Buddhist Values towards Conflict and Peace

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Introduction

There is conflict and violence in the present world. Immediate examples that come to mind are the current situations in Iraq, Palestine and the south of Thailand. What we wish to see is solutions to these those problems by peaceful methods, for instance negotiation and mediation but, even though some groups might sometimes attempt to use such methods, in the end, conflict and violence still remain a constant. It is as though neither conflict nor violence will ever die out in human beings or societies.

It might be the case that human beings interpret or define peace in different ways. As a result, they also have different thought, and actions. This leads us to seek tools for managing conflict and violence in different ways. From this, I would like to consider the meaning of conflict and peace - as it is defined by scholars, especially from the Buddhist perspective.

Lest this introduction sound unduly negative, let me hasten to add that, as we are all aware, Buddhism is not some monolithic structure, and there are also certain underlying features of Buddhist teachings that may be conducive to the furtherance of peace. What we will do below is discuss the value of conflict, how peace is essential for civilization, and discuss how peace can be achieved. As Buddhist scholars, we advocate the perspectives learned from our great enduring tradition.

Meaning and Value of Conflict - What is Conflict?

We will begin by defining the word 'conflict', as it is a key-term in our discussion. 'Conflict' comes from the Latin word: 'confligere' which connotes fighting, warfare, incompatibility, opposition and contradiction. Conflict is used for both people and groups who have beliefs, attitudes, needs and benefits that are absolutely different, so that they debate, dispute, and even kill each other as a result.[1]
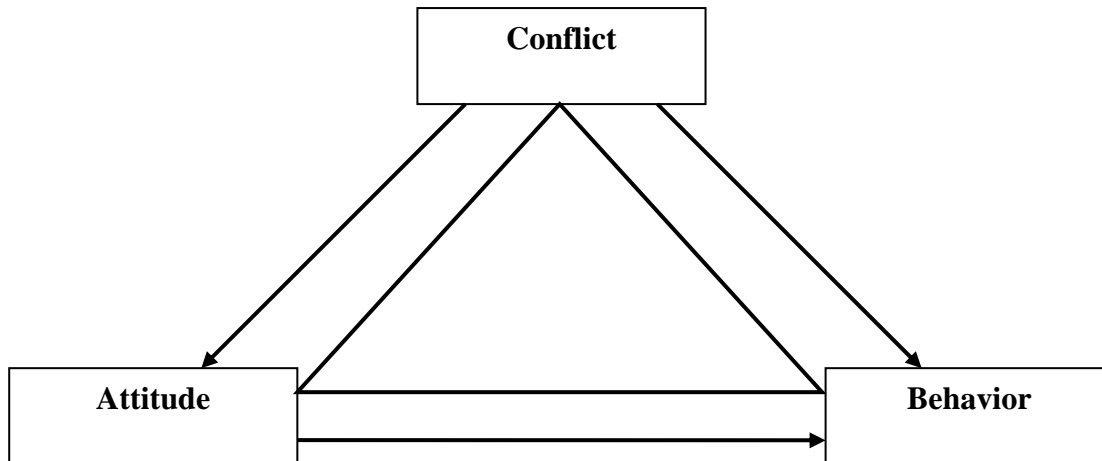
According to the Thai Royal Academy Dictionary, conflict means 'resistance', which is to say, disobedience, violation and persistence, and also 'objection', that is, dispute and opposition.

Moreover, Johan Galtung, the Norwegian peace-keeper, said that conflict is related to mankind's behavior. Conflict arises because people are concerned or understand that there are some groups who are working against their advantage. Thus conflict, on his definition, goes together with attitude and behavior. He suggested that they exist in a relationship of cause and effect, as illustrated in the diagram below[2], showing the relationships between:

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[1] Reymond W. Mack and John Pease, **Sociology and Social Life**, (New York: D Van Nostrand Company, 1973), p. 68.
[2] Phuthisarn Chumpon, "Peace under condition of conflict in social and politic", in Human and Peace, (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn, 2001), p. 47.

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In Buddhist doctrine, the terms used for conflict are: 'dispute', 'debate', or 'quarrel'.[3] People or groups might conflict about views, values, data, interests and structures. When they cannot solve these problems or find the best solutions, conflict arises. In other words, conflict usually arises in the first place from trying to defend one's own interests against other people in areas such as views on material resources and views on material resources. In cases where some people or groups cannot agree, they will dispute, attack, fight and hurt each other.

