

# **BUDDHIST PEACEKEEPING:**

## **Nonviolent Peacekeeping and the Buddhist Response**

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Nonviolent peacekeeping is a strategy currently used by both secular and faith based organizations to reduce and stop violence. In this paper I will focus on the possibility of Buddhist Peacekeeping by examining two prominent secular and one faith-based example. After examining these three nonviolent peacekeeping examples, I will pose 4 questions to help us explore the idea of Buddhist Peacekeeping and conceptualize possible geopolitical areas of engagement.

### **Introduction to the Three Approaches to Active Peace Work**

The Social Science field of Peace and Conflict Studies identifies the three approaches to active (or positive) nonviolent peace work as peacemaking, peacebuilding, and peacekeeping.<sup>1</sup> The goals of these three approaches to peace work are conflict transformation and conflict resolution. Leading Peace Studies theorist Johan Galtung defines the first of these three approaches, peacemaking, as activities that search for creative and mutually acceptable outcomes to conflict. Peacemaking seeks to transform the attitudes and assumptions of the actors in the conflict, and includes educational conferences, encounter forums, and mediation. Galtung defines the second approach to peace work, peacebuilding, as activities that build structural and cultural peace. This second approach seeks to transform and eliminate social conflict at the source, and includes programs such as sustainable development, the fair trade movement, and a focus on restructuring economic causes. The third approach to peace, Galtung defines as peacekeeping. Peacekeeping, which will be the focus of this paper, is defined as pressuring and influencing the actors of the conflict to prevent, reduce, and stop violence. In practice this entails activities of intervention, protective nonviolent accompaniment, civil disobedience, monitoring, documentation, fact-finding, networking, advocacy, and reporting.

## **Secular and Christian Examples of Peacekeeping**

Nonviolent peacekeeping as a tool of conflict transformation has roots in Asia. Perhaps the most well known Asian example of nonviolent Peacekeeping is Gandhi's Shanti Sena. Gandhi coined the term *Shanti Sena*, which means 'Peace Army' or 'Peace Brigade,' near the end of his life as he was trying to rally a nonviolent peacekeeping movement to stop and prevent violence between Hindus and Muslims.<sup>2</sup> Within the secular western world the two prominent and active examples of nonviolent peacekeeping are Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) and Peace Brigades International (PBI), both deeply influenced by Gandhi's Shanti Sena.<sup>3</sup>

Nonviolent Peaceforce, a US non-profit and Belgian AISBL, was conceived of by a group of peace activists at the Hague Appeal for Peace in 1999. NP states that its mission "is to promote, develop and implement unarmed civilian peacekeeping as a tool for reducing violence and protecting civilians in situations of violent conflict."<sup>4</sup> Their headquarters is in Brussels and they have a satellite office in Minneapolis, USA. NP is funded through governments, multilateral bodies, foundations, corporations, grants, and individual contributions. Their total support and revenue for 2013 was \$1,396,862.<sup>5</sup>

According to NP's 2013 Progress Report, NP has 202 total staff: 189 live and work within conflict areas, and 13 are advocacy and administrative support. They currently operate in the South Caucasus, South Sudan, the Philippines, and Myanmar. NP has developed a four-pronged approach to nonviolent peacekeeping: proactive engagement—or protective physical accompaniment, relationship building, monitoring, and capacity development—or nonviolence training. NP's Progress Report provides the results of their 2013 peace work, a few examples are: 31,160 children have been protected in conflict affected areas, in the Philippines 39,310 internally displaced civilians benefited from their presence, in Myanmar a new NP field program was established that conducted three training programs in Yangon which addressed how ceasefire mechanisms are established to ensure protection of civilians and Ceasefire Monitors, and in South Sudan 33 civilians were moved and protected as massacres were happening.<sup>6</sup>

Peace Brigades International is an international NGO founded in 1981 at a meeting in Canada by international peace organizers. PBI states that its mission is “to open a space for peace in which conflicts can be dealt with non-violently.”<sup>7</sup> PBI is a non-hierarchical organization that employs consensus-based decision making. They have an international office in London with 12 country groups in: Belgium, Norway, Canada, Spain, France, Switzerland, Germany, Sweden, Italy, UK, Netherlands, and the USA.

