

Inner peace: A Role in Indian Ethics with reference to Jainism and Buddhism

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Abstract

I, in this paper will like to take internal peace which has always remained the first and foremost aim of Indian Ethics. If we have a glance over the traditional systems of Indian philosophy, the yearning for peace is found running continuously as a central thread amongst the pearls of wisdom. Indian philosophy is a consistent urge for the achievement of internal harmony and Serenity. I will deal with Buddhism and Jainism, which is perhaps the greatest icons of philosophy and peace rather peace is the pivotal point around which his whole thought revolves. Buddha developed the way to peace through *Nirvana* and Jainism through non- violence paves the way to internal peace.

We find that there is a difference between internal and external peace. Indian philosophy is concerned with internal peace whereas Western philosophy is more concerned with external peace. By internal peace we mean, one who try to overcome temptations and desires and try to achieve inner calm. External peace on the other hand, tries to looks for peace amongst the community of people and fraternity of nations. In this context, I would like to mention notable western philosopher Immanuel Kant wrote a treatise on *Perpetual Peace* in 1795.

Today people are facing multidimensional crises. There is desperately need of peace which we lacks both internally and externally. It is in this context, it is the binding responsibility of philosophy to rebuild the world by offering internal peace and the devastated society by restoring and promoting external peace.

KEYWORDS: Nirvana, Moksa, Non-violence, internal and external peace, perpetual peace.

Introduction

The concept of inner peace in the philosophy of Buddhism and Jainism is the fore most important concept in Indian philosophy. The concept of peace is the most important concept not only of Indian philosophy but also of western philosophy but there approaches are different. Buddhism and Jainism are the schools of Indian philosophy which ultimate goal is the attainment of freedom or liberation from the suffering of the world.

Ethics is concerned with the supreme goal or ultimate end to which the entire life of individual is directed, the summum bonum. Almost all systems of Indian philosophy, except Carvaka consider Moska or liberation of individual as the summum bonum. Rationalism takes reason to be the supreme good. Hedonism and Carvaka regards happiness and self- realization as supreme good. When we talk about Indian ethics, the first and foremost aim is the attainment of peace. If we have a glance over the traditional

systems of Indian philosophy, the yearning for peace is found running continuously as a central thread amongst the pearls of wisdom. Indian philosophy is a consistent urge for the achievement of internal harmony and Serenity. Buddhism and Jainism, which is perhaps the greatest icons of philosophy and peace rather peace is the pivotal point around which his whole thought revolves. Buddha developed the way to peace through *Nirvana* and Jainism through non- violence paves the way to internal peace.

Buddhism has always been known as a religion of peace and non- violence. According to Buddhism, the ethical life means the practice of virtue. Buddha has discussed and explained how to lead an ethical life by laying down the eight fold path which consists of eight steps or rules which is known as *astangika- marga*.

Buddhism's core contribution to peace is to be found in the struggle against the deluded impulses that, rooted in the depths of the inner life of the individual, cause so much suffering and destruction in the whole of human society. It tries to found out the cause of suffering and how peace can be attained. Buddhist philosophy is based on the foundation on dependent origination, that is, *Pratityasamutpada* in Sanskrit and the law of Karma which is a special form of the law of causation as taken by Buddha.