To sum up, one might define conflict as follows: (1) in its positive sense, conflict is something useful that leads to creative thinking and the more successful development of organizations and society in general. (2) In its negative sense, conflict is something wrong that organizations and society cannot manage, and so violence or quarrels in different forms and levels result.

Meaning and Value of Conflict - Value and Significance of Conflict:

Buddhism would argue that evil sometimes occurs from conflict in a logical sense of curiosity. On the other hand, in many situations, conflict also leads to many benefits for human beings and societies.

(1) **Conflict leads to develop oneself:** There are many reasons why Siddhattha became a renunciate until he achieved enlightenment. In my opinion, conflict inside his mind was one important reason for his making this decision.

According to the Tipitaka, before The Buddha became a monk, he had to confront important questions, such as why human beings have to be born, grow old, suffer pain and die, in spite of the fact that his father, Suddhodana, tried to prevent him from asking such questions from his earliest childhood. However, the most important question, which was a turning point in his life, was that of 'true happiness'. Although he tried to answer this question again and again, he did not solve the problem until he met a priest (samana). As a result of this meeting, he chose to become a monk, not long afterwards, and he discovered that there can be harmony in a state of conflict: Nirvana. This case is the same as that of Yasa, who left home and went into the forest, saying that there is trouble here, and there is objection here. Unfortunately, when he met The Buddha, he had conflict in his inner mind.

(2) **Conflict leads to socio-political development:** In my opinion, conflict is fundamental to society and politics, because in the past conflicts that arose in societies

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[3] Khu.ma. (Pali) 29/97/209

usually led to the establishment of states. According to Aggañña Sutta, establishing a system of monarchy is related to conflict, because most people have physical needs, such as land for living and agriculture[4].

In this case, they consulted together and concluded that 'we should share rice and separate land for living'. However, some of them were unable to comply with the first agreement, and also stole their neighbors' rice: those who had desires wanted more material things than they needed and tried to keep their own part and also steal other parts which nobody offered them.[5]

Not so long afterwards, they quarreled again and again, because some of them could not maintain the ground rules about sharing. Other groups said that you make mistakes because of trying to keep your own part and take other parts, which was not permitted in other times, so you should not act like this'.

Furthermore, conflict was widespread, and led to violence: people fought and destroyed each other. So, one of them suggested, 'Evil occurs in our group: stealing, censuring, telling lies and destroying with weapons. So, we should appoint somebody who can negotiate, give advice and punish those who transgress with regard to our rules.

As a result, they chose somebody in their group and appointed him as their leader, later known as king, in order to share agricultural land equally. Therefore, the king in this context means 'agriculturist' whose job is to share rice and land for parties smoothly.

(3) **Conflict led to the establishment of the Vinaya:** The Vinaya is a set of fundamental rules comprised for Buddhist monks to follow, in order to eliminate passion from their minds. However, establishing the Vinaya did not arise from The Buddha's will, but it is based on monks' mistakes. The Buddha said, 'I did not establish the Vinaya until after monks had made mistakes in Sangha and society'.[6]

The Buddha realized that Mahavira did not establish rules for his followers as a result, after his death, they did not know and understand what the rules were, and had different views and practices. Later, disciples following his rules conflicted, quarreled and separated from their group. It was with partial reference to this that the Buddha established the rules for Buddhist monks.

There are other such examples of this, including Daniya taking public wood to build his kuti, a personal hut. As a result, King Bimbisara and the villagers blamed him. From this case, The Buddha established this Vinaya: 'the monk who takes public wood to build a Kuti must be making *abatti* (mistake), and *parachika* (lose his monkhood)'.[7] In another case, 'the monk who tries to destroy Sangha (group of monks) must *Apatti Sanghatises*'.[8]

From the above discussion, we can see that a similar goal in providing Vinaya and law is to manage conflict in societies; the former resolves conflict in groups of Sangha, whereas the latter resolves problems in groups of lay people. Furthermore, regarding the law, in many cases, this can lead to conflict as well.

Regarding the above saying, in the case of the Buddha, his established rules are very flexible and also not static. In considering this issue, it is very important to understand that establishing rules is not just a question of covering the mistakes that some monk has made. The Buddha will establish new rules. This is the meaning of '*Anubaññatti*'.