In 2013, according to the PBI Annual Review, they received \$2,611,301 in support from over 50 organizations including governments, multilateral bodies, trusts, foundations, religious groups, and individuals. In 2013, 286 volunteers provided support to the domestic offices, and 112 international volunteers provided protection through the use of monitoring, physical accompaniment, and advocacy work to 326 human rights defenders in the 6 countries of Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Kenya, and Mexico. Upon request from human rights organizations, PBI conducted 61 workshops attended by 1033 human rights defenders and in addition, the PBI country groups organized speaking tours for 23 human rights defenders.<sup>8</sup>

Within the Christian community the prime example for faith-based peacekeeping is Christian Peacemaker Teams. CPT was inspired in 1984 by a speech given at a conference sponsored by the denomination of American Christians known as the Mennonites.<sup>9</sup> The three churches that have historically supported pacifism; the Mennonites, Church of the Brethren, and the Quakers, formed CPT two years later in 1986 at a retreat center in Chicago. CPT now has support and membership from a wide range of Christian denominations including Catholics, Baptists and Presbyterians. They have two offices, one in Toronto and the other in Chicago.

CPT’s mission is “building partnerships to transform violence and oppression.”<sup>10</sup> CPT states in its Statement of Identity that it is “an organization gathered in the reconciling love of God, identified with Jesus of Nazareth and led by the Spirit. Renouncing violence and dominative power, CPT seeks the Gospel liberation of all people through the power of forgiveness and nonviolence.”<sup>11</sup> CPT’s 2013 Year In Review states that CPT received \$1,026,400 from Christian congregations, individuals, delegations, estate gifts, and grants.<sup>12</sup> In 2013, a total of 212 people including ten interns served in



CPT. Out of these 212, 79 people participated in 12 CPT delegations to Palestine, Colombia, Iraq, and Aboriginal Canada.

In Palestine, CPT provided daily protective accompaniment for Palestinian children walking to and from school, nonviolently intervened during human rights violations and land confiscation, and monitored the treatment of Palestinians at Israeli military checkpoints and roadblocks. In Colombia, CPT supported threatened communities with their physical presence and advocacy work. In Iraq, CPT accompanied mountain village and shepherd communities as they resisted displacement caused by Turkish and Iranian cross-border military operations. In aboriginal Canada, CPT provided human rights monitoring, media releases, fact-finding delegations, and non-violence training to help reduce violence directed at First Nations communities resisting industrial activity in their territories without their consent.<sup>13</sup>

Though CPT is established and on-going with transparency and a circulating pool of people and financial resources, it still is a small peacekeeping organization within the larger Christian community. The dominant approaches of active peace work within the Christian faith are peacebuilding and peacemaking which include the activities of the Christian organizations: American Friends Service Committee, Pax Christi, Christian Peace Witness, and numerous 'Peace Fellowships' organized by the various denominations within the Christian community.<sup>14</sup>

The major peacekeeping strategies used by CPT, NP, and PBI are monitoring and reporting—or bearing witness to violence, nonviolence training, advocacy, and protective accompaniment to individuals and communities threatened by violence. Though each organization has slightly different methods and mandates in their use of active peacekeeping, they all have a deep commitment to nonviolence.

### **Buddhist Peacekeeping**

As with the larger Christian community, the most predominant forms of nonviolent peace work in the Buddhist faith community are peacebuilding and peacemaking. Buddhist organizations such as International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), Zen Peacemakers, Sarvodaya, and Buddhist Peace Fellowship organize and implement conferences, workshops, sustainable development, community

building, and education. Though these organizations sometimes sponsor need-based peacekeeping, their active peace work is primarily focused upon peacebuilding and peacemaking.<sup>15</sup> For the rest of this paper I will explore the possibility of fulltime organized Buddhist Peacekeeping.

To help facilitate my examination of organized Buddhist Peacekeeping, I will consider 4 questions: How would Buddhist Peacekeeping be similar or different from current Buddhist peacemaking and peacebuilding endeavors? In what regions of the world would Buddhist Peacekeeping be implemented? How would a Buddhist Peacekeeping organization be structured? Should Buddhist Peacekeeping be strictly Buddhist or should it be interfaith?

### **How would Buddhist Peacekeeping be similar or different from current Buddhist peacemaking and peacebuilding endeavors?**

Buddhist Peacekeeping could either be a branch of a current organization or it could be autonomous. It would be similar to other Buddhist peace organizations in that it would focus on active peace work, but it would be novel in that it would be a full time organization dedicated to reducing, preventing, and stopping violence through nonviolent intervention, physical accompaniment, civil disobedience, fact-finding, monitoring, documentation, reporting, advocacy, and networking with existing nonviolent organizations in areas of conflict that are also involved in active peace work. Buddhist Peacekeeping would protect communities and individuals that are actively experiencing violence, or who are at risk of experiencing violence, by nonviolently intervening and using the methods stated above. The areas and methods of engagement would be articulated in the Buddhist Peacekeeping organization's mission statement.

In exploring a possible mission statement for Buddhist Peacekeeping, let us consider a few examples from current Buddhist peace organizations. INEB's official objectives are to identify and address the structural and personal suffering facing communities, societies, and the world, to articulate the perspective of engaged Buddhism regarding this suffering, and to train Buddhist activists to respond effectively.<sup>16</sup> Buddhist Peace Fellowship states that its purpose is to help beings liberate themselves from the suffering that manifests in individuals, relationships, institutions, and social systems,

and to link Buddhist teachings of wisdom and compassion with progressive social change.<sup>17</sup> Although Sarvodaya may not have the word ‘Buddhist’ in its title, the founder A.T. Ariyaratne has structured his peace organization in the principles of Gandhian development and the Buddhist tradition. Ariyaratne has stated, “Sarvodaya efforts can be described as peacemaking in Sri Lanka in the Buddhist context.”<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Sarvodaya’s mission is based in the Buddhist concept of ‘awakening.’<sup>19</sup>

Similar in orientation with these current Buddhist peace organizations, a Buddhist Peacekeeping mission statement would link Buddhist wisdom and compassion with a mandate to end the *dukkha* (suffering, stress, dissatisfaction, tension, and unhappiness) in ourselves and the world but with the specific active peace focus of stopping, reducing, and preventing violent conflicts through the strategies of direct nonviolent action—or Peacekeeping.

### **In what region of the world would Buddhist Peacekeeping be most effective?**

Buddhist Peacekeeping would be open to providing its services to anywhere in the world that there is violent conflict. Statistically most Buddhists come from Asia, unlike the percentage of people who volunteer for secular nonviolent peacekeeping or who are Christian. Thus the largest resource of potential Buddhist volunteers would also come from Asia. Western Buddhists could provide solidarity, economic resources, or media publicity, but statistically western Buddhists are low in number, and therefore most of the human resources probably would not come from the West. If we accept that the majority of Buddhist volunteers would come from Asia, then that will help us determine the region of the world where Buddhist Peacekeeping would be most effective.

When examining potential areas of engagement for a mostly Asian Buddhist Peacekeeping organization,<sup>20</sup> it’s important to take into account that the West and Buddhist Asia have differences in terms of hegemony and political clout. CPT, NP, and BMI, as western organizations, use the peacekeeping strategies of political pressure and leverage in helping reduce violence in areas affected by western economic and military influence. Similarly Buddhist Peacekeeping, with a high number of Asian volunteers, would be more effective in regions of the world where Buddhists have more political leverage and transnational influence, namely conflicts



within Asia. This would make Buddhist Peacekeeping different than CPT, NP, or PBI in that these western organizations are primarily focused outside their nationalities but within areas influenced by western hegemony.<sup>21</sup> Buddhist Peacekeeping would be most effective, based on this difference, within Asia itself where it has the most geopolitical influence.

### **How would a Buddhist Peacekeeping organization be structured?**

PBI and NP are both designed and structured based on western transnational collaboration, and thus they have mostly western international volunteers. This transnational strategy helps influence the perpetrators of violence in afflicted areas with western economic and political pressure. For Asian-focused Buddhist Peacekeeping it would also be advantageous to design and structure a peacekeeping organization, based on an international model, through Asian transnational collaboration with volunteers from all Buddhist populated countries, similar in vision to INEB. This would have the strategic effect of influencing the perpetrators of violence in afflicted areas with transnational political pressure. Prof. Patrick G. Coy from the Center for Applied Conflict Management reinforces this idea when he states,

International non-violent protective accompaniment rests on the idea that the presence of unarmed international escorts accompanying local activists may be a deterrent since political violence and the violation of human rights directed toward foreign nationals or even committed in their presence often result in higher political costs than the same actions directed at unaccompanied local citizens.<sup>22</sup>

### **Does a Buddhist Peacekeeping organization have to be strictly Buddhist or should it be Interfaith?**

In Asian nations with a high percentage of Buddhists, such as Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, social conflicts are primarily centered upon political transitions, border disputes, ethnic divisions, and communal religious tensions.<sup>23</sup> Concerning communal religious tensions in Asia, it may be wise for a peacekeeping organization to build an interfaith network of volunteers. A possible interfaith strategy might even influence the name given to a Buddhist peacekeeping organization. An example would be Sarvodaya who named their organization using Gandhian terminology instead of strictly Buddhist terminology. The strategy of excluding terminology that is strictly Buddhist-centric from the organizational title may be important, because if a Buddhist Peacekeeping organization can be

recognized as interfaith, or at least accepting and honoring others faiths, it could potentially gain the support and sympathy not only of the Buddhist community but also of other faith communities. This interfaith strategy would also be helpful in reducing suspicions or feelings of encroachment by other ethnic or faith groups.

