

Utility of Cultivating Compassion for Conflict Resolution in Modern Life

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Introduction

The purpose of this article is to discuss the applicability of Buddhist compassion (*karuṇā*) as a therapy for conflict resolution. Nowadays, the level of scientific - technological and economic development has reached many peaks, people's material lives are increasingly prosperous but moral values are degrading, social evils are increasing. Ethnic and religious conflicts, terrorism occur in many places are threats to humanity. Therefore, research on conflict resolution theories and methods is increasingly gaining attention. Faced with this situation, Buddhism has flexibly employed various methods to propagate the Dhamma and benefit living beings. Buddhism clearly identifies the causes of conflicts and offers satisfactory solutions to mitigate them. In the spirit of compassion, wisdom, equality, Buddhism has played a significant role in stabilizing society and fostering human morality. The research problem of this paper is based on how Buddhist compassion can be utilized with respect to conflict resolution in modern life. The aim of this article is to demonstrate how Buddhist teachings offer a foundation for understanding conflict, its causes, and solutions through compassion. Compassion (*karuṇā*) shows how one can address problems threatening human peace and happiness through loving actions. By approaching the issues to analyze and make the benefits of compassion in today's era, this article to shed some light on the practical applicability of Buddhist teachings to reduce social problems and contribute to creating global well-being.

Methodology

The methodology in the present study will be qualitative research method wherein the data collection will be based on documents using primary and secondary sources. The main focus of this study is related to some practices in Buddhism, therefore, the majority of the texts we rely on when writing about this topic are the English translations of the Pali Sutta Piṭaka. The scope includes Buddhist texts, books and other articles that discuss the topic. Through careful analysis of the facts and information provided, the study will focus on how Buddhist compassion (*karuṇā*) can be used for conflict resolution.

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Results and Discussion

In the context of increasing conflict and violence at an alarming rate such as shootings, suicide bombings, terrorism, murder, etc. at various levels. Conflict not only harms others and disturbs communities, but it also affects the person who commits it, creating insecurity and distancing them from moral values. Conflict, although manifest through words or actions but it is a psychological phenomenon based on problematic mental states. Therefore, reducing conflict requires more than changing external behavior; it requires emotional and mental training to develop well-being and resist motives leading to wrongdoing.

Conflict can be understood as competitive behavior between individuals or groups. It can occur on multiple levels - within individuals, between individuals, groups, organizations, or even nations - and arise from differences in opinions, needs, values, goals, or interests. Disputes and conflicts tend to have destructive consequences, exacerbating social problems, including mental disorders. The Madhupiṇḍika sutta (MN 18) identifies seven kinds of psychological tendencies cause to conflicts. The Mahādukkhakkhandha sutta (MN 13) suggests that sensual pleasures are a key cause of conflict. According to Vatthūpama sutta (MN 7), conflict begins in the mind of each individual due to unwholesome thoughts. In Kosambi sutta (SN 12.68), the Buddha taught six warm-hearted qualities make for fondness and respect, conducing to inclusion, harmony, and unity, without quarreling.

Buddhism advocates the cultivation of wholesome emotions and the elimination of unwholesome emotions. This is also based on the Buddha's teaching that the cultivation of the four sublime states (brahmavihāra) are loving-kindness (mettā), compassion (karuṇā), compassionate joy (muditā) and equanimity (upekkhā). In the words of Ven. Nyanaponika: "They are the great removers of tension, the great peace-makers in social conflict, the great healers of wounds suffered in the struggle of existence: levelers of social barriers, builders of harmonious communities, awakeners of slumbering magnanimity long forgotten, revivers of joy and hope" (Nyanaponika Thera 1960).

Compassion (karuṇā) is the ability to alleviate and transform suffering. Developing compassion requires practicing deep listening and looking deeply. When we know someone else is suffering, we listen to understand that person's pain. Deep sympathy with that person will bring relief from suffering. In Maharahulovada sutta (MN 62), the Buddha taught: "Rāhula, develop meditation on compassion; for when you develop meditation on compassion, any cruelty will be abandoned." In Aghatavinaya sutta taught: "When one gives birth to hatred for an individual, one should develop compassion for that individual. Thus, the hatred towards that person should be subdued"

The first step in cultivating compassion is to develop empathy for others. Fundamentally, we are all human. We all share common needs, such as food, water, air, sleep, shelter. Everyone craves care, recognition, love, and most of all, happiness. Once we empathize with others and understand their suffering, we can wish for their freedom from suffering. Bhikkhu Bodhi states: Karuṇā, or compassion, has the characteristic of promoting the removal of suffering in others. Its function is not being able to bear others' suffering. It is manifested as non-cruelty. Its proximate cause is seeing helplessness in those overwhelmed by suffering. It succeeds when it causes cruelty to subside, and it fails when it produces sorrow (Bodhi, Bhikkhu 2012).

Practicing compassion means sincerely wanting to bring joy and alleviate the suffering of others, without seeking profit or imposing conditions. To foster compassion, we can begin by extending our love to those closest to us - our loved ones, benefactors, close friends, then those who treat us badly. By reflecting on their virtues and kindness, it becomes easier to develop sympathy and love. With greater self-knowledge, satisfying relations with others become possible. Thus instead of developing relations based on greed, domination, dependence, and power, there are productive relationships of care, friendship, trust, and compassion (Padmasiri de Silva 2005).

Conclusion

Buddhism has taught people to avoid evil, cultivate goodness, and purity of mind. The teachings of love, kindness, tolerance, the conduct of non-violence, and especially the Buddhist theory that all things are relative can be a source of that inner peace (Bhikkhu Ñānamoli 1975). Practicing compassion (karuṇā) is one of the measures that contribute positively to preventing the arising of hatred and has the function of dissolving conflict. The Buddha's emphasis on the development of moral and spiritual progress for a happy, peaceful, and content society emphasized in the doctrine of Buddha comprehensively integrated towards sustainable development.

Keywords: Buddhist Teachings, Compassion, Conflict Resolution, Love, Well-being

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