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[4] Ti.Pa. (Thai) 11/129/96.
[5] Ti.Pa. (Thai) 11/129/94.
[6] Vi.Ma. (Pali) 1/21/13.
[7] Vi.Ma. (Pali) 1/87/76.
[8] Vi.Ma. (Pali). 1/409/309.

(4) **Conflict led to the first revision:** In my opinion, conflict led to the first revision of The Buddhist scripture, and had an influence on the revision. In considering this issue, it is very important to answer the following questions:

Why did monks have to have a meeting in order to set down the Buddha's teaching, three months after he had passed away?

When Kassapa heard the words of Supatta, who criticized The Buddha, saying to the monks, 'you should not cry; it is a very good thing that The Buddha has passed away, because nobody should assert that one thing is wrong and another is right, or that one thing should be done and another should not be done'[9], he was very concerned that the Vinaya should be revised to prevent unrighteousness from spreading and righteousness from decreasing. He said that the *Avinaya* would spread and the *Vinaya* would decrease; that *Adhammavāti* would gain power and *Dhammavāti* would lose power; *Avinayavāti* would have power and *Vinayavāti* would lose power'[10]

In order to be logical, Rev. Mahakassapa referred to Supatta's words again. Sangha was the first to begin revising The Buddha's discipline codes at the cave of *Sattabanbot*, beside *Vebarabanbot* Mountain near *Rachachur*.[11]

This is the most likely explanation for why the first revision was made three months after the Buddha passed away. Therefore, in this case, it is possible to argue that conflict was necessary and significant for the first revision. It would not have been possible for Rev. Mahakassapa to start the revision if he had not looked into the causes of the conflict that had arisen in the group of Sangha.

(5) **Conflict leads to economic development:** According *Kuthatanta Sutra*[12], King *Mahavichitarach* had a great many properties, and wanted to retain then for as long as he lived. So, he wished to offer a sacrifice in order to give satisfaction to the group of angels, who, according to his ideas, were persons who could give everything to him.

In this case, the king's chaplain, who was a Brahmin, stated that the heart of the king stands for his people, even if the king cannot understand their needs, and that therefore it is possible that some of them will protest against him, and destroy his properties.

However, the king's advisers said, 'our country has enemies who persecute us and thieve from our homes, villages, and cities; if you, as the king, perform an act of worship, this is the right thing to do'. Moreover, the king's advisers argued convincingly that suppressing enemies such as thieves by killing, confinement, fines, banishment or deportation will not completely eliminate theft, because the thieves who are not caught will continue to steal. As an alternative, the king's advisers suggested a process of administrative science and economic development:

- The state should develop the economy for the poorer classes by providing plants and foods to people who were diligent, so that they could practice agriculture and raise animals, subsidizing them until they could help themselves.
- The state should develop the economy for the middle and upper classes by providing material and financial support, in order to permit them to buy products and goods from the agriculturists. This is an excellent way of rotating goods and services.
- The leader of the state should motivate administrators by offering food and raising salaries when they attempt to work very hard in order to serve people and develop the country continuously.

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[9] Vi.Ju. (Pali) 7/437/376.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Vi.Ju. (Thai) 7/438/377.
[12] Ti.Si. (Pali) 9/323-358/127-150.

More we can see the importance of proceeding with a dual policy to develop the country. The king's advisers concluded, 'Whenever citizens are diligent, concentrate on their work, do not confine or take advantage of other people, the people in their country will be able to live peacefully, and people will be happy and families will enjoy happiness'.

Is Conflict Natural and Necessary for Human Beings and Societies?

The 'Three Common Characteristics' are principles which can completely explain the ultimate state of conflict: impermanence, suffering and selfishness. Everything in the world is characterized by these, especially conflict.

Although some political conflict theorists claim: that 'conflict leads to permanence', according to the three principle characteristics, permanence also leads to conflict. The thoughts and actions of human beings and societies change continuously, and cannot endure and be sustained. As a result, they are uncontrollable even if we wish to control them. So, as soon as expectations about benefit and position are not met, conflict arises.

In fact, when one understands the rules of the characteristics, it is very easy to explain whether or not **'conflict is necessary and natural for human beings and societies'**. Before we answer this question, we should first define 'human beings' in this context; they are people whether unenlightened or Arhat.