Though Gandhi identified himself as Hindu, his Shanti Sena movement was religiously nonpartisan and dedicated to the goal of peace between Hindus and Muslims. A pledge within Shanti Sena was to “respect all religions equally.”<sup>24</sup> The Sri Lankan peace organization Sarvodaya states that its peace teams “are led by Muslim, Christian and Hindu Sarvodaya personnel,” and that, “The Movement consciously directs its efforts to people of all religious persuasions.”<sup>25</sup> Even the Christian peacekeeping organization CPT states that it welcomes peacemakers from other faiths and that its delegations are open to anyone regardless of their faith commitment.<sup>26</sup> The Interfaith strategy is an important question to consider in devising the most effective method in which Buddhists Peacekeeping can help in reducing, preventing, and stopping violent conflict.

## **Conclusion**

Regardless of whether peace activists and organizations are secular or faith based, Buddhist or Christian, most are primarily focused on the two nonviolent peace approaches of peacemaking and peacebuilding. Organized nonviolent peacekeeping as an active approach to peace is the least used approach by the faith and secular peace community. Though one of the first examples of systemically organized nonviolent peacekeeping comes from Asia with Gandhi’s Shanti Sena, full-time and on-going organized nonviolent peacekeeping has since become established in the West.

Buddhists can use the examples of the international organizations NF and PBI, and apply it to other geopolitical realities like the Asian Buddhist context. Likewise, Buddhists can use CPT as a faith based model for peacekeeping, and Gandhi’s Shanti Sena and the other Buddhist peace organizations as examples of active peace work in Asia. These examples can help us conceptualize how Buddhist Peacekeeping would best be organization and how a Buddhist Peacekeeping organization could work



towards the active prevention, reduction, and cessation of violent conflicts that are happening now or are in danger of occurring.

For individuals, organizations, or faith communities to effectively and holistically reduce and stop violent conflicts in their communities and in the world, it is paramount to systemically practice all three of the active peace work approaches. The Buddhist goal is the reduction, non-production, and total elimination of *dukkha*. The cessation of *dukkha* must be practiced at the peacebuilding and peacemaking levels, but the cessation of *dukkha* must also be practiced at the level of peacekeeping where the experience of conflict and violence are most probable, prominent, and direct.

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<sup>1</sup> Galtung, Johan. *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*. London: SAGE Publications, 1996. Pg. 271.

<sup>2</sup> Desai, Narayan: Gramdan. "The Land Revolution in India." *WRI pamphlet*. London, 1969

<sup>3</sup> McCarthy, Eli Sasaran. *Becoming Nonviolent Peacemakers: A Virtue Ethic for Catholic Social Teaching and U.S. Policy*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012. Pg. 200.

<sup>4</sup> Nonviolent Peaceforce. *Mission Statement*. Accessed Feb. 2015.  
<http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/background/mission-history>

<sup>5</sup> Nonviolent Peaceforce. *2013 Financial Statement*. Accessed Feb. 2015.  
[http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/images/Funding/Final2013\\_audit.pdf](http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/images/Funding/Final2013_audit.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Nonviolent Peaceforce. *2013 Progress Report*. Accessed Feb. 2015.  
<http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/images/AnnualReports/3NP%20Progress%20ReportFinalEVersion11.71.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Peace Brigades International. *Mission Statement*. Accessed Feb. 2015.  
<http://www.peacebrigades.org/about-pbi/vision-and-mission/>

<sup>8</sup> Peace Brigades International. *2013 Annual Review*. Accessed Feb. 2015.  
[http://www.peacebrigades.org/fileadmin/user\\_files/international/files/annual\\_reviews/Annual\\_Review\\_2013\\_-\\_English.pdf](http://www.peacebrigades.org/fileadmin/user_files/international/files/annual_reviews/Annual_Review_2013_-_English.pdf)

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- <sup>9</sup> Sider, Ronald J. "God's People Reconciling." Christian Peacemaker Teams. