

The World Buddhist Peace Conference

Congratulatory Message

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Present situation in the world is full of disturbances and people and animals live in fear: fear of losing what they want and fear of not having what they want. The world can only survive and this fear is removed from the mind only if peace is reinstalled. Here, I quote some definitions of peace given by some great personages.

Peace is a daily, a weekly, a monthly process, gradually changing opinions, slowly eroding old barriers, quietly building new structures (John F. Kennedy)

Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding.
(Albert Einstein)

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. (Martin Luther King, Jr.)

Hatred cannot be conquered by hatred; it can only be conquered by love.
(The Buddha)

From these quotations, I would like to define peace as a state free from mental defilements. The word "peaceful" can be used to modify places as well as the mind: a peaceful place or a peaceful mind. A peaceful place conditions a peaceful mind and vice versa. Nevertheless, a place is peaceful only if the minds of the inhabitants are peaceful. And peaceful mind creates peaceful atmosphere around it. They condition each other. However, the starting point is our mind since we cannot possibly demand the world to be peaceful unless we start with our peaceful mind.

The roots of all kinds of disturbances are unwholesome actions, either mental or physical, and the roots of these unwholesome actions are avijja (ignorance) and tanha (craving). Sometimes unwholesome actions are done

since they are not recognized as unwholesome, and sometimes they are done since they are very attractive to people. With the lead of avijja and tanha, people go round and round in the circle of dukkha. These roots can be cut off with wisdom. One needs to construct penetrative wisdom. Satipatthana practice that is the Four Foundation of Mindfulness is helpful to weaken the roots so that one can cut off them completely. Mindfulness helps wisdom develop and the later weakens and destroys ignorance and craving. Therefore peace, which is free from any physical and mental disturbances, can be brought about through wisdom: seeing things objectively, without putting any labels on them.

When a man puts a label on a certain thing, identifying it mine or his or hers, he develops self-center attitude. With this attitude, he acts in favor of himself, and consequently, at certain times, he loses good qualities of mind such as kindness and sympathy. Unkind treatments on other people and animals around him become great disturbances for peace in the society where he lives in. On the other hand, kindness spread from one's mind creates and promotes peace in the society. Therefore, here, we may note that a man of kindness and wisdom is a man who creates peace in the world.

The world can possibly have true peace only when the four Brahmavihara (the noble living) – metta (loving kindness), karuna (compassion), mudita (sympathetic joy), and upekkha (equanimity of the mind) are present in the mind. Without Brahmaviharas, one's mind is disturbed and this disturbance spreads around like a highly contagious disease. With these Brahmaviharas, one avoids harmful treatments on others while one becomes helpful to them. In fact, the practice of Brahmavihara is seeing others equal to oneself. It's the practice of treatment putting on others as one treats oneself. One may imagine how the world is peaceful if everyone in the world possesses this quality of the mind.

There are people whose mind cannot be disturbed. Peace is a necessary quality of their mind. They are called, in Buddhist terminology, Arahanta or Enlightened Ones. Their Enlightenment is the result of their experience of

Nibbana which is the Ultimate Peace. This experience of the Ultimate Peace conditions the mind of the Enlightened Ones peaceful, and consequently whoever encounters with them feels peace. However, if the mind of a person was disturbed by things and people around him, it would be difficult for him to walk on the path to the Ultimate Peace. Therefore, we must first create a peaceful world around us. In order to do so, we must begin with constructing peace in our mind. At the beginning, we cultivate peace in our mind although it may not be strong enough, but gradually we can develop it until it is strong enough to spread around and create a peaceful world. In this peaceful world, we live happily and peacefully, and we strive for the Ultimate Peace which nothing can disturb again. This is the goal the path of the Dhamma is leading and we need to walk on the path. The Buddha taught, "Dhammo sucinno sukhamavahati" – Well practised Dhamma brings about happiness.

I believe the World Buddhist Peace Conference will surely be helpful in the construction of peace in the world. We meet, discuss, share our knowledge, experiences and opinions, and we are to work together for the same goal – Peace!

Thank you.