind can work by going beyond socially built presuppositions and sedimented habits of thinking and knowing.<sup>80</sup> Developing the abilities to observe our minds leads us to temporarily mute external factors so that we can be awoken to the role of our mental and emotional habits in framing our perceptions of reality. The development of mindful practices empowers us to discover the contents of reality depend not so much on what happens to us, but on what attitudes, understandings, feelings and reactions we give to those events.<sup>81</sup>

Further, mindfulness plays a significant role in promoting dialogue. Arguably, dialogue, the need for which emerges from the increasing acknowledgement that our changing reality demands a new global ethic and a new perception of one another has

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<sup>76</sup> Walshe, M. (Trans). (2012). *The Digha Nikaya – The Long Discourses of the Buddha*. Boston: Wisdom Publications: 335.

<sup>77</sup> Hart, T. (2001). Teaching for wisdom. *Encounter; Education for Meaning and Social Justice*, 14 (2): 3-16.

<sup>78</sup> Brantmeier, E. J. (2007). Connecting Inner and Outer Peace: Buddhist Meditation Integrated with Peace Education. *Journal of peace education and social justice*, 1(1): 120-157.

<sup>79</sup> Gunnlaugson, O. (2007). Shedding Lights on the Underlying Forms of Transformative Learning Theory: Introducing Three Distinct Categories of Consciousness. *Journal of Transformative Education* 5 (2): 134-151.

<sup>80</sup> Hart, T., Teaching for wisdom.

<sup>81</sup> Chappell, D. W. (1999). Buddhist Peace Principles. In Chappell, D. W. (Ed.) *Buddhist Peacework: Creating Cultures of Peace* (199-231). Boston: Wisdom Publications.

become one of the core methods to transform violent and antagonistic relationship into harmonious one. The main objective of dialogue is not just to share information; rather, it is to uncover the processes that are shaping us and the struggle we are having, which, it is assumed, will lead us to mutual respect and a sense of solidarity.<sup>82</sup> Dialogue seeks to go beyond dichotomous debate to promote mutual understanding and transformation.<sup>83</sup>

However, what needs to be claimed from a perspective of mindfulness is the intimate connection between dialogue with others and that with ourselves: only those who are capable of a sincere encounter with themselves can engage in an authentic dialogue with others.<sup>84</sup> The practice of dialogue requires the openness to be challenged and transformed by encountering others' viewpoints or values as well as the willingness and ability to engage in active listening and understanding of them.<sup>85</sup> Dialogue demands us to let ourselves be changed in our point of view, attitude, value, mode of thinking and this requires internal and reflective dialogue with ourselves while engaged in dialogue with others.<sup>86</sup>

Engagement in mindful observation of our own mind-state slows down our stream of consciousness and enables us to suspend impulsive and automatic reaction in encountering distinct ideas, values, or identities. Mindful suspension of habitual reaction facilitates the transition from being focally embedded with our thoughts and feelings to being free to witness them consciously, which gives us a preview of a different self-sense and more complex and multi-faceted form and order of consciousness to appreciate distinct views and ideas.<sup>87</sup> The practice of internal observation of ourselves empowers us to expose and deconstruct socially conditioned positions of belief, value, thought and so on and frees our minds to notice and

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Said, Abdu'l-Aziz., Lerche, C. and Funk, N. C. (2006). For the need for new thinking. *International Journal of Peace Studies*, 11 (2): 105-120.

<sup>84</sup> Hadot, P. (1995). *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. Oxford: Blackwell.

<sup>85</sup> Ferrer, J. (2002). *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory: A Participatory Vision of Human Spirituality*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.

<sup>86</sup> Hadot, P., *Philosophy as a Way of Life*.

<sup>87</sup> Gunnlaugson, O., Shedding Lights on the Underlying Forms of Transformative Learning Theory.

appreciate multiple perspectives and unexpected insights,<sup>88</sup> which inspires us to listen sincerely to those with different or even opposing views and identities to construct a harmonious relationship.