However, when we analyze human beings, using the concept of the characteristics, whenever they are consumed by passions, which include desire, anger and delusion – all of their actions, including thinking, speaking and acting will relate to merit (kusala) or evil (akusala) or both. In this case, conflict is a normal thing that will arise among unenlightened human beings. According to the Tipitaka, as referred to above, the conflicts that arose between Vinayadhara Bhikkus and Dhramadhara Bhikkus in Kosumbi, or relatives of the Buddha (the Sakya and Koliyas) about water from the Rohini River are covered by this interpretation.

All these examples suggest that it is very difficult for a layman belonging cultural to avoid conflict, because people generally, have to make contact with others, in connection with work, politics, economics, family and son. So conflict occurs, because human beings and societies have to live together in the world and satisfy their physical and mental needs, and work together, in order to meet their needs and wants.

Therefore, according to Buddhist doctrine, conflict is a natural aspect of human life, in connection with neither completely good nor completely bad. At the same time, we have to ask ourselves how to live with conflict in the best possible way. In addition, we should take time to consider the reasons why human beings and societies find themselves in conflict.

What is peace?

In order to answer this question, which refers to the key term in this discussion, I will begin by defining the expression 'peace' itself.

According to the Webster Dictionary, peace means "freedom from war", which is "to stay without war."[13] Moreover, Alvin Toffler[14] and Disaku Ikeda[15], who were experts in the way of 'non-violence', point out that "arising from peace is absence of

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[13] '**Webster' New College Dictionary Boston**, (New York: Houghton muffin company, 1995), p. 808.

[14] Alwin Tofler, **War and Peace in 21 century**, (Bangkok: Nanmee book, 2,000), p. 252-256.

[15] Santi Isarovuthakul translated, **True peace volume 2, Speech of Disaku ikeda, (Bangkok: Songsiam, 1991) p.267.**

war". However, Johan Kaltung, suggests that 'peace does not only mean the 'absence of war', but is a state of 'non-violence'[16].

These statements come very close to our concept of the definition of peace. That is "without war or violence, peace will occur". In other words, following this idea, if we depart from war, we become absolutely peaceful.

From a Buddhist perspective, the word 'peace' contains two levels of meanings. Firstly, as an ultimate truth, it means 'Nirvana': the state of mind that does not have passions, such as desire, ignorance and delusion. In other words, whenever our mind is not under the control of passions, it is calm and peaceful. So, this may be termed 'true peace'.

Secondly, in general terms, 'peace' means that although human beings and societies might have conflict with each other, for instance conflict of data, interests, structures and values, they still attempt to choose the best option by negotiation or dialogue without violent action.

Therefore, 'peace' in term of Buddhism has means much more than just when human beings and societies have problems with each other, they do not solve problems by using violence, such as war, beating, killing and so on; it also mean that but they have loving-kindness and compassion towards other people in the world.

Thus, one might define peace as follows: there is a slight difference of perspective thing between the western scholars and Buddhism. The former attempts to focus on external peace; whereas the latter is aware of both external and internal peace.

Why is peace absolutely essential to human beings and societies?

There is no less suffering in the world today than there was in the past, and there are no fewer problems. Indeed, it could be said that there are now more problems and greater unhappiness than ever before. This suggests that the solution to our problems, and to those of society as a whole, does not lie in knowledge or control of the external world.

Furthermore, in the present world, whenever human beings and societies conflict with each other they resort to violence; instead, they should resolve the problem by using reconciliation rather than violence as a tool in order to manage conflict; 'peace' is the best alternative way. I therefore propose to show why peace is so essential to human beings and societies and how it can be used to manage conflict?

Peace brings loving-kindness to human beings and societies

From a Buddhist perspective, whenever our minds have peace, particularly inner peace, it is very easy to build loving-kindness and give it to other people who need help. Loving-kindness means we understand the feelings and needs of other people. We are encouraged to take positive action when we are presented with an appropriate opportunity to help those who are in need.

Human beings are not independent of each other. That is why human being must love each other. So loving-kindness or Metta **is** like bridge that builds harmony between human beings and societies.

Clearly, because of just peace, we are able to have loving kindness and be happy as well as helping other people unconditionally.

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[16] Johan Gultung, "Violence Peace and Peace Research", in **Journal of Peace Research . Vol.6 VI**, 1969, p. 171.

Peace brings happiness to human beings and societies

My question in this case is: why do human beings have so many possessions in their lives, such as money, cars, and houses, but are still unhappy with all this?