The theory of dependent origination and the law of Karma explain the genuine condition of things that exist in the universe. In simple words, “the dependent origination claims that anything (including sentient and insentient beings) can only exist in relation to everything else; if the causes of its existence disappear, then it ceases to exist.”¹ Nothing can exist on its own and everything is dependent on other things. All elements, all entities, all phenomena are thus related directly and indirectly to one another in the universe. Any change in this huge interconnected compound of existence would definitely, eventually exerts influence on everything else. Derived from the principle of dependent origination is the Buddhist view of the cosmic world and the human being. The theory of dependent origination states that “nothing is unconditional; the existence of everything depends on some conditions”². Since everything depends on some condition, there must be something which being there our misery comes into existence. Hence there is a chain of cause and effect that leads to the root cause of suffering in the world. According to Buddhism, there is a twelve link cause that constitutes the wheel of existence: birth and rebirth and these suffering is due to the ignorance. This link is known by Buddhism as *dvadasa nidana* or *bhava cakra*. This theory realizes the interdependent nature of their existence and the interconnection among all things. Moreover Buddha attributes all our attachments, and suffering caused by human ignorance (*avijja*), that is, we cannot see the world as it is and see our self as such. We are ignorant to the cosmic reality that everything in the world is inter-related, interdependent and we think ourselves different and independent entity and hence, we develop our attachments to views and desires through the reinforcing notion of “me” and “mine” which ultimately leads to violence and conflicts and even wars. This ignorance is what Buddhism identifies as the very root cause of violence, conflict, and war, which prevents human beings to live a peaceful life.

At the same time Buddha shows the path through which one can get rid of these suffering and can attain *Nirvana*. According to Buddhism in order to find world peace, first a person must find peace within himself. Hence Buddhist first priority is the inner transformation within individuals on the path to peace in larger context. Almost all the schools of Indian philosophy, except Carvaka tried to attain inner peace. One must

prepare themselves for practicing peace, by remaining calm which is the most nonviolent way. Peace in society begins with peace within oneself. Without this “internal disarmament”, our negative emotions derived from the ignorance to the true operating principle behind all phenomena (including our own feelings and thoughts), the fear, anger and confusion in the state of mind, would rise as reactions to the adversary conditions, and would prevent us from acting nonviolently and living harmoniously with other people in the world.

According to Buddhism, the basic cause of the suffering of human existence is greed, hatred and ignorance. These are the uncontrolled desire for, and attachment to material comforts for wealth, power or fame. Desires of this kind grow and multiply without cease, and since their fulfillment cannot bring true and lasting happiness, a person in their grip is condemned to endless torment and frustration. Hatred is the violence that grows from an egocentric view of life. Ignorance is the lack of knowledge about the reality, or the true nature of life or cosmos. Ignorance generates discord and rebellion against the principles that govern the functioning of the cosmos. When the true nature of the cosmos is revealed and illuminated then enlightenment is achieved. Hence Buddhism considers ignorance the most fundamental cause of suffering. Buddhism aims at the removal of ignorance and when ignorance is removed then one can attain inner peace. In Indian philosophy, peace is equivalent to “shanti” which means the state of inner tranquility or enlightened which is referred in Buddhism as *Nirvana*. With respect to the state of inner peace, a Buddhist text describes this as follows: "Tranquility of mind comes from having successfully transcended greed, hatred and ignorance."³ In order to attain nirvana one must follow the eight fold path which helps the individual to control desires, attachment towards material things which leads to inner peace. Hence it is only through the individual human being who alone can strive towards the realization of the grand goals of world peace, that is, external peace. So it is through inner peace we can achieve external peace. As Buddhists, we strive to establish a condition of inner peace in daily life and, at the same time, to contribute to the realization of the peace of the world around us, by enabling each individual to develop his or her unique qualities to the very fullest.

The eight –fold way which prepare an individual for Moska are, namely; right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. The Buddhist approach to peace begins with the act of surmounting greed, hatred and ignorance. The state of having brought these under control, we can have inner peace or nirvana. Nirvana is a state of perfection, brilliance, enlightenment and freedom. Apart from the eight-fold path which explains the eight stages of the development of individual soul towards the universal soul. The Mahayana school of Buddhism, mentions ten stages or Bhumis, for the attainment of Nirvana. The first stage is the Pramuditabhumi, or the stage of joyfulness, which is generated because of the intellect rises above the common sense level. The second stage is the Vimala, in which the aspirant comes to recognize the transitoriness of all things and thereby become compassionate and pure-hearted. The third stage is Prabhakari, or the shining stage, in which the aspirant practices patience and forbearance and banishes anger, hatred and illusion and inculcates belief, benevolence, mercy and non-attachment. The fourth stage is Arcismatibhumi, in which the aspirant gives up egoism, engages himself in righteous