Dialogue requires internal awareness and mindfulness that undergirds mutual appreciation and transformation.<sup>89</sup> Learning to be less embedded or reified in the perspectives or thoughts as a result of mindful observation, we can develop a deeply different basis or relationship to our modes of thinking and emotional processes,<sup>90</sup> which makes new interpersonal and intergroup relationships and connections possible.<sup>91</sup>

### **Enacting a perspectival transformation**

As we develop mindfulness practice to monitor how our mind works and control emotions, a deeper and more profound intellectual understanding or development of wisdom that enables us to gain an insight into the nature of reality can be embodied to address absolutized conditioned state that causes negative feelings and dogmatism.<sup>92</sup> Contemplative practice that enables us to disidentify ourselves from frames of reference that socially condition us and create ‘in-group’ and ‘out-group’ boundaries and observe mind dynamics leads us to realize an inherent interdependent and interpenetrating nature of reality or conceptual thought framing our reality.<sup>93</sup> The reason for transforming our view of conceptual thought is that, since conceptual thought construction provides us with a sort of lens to view and organize our world and build our lived experience, it becomes imperative to correct our misunderstanding of it as it causes us suffering including violence.

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<sup>88</sup> Hart, T. (2004). Opening the Contemplative Mind in the Classroom. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 2 (1): 28-46.

<sup>89</sup> Chappell, D. W., Buddhist Peace Principles.

<sup>90</sup> Gunnlaugson, O., Shedding Lights on the Underlying Forms of Transformative Learning Theory.

<sup>91</sup> Chappell, D. W., Buddhist Peace Principles.

<sup>92</sup> Danesh, H. B. (2006). Towards an integrative theory of peace education. *Journal of Peace Education*, 3(1): 55-78.

<sup>93</sup> Apffel-Marglin, F. and Bush, M. (2005). *Healing the Breach of Faith Toward Everything That Is: Integration in Academia* 2005. Accessed August 15 2012.

[http://www.contemplativemind.org/programs/academic/summer05/Apffel-Marglin\\_Bush.pdf](http://www.contemplativemind.org/programs/academic/summer05/Apffel-Marglin_Bush.pdf)

Interdependent and interpenetrating nature of any kind of conceptual thought forming our reality is, for instance, expounded by Nagarjuna. In his *Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness*, he states, “Without one there cannot be many and without many it is not possible to refer to one. Therefore, one and many arise dependently and such phenomena do not have sign of inherent existence.”<sup>94</sup> He also states in the *Catustava* or *Four Hymns to Absolute Reality*, “If there is existence, then is non-existence; if there is something long, similarly (there is) something short; and if there is non-existence, (there is) existence; therefore, both (existence and non-existence) are not existent.”<sup>95</sup> He also states, “Unity and multiplicity and past and future, etc., defilement and purification, correct and false – how can they exist per se?”<sup>96</sup> These statements neither aim to abandon thinking nor deny having frame of reference. Rather, the objective is to make our own minds free from attachment to any form of conditioned state even when we are engaged in it, which makes us more flexible in approaching our reality including peace and conflict.<sup>97</sup>

The essential dependent-originated nature of any conceptual or linguistic framework enables us to understand any form of symbolic knowledge that shapes dichotomous human relation cannot be seen as existing outside of the purview of interdependency.<sup>98</sup> This does not mean total erasure of difference or demise of all distinctions into an all-frozen sameness, but advocates a reformulation of dualistic thinking. What should be recognized is that dualistic either-or thinking, though important in some circumstance, is “only one product of the total functioning of the mind.”<sup>99</sup> It is a perspectival shift from the dualistic stance to non-dualistic stance, wherein *prima facie* opposing views are not seen as fixed pair of opposites, but as inter-relational constructs.<sup>100</sup>

## Exploring a Buddhist culture of peace

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<sup>94</sup> Komito, D. R. (1987). *Nagarjuna's "Seventy Stanzas": A Buddhist Psychology of Emptiness*. Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion.: 80.

<sup>95</sup> Tola and Dragonetti, Tola, *On Voidness*: 128.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Muller, C., *Innate Enlightenment and No-thought*.

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Tart, C. (2000). *States of Consciousness*. Lincoln, Nebraska: iUniverse: 28.

<sup>100</sup> Nagatomo, S., *The Logic of the Diamond Sutra*.

How can the practice of mindfulness and transforming our understanding of conceptual thought framing bounded or dichotomous relationship contribute to changing the dynamics of violence? And how can a culture of peace be characterized as a result of that?

