



BELIEVING PANCHSHEELA : OUTWITTING TERROR

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Buddhism is based on the fundamental principles of good conduct and prohibits its followers from indulging in the misconduct and misbehavior that may harm the society at large. One can say that so does every religion since no religion asks its followers to misbehave and to indulge in criminal activity. However Buddhism is made different by the fact that it does not outrightly reject anything; it asks its followers to live a complete life while practicing moderation in every act, decision or even thought.

While we need to dwell on this aspect of Buddhism that makes a stronger, firmer and better being of the individual the fact remains that life is no longer confined to the individual, the family, the clan or even the country or state. In fact it is not even confined to gender or humankind. A decision, even a simple one of acquiring your daily meal has a chain of reactions that effect our surroundings, people around us, people involved in growing, procuring and marketing that food. At no point of life is an individual really alone, unaffected by what is happening around and the surroundings are also never alienated from what is happening inside the individual.

Buddhism believes that what is without is a result of what is within. Though this is a deep philosophy requiring in-depth discourses, I would only venture to say that a day seems brighter and fulfilling when one is happy and the same day seems bleak and gloomy if one is unhappy and distressed. So one is advised to practice moderation even in ones thoughts and feeling; I repeat the word practice. Buddhism does not advocate miracles per say: nothing happens no change is possible in the blink of an eye. A person cannot drop a habit just by saying so; they have to work on it, practice abstaining from it for it to become a reality. But nothing is unattainable according to Buddhism; it can be achieved with practice, perseverance and the conviction that even the impossible can be made to happen. The responsibility hence is given to the individual to work towards achieving what might seem beyond ones means and out of

bounds. It is the individual who has to change the within to be able to change the without.

At this moment there is a worldwide concern over terrorism. As we look at it without taking any sides or religious compartments, the terrorism that we see around is the direct result of extremist thought. This violent, extremist thought is something that is happening inside an individual. However all the effort that is being made to counter, check or even engage with terrorism is activity that is happening outside; these maybe be it arrests being made, the jail sentences pronounced, hangings, engaging in battles or even targeted drone attacks. All this is perhaps for a while checking the progress of the extremists but is not stopping or containing the thought that "I alone know best, I alone am right." With this belief the extremist can hardly be expected to question his own thoughts and the decisions and acts that are the result emerging from this belief.

The beginning of the last century had seen the rise of extremist belief in the form of racism that was followed in quick succession by fascism. That it had not been part of the human thought is not a question that is being debated here. We all accept that it was very much there or the centuries before that would not have seen the mass killing of Red Indian tribes, or the aboriginals in Australia or even colonization. What happened in Europe was a culmination of this thought: "that I am superior to you." It was impossible for the thought not to complete the full circle and reach back to the people who were practicing it: soon it was not whites versus the red Indians, civilized versus the so called barbarians, or war of cultures. It was Europeans versus Europeans, Christians versus the Semitics, whites versus the not so white. That rise of fascism and racism was contained through a bloody war that lasted almost 10 years and saw 60 million people dead. This count does not include deaths because of the famines and starvation caused by support being provided to the waging armies, the industry that mushroomed to provide consumables to the men on the fronts and the destitution that resulted when the war ended and this industry closed down. Also are not included the women widowed, the children orphaned, the old left uncared for and the acute shortage of basic necessities. It also does not include the cities, towns and villages raised to the

ground in bombings, those that were deserted, factories destroyed and powerful economies now shattered.

The war contained the progress of fascism and racism for a time being but was it able to change the thoughts, the beliefs, of the people who survived? The people who were born after the war, were they taught history as a question or only as boastful victories and needless glorification of mass destructions? The victors perhaps forgot that as they are happy over the victory, the vanquished would be unhappy and writhing at the defeat. While one celebrated the other waited and bided time. As one gathered its resources to survive the other also hunted around for ways and means to resurface.

It was with the realization that thoughts and ideas do not vanish, they can never be completely vanquished, that they can and will raise their heads again if they have not been replaced and changed that based on the principals of Panchshila of Buddha Jawaharlal Nehru had propagated the Panchsheel for states, in particular the countries that shared borders, cultures and civilizational commonalities.

The terms Pancha and Shila originate from the Pali language, the language used at the time of Lord Buddha. The word PANCHA means 'five' while the word SHILA means 'rules' or 'moral precepts'.

It is important to clearly state that the Panch Shila or the Five Precepts do not essentially make an individual a Buddhist. They are the basic ethics adopted by Buddhists in day to day life. Some people believe that these rules are the basic fundamentals of Buddhism but this is not true. The basic fundamentals of Buddhism are deeper and philosophical than these. The Five Precepts are simple practices that can be followed in everyday life and by anybody anywhere.

It particularly important to stress this point to clarify that while discussing the Panchashila one is not propagating a religious belief or philosophy. The Pancha Shila can be discussed, adapted and practiced even by those who have no adherence to either Buddhism or even by those who profess atheism.