action and become virtuous. The fifth stage is Sudurjayabhumi, which is dominated by concentration and meditation. At the sixth stage the aspirant turns towards moksa, but is not completely detached. This stage is known as Abhumuktibhumi. The seventh stage is Durangamabhumi, in which the aspirant is devoted to the attainment of right knowledge to achieve his object of universal salvation. At the eighth stage, the aspirant is actively engaged in preaching dharma to society. It is called Tathata, in which he sees all things in their reality. The ninth stage is Sadhumatibhumi, in which the aspirant work for the well being of humanity without any selfish motive. The last stage is the Tathagata or the Buddha, the enlightened, in which the aspirant attain nirvana. Nirvana is the systematic development of the individual to a state of universality.

Jainism and Buddhism are almost contemporary as classical systems. The similarity between both of them is that, both emphasis on dharma (moral duty) and Moksa (liberation) and the way to attain Moksa is through non-violence (Ahimsa). Before discussing jaina account of non-violence, it would be incomplete if we do not mention the jain concept of peace. Peace to all living beings is the credo of Jainism. According to Jainism, “peace is a fundamental quality of the soul, essential for attaining *infinite, nanda*.”⁴ Eternal peace is the primary state as well as the ultimate goal of soul. Peace is an internal aspect of mind as well as external aspect of the individual, family, society, nation, the world and indeed the whole universe; The internal peace of mind and external peace in the world are two different things; in the absolute sense, they are independent of each other but in practice they are inter-related as well. One can attain internal peace even when the external conditions are adverse and persons may appear externally peaceful even though internal peace eludes them. The Jain concept of peace is different from most other philosophies. The basic Jain approach to Peace is the welfare (*mangal*) of all living beings, from smallest insects to the most evolved mammals. Peace (*Shanti*) is an eternal quality of the soul. One can attain eternal peace by conquering one self, making one free of all the vices (anger, jealousy, competition, attachment, hatred etc) which are then automatically eliminated. When one is peaceful with himself then the family becomes peaceful, then the society, then the nation, then the world and then the whole universe. Welfare of self depends on the welfare of others; hence the principle of nonviolence. Welfare of all living creatures constitutes the main thrust of Jain prayers.

According to Jainism, “non-violence is the highest virtue.”⁵ Jaina philosophy lays down five great vows or principles to be basic rules of the conduct for ascetics. They are as follows: 1) non-violence (Ahimsa), 2) truth (Satya), 3) non-stealing (Asteya), 4) celibacy (Brahmacarya), 5) non-possession (Aparigraha). Peace cannot be attained without the sacrifice or without following the five vows on the part of the self.

When one conquers one’s own self, one attains internal peace but for external peace conquering the world is not essential. The Buddhism and Jainism have the same approach to peace: one need not be a super power with powerful weapons at its disposal to rule the earth. The real super power status is attained, not at the point of gun, but when others willingly share and follow your thought and philosophy.

Non-violence is the prime requirement for peace. Non-violence means refraining from all injury and violence, whether such violence pertains to the subtlest invisible living beings or to animals or to human beings. Violence does not mean causing only

physical injury, but it also includes mental and verbal injury. Hence Jainism follows absolute non-violence, that is, not to cause any injury to any living being, physically, mentally and verbally. Non-violence requires three principles which are called the “three Guptis, that is, the Guptis of mental non-violence in mind, verbal non-violence in words and physical non-violence in deed”⁶. Non violence should be practiced to the extent that you do not hurt any creatures in thought, words and deed and you seek forgiveness in case someone is hurt, knowingly or unknowingly. Most people in the world do not like violence and in this respect they follow Jainism to some extent. Jainism does not permit any form of violence in thought, action or consent and even support of violence for any reason whatsoever even at the cost of the physical safety of oneself or in self-defence. Non violence must start at the lowest level of living species and should not be confined only to humans. We should remember that the foundation of all the great vows is the great vow of non-violence. All other moral rules are accepted only to maintain this great vow of non-violence.