The reason is that what they receive every day is not true happiness but false happiness. In fact, true happiness does not arise if our minds do not have peace. Not only can peace can build true happiness but it also brings it to other people who follow us or live beside us.

Moreover, happiness and suffering are states of mind, and so their main causes cannot be found outside the mind. The real source of happiness is inner peace. If our mind is peaceful, we will be happy all the time, regardless of external conditions, but if it is disturbed or troubled in any way, we will never be happy, no matter how good our external conditions may be. External conditions can only make us happy if our mind is at peace.

We can understand this through our own experience. For instance, even if we are in the most beautiful surroundings and have everything we need, the moment we get angry any happiness we may have disappears. This is because anger has destroyed our inner peace.

Therefore, peace is important for building happiness within human beings and societies. Without peace, our world will be permeated by both conflict and violence, until no one helps, understands or loves anyone else.

Peace brings solidarity and harmony to human beings and societies

Solidarity in this sense is like the 'social energy' that arises from cooperation between human beings and societies to help each other. It means the way in which we are able to find shared values and agreement within each group. In order to establish solidarity and harmony in societies, we first have to build peace in our minds, because it leads us to positive behaviors, such as speaking, listening, walking and living.

Therefore, peace is very important for building solidarity and harmony. If we do not have it, it is impossible for the world to have happiness and cooperation in many spheres, such as prevention of terrorism and action against global warming.

To sum up, the reasons why human beings and societies should have peace or why peace is so important to them, is that the world cannot survive without it. Peace is like a bridge that joins human beings and societies. Without this bridge, it is impossible for people to talk and share happiness and suffering with each other.

Why do mankind and society not have peace?

There are many reasons why human beings and societies do not have peace in the present world. First of all, we will consider this term as it is understood in Buddhism.

We may infer that, from a Buddhist perspective, the causes of these are multiple. They include desire, arrogance, and delusion.

Desire refers to acquisitiveness and aspirations. Acquisitiveness includes the need to 'possess' material goods and also people, whereas aspirations concern the wish for status, power and position. Furthermore, the world's natural resources would be sufficient for all the world's people, but a greedy person always wants more, because materialist and capitalist societies do not have unlimited raw materials. Such societies, therefore, will go to great lengths to obtain all the available resources, even though this means depriving other groups. Failure to negotiate results in conflict.

We can illustrate this with reference to the following story from Buddhist scripture: the brahmin Aramadanda asked Mahakaccayana, 'What is the cause of conflict between king and king, Bhramana and Bhramana or wealthy person and wealthy

person?'. The latter replied that whenever human beings grasp tightly, adhere , or are sexually aroused or held by desire[17], they come into conflict. Also, parents and children, siblings and other relatives come into conflict, quarrel and attack each other because of desire[18].

According to Tipitaka, Koliya and Sakaya, who are relatives of the Buddha, fought because they wanted water for agriculture, and the kings Pasenadi of Kosala and Ajatasattu fought because they wanted to control part of the land which is on the border between their countries. When we analyze these two examples, we can see that conflict arose between these people because they were controlled by desire.

However, in my view, desire in this case covers the need for power, too. Power in itself is neither good nor bad, but in this case, 'power' refers to politics, money and social control. These kinds of power tend to corrupt the mind; The love of power leads to the desire for even more power and control. When everybody wants power, conflict arises, because nobody wants to be subject to the power or authority of anybody else.

Arrogance refers to human beings' preference for showing themselves that they are better than other people in term of status, personality, property, education, work or knowledge[19]. As a result, somebody who has been insulted sometimes disputes, quarrels and even kills. In this case, the Buddha said that anyone who really likes to say and think that he is better than other people is highly likely to come into conflict within his society[20].

A good example of this is the case of the kings of Sakaya who believed that they were racially superior to all the other kings of Jambudipa. They therefore refused to associate with or marry into other groups. When the king Pasendi of Kosala, who came from the ordinary people, wanted to marry a relative of Sakaya, they brought him a slave. Not long afterwards, he had a son, Vithuthapha. The kings of Sakaya did not want to welcome him, when he went to visit them in the Kipilapat. When Vidudabha learnt that he was not their grandson, but the son of a slave, he and his soldiers went to kill all the kings of Sakaya.

For this reason, the Buddha said that Bhikkhus should not claim that they are better people because they observe many precepts or have great merit[21].

When people are arrogant, they do not like to listen to or understand each other. In general, active listening is extremely important, because it involves opening one's mind in order to understand another person's feelings and needs. However, selfishness obstructs creative thinking, causing an inability to accept a diversity of views.

Delusion is a form of ignorance, which can be compared to a shadow over the mind that prevents us from seeing things as they really are. Thus, good and evil can become confused; advantages can be perceived as disadvantages (and vice versa)[22].

The Buddha said, 'Whoever holds extreme opinions quarrels very easily[23] and has difficulty avoiding disputes[24]'. On another occasion, the Mahakaccayana asked the Buddha what the cause of conflict between monks was. The Buddha replied that

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[17] Ang.Tuka. (Thai) 20/38/83.
[18] Khu.chu. (Thai) 30/136/443-444.
[19] Khu.chu. (Thai) 30/103/351-353. compare in khu.ma. (Thai) 29/178/508-501.
[20] Khu.ma. (Thai) 22/77/231.
[21]Khu.ma. (Thai) 29/153/420.
[22] Khu.ma. (Thai) 29/115/341.
[23] Khu.ma. 29/82/243.
[24] Khu.su. (Thai) 25/803-807/694.

whenever monks refuse to accept different views from their own, cling to material things or are sexually aroused or controlled by desire, conflict very easily arises[25].

According to the Tipitaka, conflict arose between Vinayadhara Bhikkus and Dhammadhara Bhikkus in Kosambi, even though they had been good friends before, because they had different views on the interpretation of the Vinaya.

Summarizing the above, most conflict arises from desire, arrogance and delusion, all of which the Buddha counseled against, because they prevent clear thinking and impede effective social and professional relationships. Whenever a human being can be brought to understand this, inner peace becomes possible, and this is the basis for true happiness in human society.

Peace building through Justice, Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Forgiveness is a cognitive process that consists of letting go of feelings of revenge and desire to retaliate. In Buddhism, it is called "Abhayadana". From studying the Tipitaka and the Commentaries, Abhayadana is the great Dana which has the meaning of "giving no danger". Fundamentally, the Abhayadana in Buddhism is primarily developed by Right Views and Right Thought which are the result of loving-kindness (Metta), patience (Khanti) and the Five Precepts (Panca-sila). The framework guidelines of practicing Abhayadana are Brahmavihara, Saraniya Dhamma and Catu Sangahavatthu Dhamma , which can be conducted in 3 ways through body, speech and mind. The Abhayadana through mind primarily plays a very important role in patience, loving-kindness and dissolution of revenge. Consequently, the Abhayadana through speech is Right Speech of saying an excuse, meanwhile the Abhayadana through body shows respect to human beings. Forgiveness or Abhayadana is essential mental medicine for treating emotional illness by reducing or abandoning the negative reactions to an offense but increasing or fostering positive reactions such as taking the forms of compassion and generosity toward an offender.

Choosing between trapping in a prison of hate and forgiving: the freedom from feelings of revenge, how should we handle such this situation? Some people might be reluctant to express forgiveness because they believe that pardoning a debt violates standards of justice. However, according to Buddhist perspective, it might be viewed that the principle of justice affirms our common humanity supported by *the law of karma*. The Buddhist believes that no one is above the law of karma like the rule of law. Karma means action, deed. The law of karma is the law of action which works scientifically just like other natural laws in having a cause and effect. The cause is the action or karma that you carry out whether good or bad, and the effect is that you will reap the good and bad results according to what you have put in. In short, human beings have to be responsibility for the consequence of the actions. Similarly, the offender has to be responsible for the consequence of such bad actions. Accordingly, it is assumed that Buddhist states should agree with the justice principle.

Reconciliation is a behavior process in which we take actions to restore a relationship or create a new one following forgiveness. As mentioned above, the Abhayadana in Buddhism is primarily developed by Right Views and Right Thought and Abhayadana through mind primarily plays a very important role in patience, loving-kindness and dissolution of revenge. By all the processes, the identity attachment may be transformed into the dissolution of identity. Accordingly, Abhayadana may bring about
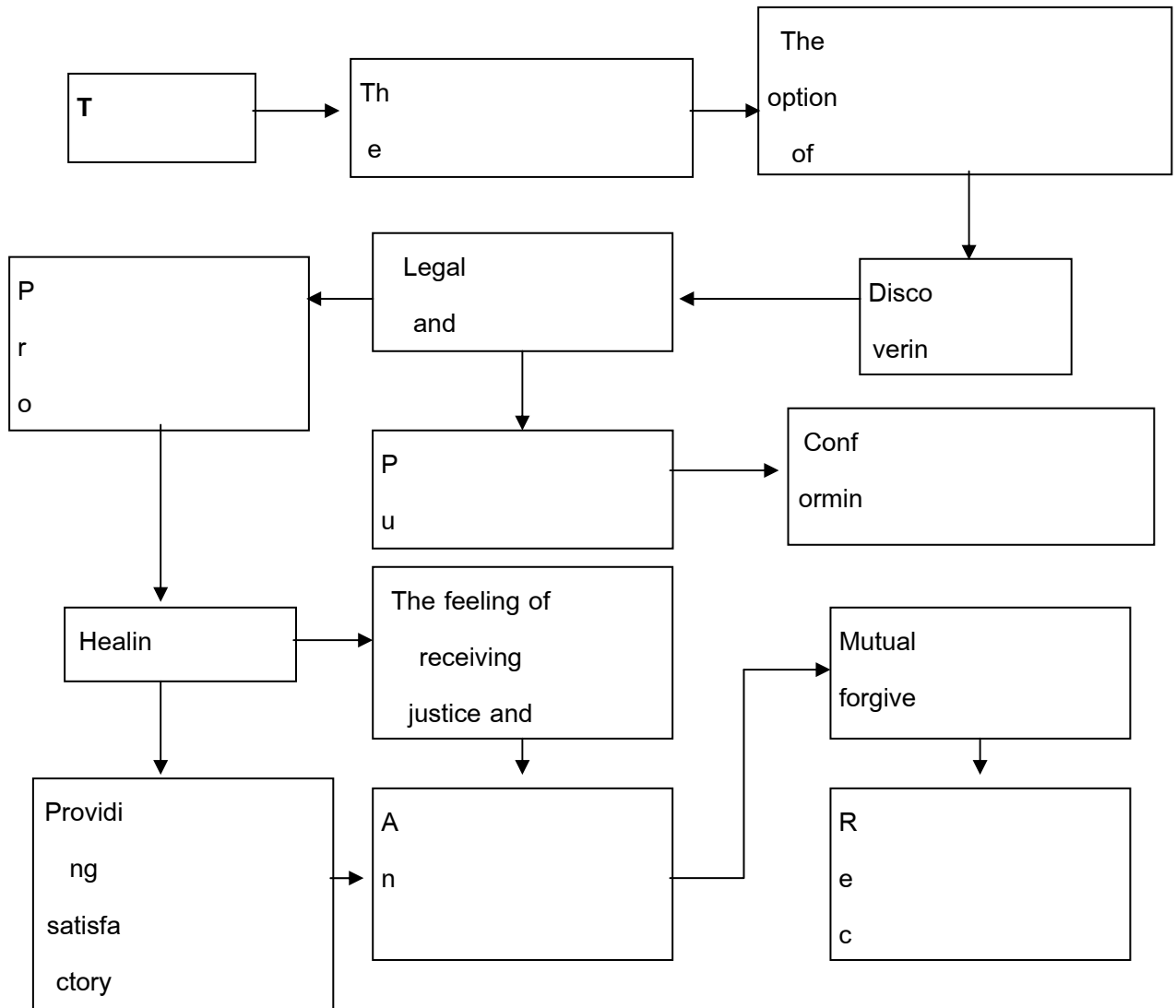
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[25] Ang.thuka.a. (Thai) 2/38/48.

reconciliation behavior to build the sustainable relationship which is the crucial target of conflict management in Buddhism.

8. The Process of peace-building

The process of building peace by way of truth, justice, forgiveness and reconciliation, as illustrated in the following chart:

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The first question that should be asked by people who have been involved in conflict, either directly or indirectly—and in some cases may have experienced violence to the extent of loss of life or material possessions—is: "What is the truth of this situation," followed by the question: "How can we discover or arrive at this truth?" (=

fact finding). This is because people have different perspectives and attitudes towards the truth resulting from personal experience. It is important that people ask the question: "What is the objective truth, rather than the truth that I or my faction wants to believe in?" For this reason, one may establish a committee that every party agrees to, in order to arrive at this objective truth. A peaceful alternative is to establish a 'truth commission'— to find a solution by allowing each party to share their grievances.