Perspectival transformation from dualistic stance empowers us to hold multiplex, complementary both/and dialectical thinking, which leads us to appreciate the opposite of a deep truth is another deep truth.<sup>101</sup> The integrative expansion of experiential range as a result of the practice of mindfulness and perspectival shift enables us to engage the world in a more extensive and inclusive manner.<sup>102</sup> The awakening to the inherent interdependent and interpenetrating nature of reality and of conceptual or linguistic knowledge framing boundaries separating human beings deconstructs the thought-wall of seeming difference in values or perspectives between self and others to reveal an ultimate interdependent and interpenetrating relation.<sup>103</sup>

Recognizing interdependent and interconnected nature of human relations makes us aware we need to approach the phenomenon of violence from a perspective different from conventional dualistic or dichotomous logic. What needs to be acknowledged is that those in violence are interdependent and interconnected with each other. They are interwoven on a fundamental dimension despite their conflictual and dichotomous relationship on a visible level.<sup>104</sup> With dualistic view of violence transcended, it comes to be realized that violence against others or out-group becomes an act of violence against ourselves and is understood as an undesirable and unrealistic option or course of action.<sup>105</sup> It is to be recognized that any form of violence, whether it be direct, structural, or cultural, hurts both those who are committing it and those who

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<sup>101</sup> Braud, W. and Anderson, R. (1998). *Transpersonal Research Methods for the Social Sciences: Honoring Human Experience*. London: SAGE.

<sup>102</sup> Firman, J. and Gila, A. (2002). *A Psychology of the Spirit*. Albany, New York: University of New York Press.

<sup>103</sup> Makransky, J. (2005). Buddha and Christ as Mediators of the Transcendent: A Buddhist Perspective. In Schmidt-Leukel P. (Ed.) *Buddhism and Christianity in Dialogue: The General Weisfeld Lectures 2004* (176-199). Norwich, Norfolk: SCM Press.

<sup>104</sup> Park, Jin Y., *Buddhism and Postmodernity*.

<sup>105</sup> Brantmeier, E. J., *Connecting Inner and Outer Peace*.

are committed and that no one single individual or group can gain benefit from committing any kind of violence.

With transcending dualistic and dichotomous relationship in violence, how can peace be characterized? Awakening to the interdependent and interpenetrating nature of relations empowers us to realize nondualistic peace based on compassionate mind. Compassion is an acknowledgement of shared humanity and the commonalities in both suffering and aspiration among people.<sup>106</sup> It is a capacity to feel others' pain, sorrow, despair or suffering as our own, but at the same time an ability to have clear awareness of interdependent origination of phenomenon of any kind.<sup>107</sup> Developing compassionate mind, which is often associated with the development of a quality of loving kindness, a universal and unselfish love that extends to ourselves, to friends, family, and ultimately to all people, inspires us to take action to care for and serve others.<sup>108</sup> Recognition of an ultimate nondualistic relationship makes us realize that our happiness comes through others' happiness.<sup>109</sup> Awakening to the interdependent and interpenetrating nature of relations enables us to appreciate that our well-being and others' are inseparable: without considering and acting to promote others' peace, our own peace would be impossible.<sup>110</sup>

Nondualistic peace is to be understood as a transition from self-centered, dichotomous tensions of in-group and out-group processes to an all-inclusive state of awareness of our fundamental interdependence and interpenetration, which drives us to satisfy basic human needs of all, to take action to promote freedom, justice of those with distinct identities as well as our own somehow, and to resort to peaceful methods to resolve conflict constructively.

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<sup>106</sup> Pruitt, I. T. and McCollum, E. E. (2010). *Voices of Experienced Meditators: The Impact of Meditation Practice on Intimate Relationships*. Retrieved on May 4 2014, from <http://portal.idc.ac.il/he/main/research/aware/research/documents/social/attachment/voices%20of%20experienced%20meditators%20the%20im>

<sup>107</sup> Hoyt, M. (2014). Engaging Bodhisatva Compassion in Pedagogical Aporias. *Paideusis*, 21 (2): 24-31.

<sup>108</sup> Pruitt and McCollum, *Voices of Experienced Meditators*.

<sup>109</sup> Luisi, L. P. (2008). The Two Pillars of Buddhism.

<sup>110</sup> Vaughan, F. (2002). What is Spiritual Intelligence? *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 42 (2): 16-33.

The second characteristics of a Buddhist view of peace is, as a consequence of nondualistic relationship, the achievement and practicing unity and diversity of those with distinct cultural, racial, religious, and ethnic values and identities. And here comes a need for understanding the meaning of diversity in the context of an expanded awareness of interdependent and interconnected nature of human relations, which opens up for wider range of possibilities in interpersonal and intergroup relationships.

Diversity does not merely mean that differences exist. Touching diversity and differences makes the rise of complex and coordination-enriching interdependence:<sup>111</sup> diversity can only be enhanced by realizing and practicing patterns of completely meaningful interdependence and interpenetration. Human relationship involves “continuous, relationally-expanding and interdependent enhancing improvisation”,<sup>112</sup> whereby we can experience difference and diversity not as a threat or a subject for attack or hatred but as an opportunity to mutual insight and inspiration to explore something new to all participants. Improvising, the ethos of which is “lived, enacted performance of being different in the world,”<sup>113</sup> is the ongoing development of new views and meanings from within things as they have come to be. It does not refer to denying or abandoning distinct values, worldviews, or norms that socially or culturally condition us. Rather, it is their meaningful revision and reorientation so that we can add new understandings or views to them according to interdependent and nondualistic relations.

Though two features of a Buddhist view of peace have been examined, how can a culture of peace be characterized? It is to be understood as an exploratory, ongoing and ever-lasting process that explicates or unfolds new values and meanings to achieve and sustain interdependent, mutually liberating and transformative relational dynamics between/among those with distinct identities, values, worldviews, or frames of reference: continuous co-emergent and co-creative value and truth construction

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<sup>111</sup> Hershock, P. D. (2012). *Valuing Diversity: Buddhist Reflection on Realizing a More Equitable Global Future*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

<sup>112</sup> Hershock, P. D. (2013). Diversity Matters: Buddhist Reflections on the Meaning of Difference. In Emmanuel, S. M. (Ed.) *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy* (675-692). New York: Wiley-Blackwell: 683.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 688

accompanied by reflective self-awareness and self-transformation inspired by encountering differences.

## Conclusion

This paper has examined a Buddhist contribution to advancing the principle of non-violence and culture of peace. As has been delved into, a foundational nature of a Buddhist peace is the outcome of our epistemological (contemplative practices), ontological (understanding reality as interdependent, interpenetrating, and ultimately nondualistic), emotive (compassion), and conative (choosing) capacities. Stated otherwise, it is recognition and enacting of multiple functions of our own mind.

Truly, the practice of mindfulness, transforming our understanding of conceptual thought, enacting compassionate mind for nondualistic peace and embodying unity in diversity are not easy and can be seen as a special activity located outside the domain of daily life. However, The Constitution of the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) states that “since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.” Furthermore, since how we act and how we speak are derived from our own mind-state, we need to monitor and control our own minds to act and speak constructively and harmoniously.<sup>114</sup> As we are creating our subjective and intersubjective realities every day,<sup>115</sup> our daily life can be an opportunity to experience the potential and value of mindfulness and perspectival transformation to embody internal self-transformation and interdependent and interconnected nature of peace.

However, as peace lies at the nexus of interdependencies and interconnections among psychological, social, cultural, structural, economic and political realities,<sup>116</sup> it could be morally problematic to ignore issues of social, structural justice while pushing

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<sup>114</sup> Venerable Kosan Sunim (1999). My Way of Pilgrimage to Peace. In Chappell, D. L. (Ed.) *Buddhist Peacework: Creating Cultures of Peace* (121-128). Boston: Wisdom Publications.

<sup>115</sup> Vaughan, F. (1979). *Awakening Intuition*. New York: Doubleday.

<sup>116</sup> Groff, L. (2008). Contributions of Different Cultural-Religious Traditions on Different Aspects of Peace – Learning to a Holistic, Integrative View of Peace for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Interdependent World. *FUTUREtakes Transcultural Futurist Magazine*, 7(1).

spiritual and internal development as inner dimensions of peace and outer or social/structural dimensions are interdependent human experiences.<sup>117</sup> The challenges for promoting sustainable peace is to strive to satisfy basic human needs of all global citizens and to transform social and even global structures that create asymmetric relationships and train or educate the potential of human mind in terms of developing multiple perspective and epistemologies such as rational consideration, reflection, intuitive knowing, contemplative practices, creative imagination and so on to achieve a positive change.

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<sup>117</sup> Cabezon Jose Ignacio (1999). The UNESCO Declaration: A Tibetan Buddhist perspective. In Chappell, D. W. (Ed.) (1999). *Buddhist Peacework: Creating Cultures of Peace* (183-188). Boston: Wisdom Publications.

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[http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/Miscellaneous/NonDuality\\_Good\\_and\\_Evil.htm](http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/Miscellaneous/NonDuality_Good_and_Evil.htm)

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