Apart from the five great vows and the three Guptis, the ascetics must adopt the following five Samitis or co-rules in order to be absolute non-violent. They are as follows:

1. Irya samiti, or causation in avoiding injury to living beings while walking.
2. Bhasa Samiti, or control over speech to avoid verbal injury.
3. Esana Samiti, or careful checking of food to assure that whatever food or drink has been given to him was not specially prepared for him.
4. Adana Niksepana Samiti, or using necessary articles cautiously to avoid injury to subtle lives.
5. Parithapanika Samiti, or disbursing or throwing away unnecessary articles with care and caution.

Non –violence is really the source of Jaina ethics and the basis of non-violence is the feeling of oneness in all living beings. But to practice absolute non-violence is impossible. Gandhi also expressed a similar view. In his words, ‘absolute or complete non-violence means freedom from every ill will against all kinds of living beings and therefore it encompasses the wild and poisonous animals other than human beings as well.’⁷ Gandhi preached absolute ahimsa but his conception is entirely different from Jainism because fighting for rightful causes was allowed. He used non-violence to solve political and international problems and also to regulate individual as well as social conduct. It is that one must love one’s enemy and should do “good to those who do evil unto us.”⁸ He said that non-violence is the only weapon which can root out all evils from the society. He tried to transform society, but his main goal was to educate individual men in the spirit of non violence.

Hence we see that there are two type of peace, namely internal and external peace. Western thinkers are more concerned with the outer and external situation, whereas Eastern philosophers are more introverts and internal world is more significant for them. They wish to overcome the temptations and desires and thus wish to have inner calm. To have personal harmony and quiet is a cherished ideal for an Asian sage. He seeks peace in seclusion and solitude. The philosophies of this part of the world are subjective and

individual-oriented. West on the other hand is extrovert, objective and socially inclined. Western Thought looks for peace amongst the community of people and fraternity of nations. It is more interested in the external harmony, accord and synchronization amongst citizens, institutions and the countries. In this context I would like to mention Immanuel Kant wrote a treatise on *Perpetual Peace* in 1795. He proceeds to draw up the conditions of a formal Treaty of Peace on a philosophical basis with all the gravity of Preliminary, Definitive and Secret Articles. Its first part comprises "preliminary articles for perpetual peace among states"⁹ which would reduce the probability of warfare even among states that are not yet true republics. These preliminary articles preclude peace treaties with secret reservations, acquisition of states as if they were private property, standing armies, the incurrence of national debt for purposes of foreign adventures, interference with the constitution or politics of other states, and in general all acts of hostility that would "make mutual trust impossible." The definitive articles" for perpetual peace, however, require not just the avoidance of provocations but the permanent institution of a federation of republican governments, whose citizens always have the right to hospitality from foreign governments but not the right to colonize or dominate other states. Kant's insistence upon republican governments throughout the world may be an expression of his idealism, but his insistence upon a *federation* of such governments rather than a single world-government is a sign of his realism: he thinks a single world-government would just be too big to govern by republican means and would inevitably degenerate into a tyranny. He argues that we may think of differences of language and religion as providential provisions of nature to make a single-world government impossible, while the spread of trade and its need for respect for rights of property and exchange across national borders should inevitably encourage internationalism. But, Kant insists, even a "race of devils" could figure out the necessity of both the preliminary and definitive articles for world peace, and then feign compliance with them while secretly attempting to subvert them when they think that is in their own interest. Only moral politicians will decide *always* to observe these articles, not merely when seeming to do so is in their own short-term interest but when really doing so is in the long-term interest of everyone throughout the world.

The first section of the article contains the preliminary articles of a perpetual peace between states. They are as follows:

1. "No conclusion of Peace shall be held to be valid as such, when it has been made with the secret reservation of the material for a future War.'
2. 'No State having an existence by itself—whether it be small or large—shall be acquirable by another State through inheritance, exchange, purchase or donation.'
3. 'Standing Armies shall be entirely abolished in the course of time.'
4. 'No National Debts shall be contracted in connection with the external affairs of the State.'
5. 'No State shall intermeddle by force with the Constitution or Government of another State.'
6. 'No State at war with another shall adopt such modes of hostility as would necessarily render mutual confidence impossible in a future Peace; such as, the employment of Assassins (percussores) or Poisoners (venefici), the violation of a Capitulation, the

instigation of Treason and such like.’¹⁰

The Second Section contains three Definitive articles of a perpetual peace between states. They are as follows:

I : According to the First Definitive Article in the Conditions of Perpetual Peace. ‘The Civil Constitution in every State shall be Republican.’¹¹

II : Second Definitive Article in the conditions of a Perpetual Peace. ‘The Right of Nations shall be founded on a Federation of Free States.’¹²

III : Third Definitive Article in the conditions of a Perpetual Peace. ‘The Rights of men as Citizens of the world in a cosmo-political system, shall be restricted to conditions of universal Hospitality.’¹³

As stated at the outset, Kant sees the preservation and promotion of our own freedom as our most fundamental moral obligation. In the first instance, this is the freedom to set our own ends, or choose our own paths of action—the ability that in the *Metaphysics of Morals* Kant holds to be the very definition of humanity. The fundamental principle of morality, which Kant expresses in the various formulations of the "Categorical Imperative" in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, is essentially the principle that in each exercise of our freedom of choice we should choose that course of action which is most compatible with the continued exercise of our own freedom of choice and with that of all others who might in any way be affected by our actions. In Kant's view, the achievement of moral worth requires that we be motivated to adopt this principle by respect for duty as such. The public sphere of justice or politics, however, concerns only our outward compliance with requirements of morality, our external actions rather than our motivations or ends, and its "Universal Principle of Right" is only that "Any *action* is right if it can coexist with everyone's freedom in accordance with a universal law."¹⁴ Justice obtains when each member of a society can freely act to realize his or her ends, however chosen, to the fullest extent compatible with a like freedom for everyone else. Kant argues that such widespread freedom of action can exist only in a republic, by which he means a system of government that respects the rights of private property and contract, that divides legislative, executive, and judicial power, and that prohibits proprietary and hereditary rulers, that is, rulers who regard their dominion and their office as private property, to be passed on to heirs of their own rather than the people's choice and augmented or diminished as they see fit. In *Toward Perpetual Peace*, Kant argues that stable peace can come only when all the nations of the earth are such republics, governed by citizens who see the security of their property obtaining only under the universal rule of law rather than by proprietary rulers who can always see a neighboring state as a potential addition to their own personal property. But in Kant's view even a worldwide federation of republics cannot *guarantee* world peace: such a federation provides the necessary conditions for peace, but peace can only be realized and maintained by the free choice of all those politicians governing the republics.

Hence Kant concludes that in order to make possible the association of states and to reform within states, then we have to adopt a republican constitution. Kant argues that only the republic is the rule of law, because it implies the separation of the legislative and executive branches. If the people are associated with power, he can not want war because they should suffer the consequences. In despotic regime, in which executive and

legislative powers are embodied in the person of Prince, the war only depends on the goodwill of the ruler, who may despise the interests of his people. Therefore, peace can be built on the republicanization State.

We may conclude that there is a difference between the Indian and western philosophy on the concept of peace. Indian philosophy is concerned with inner peace, which is the moksa or liberation of individual from the worldly things while western philosophy is concerned with external peace. They try to attain peace among society, community, states and between countries. But in order to attain external peace within states, first one must achieve inner peace by controlling one desire and work for the welfare of others. Hence inner peace is most important in order to achieve external peace.

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FOOTNOTES

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