When we are able to arrive at and agree upon an objective truth, the next step in the process is to apply legal criteria and/or socially determined principles to deal with and settle the conflict. If one of the parties has truly transgressed a law and committed a crime then it may be seen as appropriate to settle the matter according to the law. Sometimes social principles or social measures can have a positive influence on the conflict,

In some cases, when social measures have been effectively applied, those parties who are considered innocent of any wrongdoing should help to establish justice for the other parties by applying fair legal standards. One important method that can help lead people who have been harmed by a conflict to a sense of acceptance and resolution is to promote healing. This can be done by healing hurt feelings, by addressing the feeling of being a victim to others, and by providing benefits and necessary recompense to those who have been harmed. The inability to provide prompt and appropriate healing may create serious adverse effects.

An appreciation of our responsibilities by offering healing (both emotional support and material recompense) and by promoting harmony will help to build mutual trust and strengthen relationships, both in the short term and the long term. The result of such responsible action is mutual forgiveness (abhaya-dāna), by all those individuals seeking a satisfactory agreement. Forgiveness in this context includes pardoning those people who have done us wrong and offering an environment in which people are not afraid to think, speak or act. Finally, the reconciliation that comes from each party aiming to promote healing and to build positive relationships will allow all people to live happily in their families, communities, and wider societies.

9. **How can we find true peace?**

What I wish to do now in this paper is to open up this discussion with an important question for the present world: How can we find "true peace"? Turning now to a consideration of the meaning of "true peace" discussed above, I see evidence that the Buddha or his followers, at least down to the present time, have been greatly concerned with the question of "how we can find true peace".

Among world religious, Buddhism is one that is based on "peace"[26]. There is more than one dimension to how we can find true peace. One of these is to practice meditation. In fact, there are two significant reasons why meditation is a very important thing for seeking "true peace".

Firstly, when our mind focuses or concentrates on breathing in and out all the time, we will be in the present moment which means we will be aware and understand everything as it is[27].

Secondly, our mind is aware of one thing at one time continuously. After a short time, we will seek the true happiness that is hidden in our mind. Generally, whenever our mind is calm and peaceful, we will find true happiness. In other words, true peace and

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[26] United Nation announce Buddhism as "religion of peace" in 1998.
[27] Thich Nhat Hanh, **Waking: the way of mindfulness**, (Bangkok: Rurnkeaw, 2543), p.4.

happiness are exactly the same. We could also use the term 'Nirvana'[28]. 'Nirvana' is true peace and happiness.

From this, we can infer that "true peace will arise from practicing meditation. In other words, meditation will make our mind calm and peaceful. So, we cannot seek true peace outside our mind, but we have to find it in our mind by practicing meditation.

Let me conclude by stressing some of the methods that we can use to find true peace. From a Buddhist perspective, the way that leads to "true peace" is practicing meditation.

In my opinion, it is not difficult to seek true peace, because it lives in our mind. We do not have to spend more time looking for it elsewhere. Therefore, in order to achieve it more effectively, we should start to practice meditation right now; otherwise, we might wait for it another hour, week, month, year or so on.

As we all know, we might die at any minute. We absolutely never know when we will pass away. Therefore, the most important thing we should do right now is to be aware every minute while we are breathing in and out. In fact, we might say that whenever we forget our breathing, unfortunately, we are living like somebody who is going to die any minute.

10. Conclusion

To sum up, from the Buddhist perspective, conflict is possibly, natural and conventional in the world, because the suffering of human beings and societies is common one. However, there is one unconditional thing which has no conflict, in Buddhism that is Nirvana: ultimate truth - absolute freedom from and transcendence beyond three common characteristics of things (impermanence, suffering, and not-self). Furthermore, from the above discussion, objectively speaking: conflict leads to development as well as disintegration of inner values of human beings; moreover, in a subjective sense, conflict led to the establishing of the Vinaya, the first sanctioned Buddhist council, and the development of the economy as well. So, conflict in Buddhism can be a good and a bad thing. Essentially: how should we view conflict? We would be able to live with each other happily and peacefully in this different and pluralistic society. We should not though, advocate for the destructive aspects of society – and we must collectively encourage activities that bring about peace and social cohesion.

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[28] Bhikkhu Nanaponika, **The heart of meditation**, (Bangkok: Siam, 2538), p.23.