The Panchashila as it is discussed in the teaching of Buddha is comprised of the five basic teachings of conduct which are:

- Respect for life
- Respect for others' property
- Respect for our pure nature
- Respect for honesty
- Respect for a clear mind

These five principals in the normal course of day to day life would translate to:

1. Avoid killing
2. Avoid stealing and hoarding
3. Avoid sexual misconduct
4. Avoid lying
5. Avoid intoxicants and practice control over emotions

But when they are adopted by statesmen as policies that should govern diplomacy and cross border relation they take on a much larger and far reaching meaning.

The Panchsheel Treaty of 1954 aimed to give a new and different approach to International Relations.

The **Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence**, known in India and elsewhere as the **Panchsheel Treaty** are a set of principles to govern relations between states. Their first formal codification in treaty form was in an agreement between China and India in 1954. They were enunciated in the preamble to the "Agreement (with exchange of notes) on trade and intercourse between Tibet Region of China and India", which was signed at Peking on 29 April 1954. This agreement stated the five principles as:

1. Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
2. Mutual non-aggression.
3. Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs.

4. Equality and cooperation for mutual benefit.
5. Peaceful co-existence.

An underlying assumption of the Five Principles was that newly independent states after decolonization would be able to develop a new and more principled approach to international relations. The principles were emphasized by the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, in a broadcast speech made at the time of the Asian Prime Ministers Conference at Colombo just a few days after the signing of the Sino-Indian treaty in Beijing. Nehru went so far as to say: "If these principles were recognized in the mutual relations of all countries, then indeed there would hardly be any conflict and certainly no war." The five principles were subsequently incorporated in modified form in a statement of ten principles issued in April 1955 at the historic Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, which did more than any other meeting to form the idea that post-colonial states had something special to offer the world.

It has been suggested that the five principles had partly originated as the five principles of the Indonesian state. In June 1945 Sukarno, the Indonesian nationalist leader, had proclaimed five general principles on which future institutions were to be founded. Indonesia became independent in 1949.

The Five Principles as they had been adopted in Colombo and elsewhere formed the basis of the Non-Aligned Movement, established in Belgrade in 1961.

The Five Principles, as stated by the Panchsheel Treaty, signed on April 29, 1954, have their roots in the Panchshila of Buddha or the basic teachings for the individual of Buddhism. These five principles in essence state respect for life, for other's property, one's own body, honesty and a clear mind.

However when this as International diplomacy did not succeed for various reason it was given up in its entirety by Asia.

Don't take life

Every individual loves their own life and you are no one to take it away from them. Just like you like your life, all others do too. So, live and let live. Do not get involved in any kind of violent activities to harm other individuals.

Don't take what's not given

This rule simply emphasizes on staying away from the practice of stealing. If something does not belong to you or is not given to you, it is not yours and you do not have the right to use it without permission.

Don't do sexual misconduct

This rule can be arguable and different cultures describe it differently. However, the bottom line is to avoid unethical sexual relationship and nurture an attitude aimed towards gender equality.

Don't do false speech

Avoid lying. If you lie, you will not only harm the other person but also harm your own self.

Remain clear headed

This may also be debatable for different individuals but the fact remains the same that any intoxicant reduces the ability of an individual to think and act appropriately. So does anger, temper, desire and distrust.

These are the main rules which should be followed by anyone who wants peace and happiness in life. Not following these rules is also the main cause of violence on the earth. If all the human beings understand and believe in these rules then there will be a very beautiful world with peace. In any religious view unnecessary killing of any living beings and not just human beings is not recommended but these days there are many people who kill many innocents in the name of their religion. It only leads to more violence and violence of different kinds.

Buddhist philosophy does not only advocate the change within personally. While one has to work on oneself, to be a better and more beneficial individual one also has to engage in discussion, in dialogue and in debate to convince others of belief in the non-violent methods. That is how the whole society can be peaceful and useful.

I quote a poem which is said to be one of most widely read and quoted of Buddhist literature:

*Who is wise and virtuous,
Gentle and keen-witted,
Humble and amenable,
Such a one to honor may attain.*

*Who is energetic and not indolent,
In misfortune unshaken,
Flawless in manner and intelligent,
Such a one to honor may attain.*

*Who is hospitable and friendly,
Liberal and unselfish,
A guide, an instructor, a leader,
Such a one to honor may attain.*

*Generosity, sweet speech,
Helpfulness to others,
Impartiality to all,
As the case demands.*

These four winning ways make the world go round

PANCHSHEEL TREATY

India and China especially and other countries who have accepted the Panchsheel as a form of diplomacy, have often emphasized their close association with the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. However the history of the first major enunciation of the Five Principles is not wholly encouraging as far the two main players India and China go. The 29 April 1954 agreement mentioned above was set to last for eight years.

However when it lapsed, relations were already souring and the provision for renewal of the agreement was not taken up. Following events led to the the Sino-Indian War. However, in the 1970s, the Five Principles again came to be seen as important in Sino-Indian relations, and more generally as norms of relations between states. They have become widely recognized and accepted throughout the region.

Last year in June Chinese President Xi Jinping hosted Myanmar's President Thein Sein and India's Vice President Mohammad Hamid Ansari at the celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence," or Panchsheel. The Chinese government held the event commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of its cherished foreign policy principles at the Great Hall of the People.

The fact that Beijing chose to celebrate this anniversary with the pomp and circumstance of a state visit with two international leaders underscores the importance it continues to ascribe to the Five Principles.

It was said after the initial set back to the concept of Panchsheel that the principles represented a vision of international relations that was highly principled and not based on realism. After Mao Zedong declared that China had "stood up" after a century of humiliation in 1949, the country needed to base its foreign policy around a set of principles that would embody its principled independence in world affairs. The Five Principles were borne of post-colonial solidarity and Chinese leaders embraced them for both their moral weight and strategic flexibility.

Later this treaty with its five principles came to be referred as "peace principles." Over the past six decades, the principles have withstood tests, been accepted by an increasing number of countries, become the tenets governing international relations and played an important role in safeguarding world peace and development.

At the recent Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) summit, Xi Jinping appealed to the Five Principles in outlining his vision for a future Asian security order. "The five principles that China initiated together with India and Myanmar have become a basic norm governing state-to-state relations."

While this is a hopeful sign seeing that China is one of the super powers in the world, it is important to take the concept of pancha shila in its totality.

A socialist set up guarantees that the five fundamentals need of human beings is taken care of: food, clothing, shelter, health and education are the states responsibility. In such a situation one would expect that the individual would be provided space for introspection which would lead to internal changes through one's own efforts towards a desire to have peaceful and useful existence.

But that did not happen. Socialism while providing for physical needs took away the basic need of an individual to work on one's inner being. Thus desire, greed remained leading to lying, deceit, theft, jealousy and most importantly to fear. Human being has been endowed with reason and inside oneself found it difficult to justify this greed and lust, so from this was born the self-righteousness 'I am better than you, my religion is better than yours' etc. Fear has been built up through an emphasis on sins and punishments and not enough is said on the compassionate and merciful side of God. While cruelty and oppression is abhorred by all religions not enough is done to inculcate it as the basis of a meaningful and fulfilling life. With all this one cannot deny that different kinds of value systems of different civilizations have also propagated the joy of seeing others unhappy leading to cruelty and oppression.

I'll quote here a story of Buddha that was told to me when I was 8 years old by my father. My wax doll had been left near the fire and had melted. I was inconsolable. This is what my father narrated : a man asked Gautama Buddha 'I want happiness.' Buddha said "But you already have it. All you have to do is first remove 'I' which is your ego and then remove 'want' that is Desire. See, now you are left with 'happiness.'

Capitalism and globalization that have brought free economy is believed to have given rise to a new kind of consumerism leading to a rat race for possessions and this is being targeted as the cause of dissatisfaction, unhappiness in the present society. But socialism too did not work towards changing the inner being of the individual.

I would venture to add here that no political system is designed to address the

individual; it is not in the nature of its formation. It aims at economic changes, industrial growth, improvement in agriculture, addressing gender discrimination; all of this is very necessary and we choose one form or the other of political ideology because we hope to get good governance and a secure society. However the change within can be brought about only through questioning and religious introspection.

A positive change for the better in the last two centuries has been the acceptance of a unified god. Even the religions that believe in idol worship and multi-manifestations accept that they are the representations and symbols of a single power. This is a very hopeful development because it allows us to freely understand and borrow from all the existing religious philosophies. This allows me rights as an individual to engage in discussions and contemplate my own role in making myself and the society around me.

This also creates space to discuss the perception of God as held in every religion and arrive at the very basic and fundamental one that God is compassionate and kind, merciful and forgiving and most importantly that this God is not someone outside but resides within us. If the same God resides in all of us we are united, we are one and their then remains no reason for repressing, subjugating and killing in the name of that God.

I remember a quote of J Krisnamurti: the moment you profess a religion you commit an act of violence, because you have then built a wall between you and the rest, then comes country, race, languages all leading to more walls and more room for violence. While one admits the need for borders for administration and governance be they between countries, religions, races one needs to develop respect for those borders for peace and for the celebration of diversity; something that is very much enshrined in the concept of Panchsheel.

At the end I would like to say point here that most religions have an emblem and a flag. Buddhism did not have a flag for a long time. It was in 1952 that World Buddhist Congress accepted a flag as its symbol, which was jointly designed by J.R. de Silva and Colonel Henry S. Olcott to mark the revival of Buddhism in 1880 in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka. The accepted Buddhist flag is believed to have the colours of the aura that is said to have shone around Buddha's head after attaining enlightenment. The first five

stripes of the flag are of five colours representing the tenets of Buddhism, and is now regarded as the 'standard Buddhist flag'. In the flag, blue is for universal compassion; yellow for the middle path; red for blessings; white for purity and liberation; and orange for wisdom. The flag is meant to symbolize the unity of human beings.

One has to stop and ponder here why didn't Buddha have a flag? a flag is meant to divide, to separate, to represent a group and make it different from others, to draw boundaries and hence create violence. Maybe all the discourses of Buddha and all his 'awareness' or 'bodh' can be contained in a nutshell : to be peaceful and useful, contented and nonviolent one had to stand united with all of humanity irrespective of country, religion, caste or colour and just be of the human kind. I know very difficult to achieve but as necessary to achieve.

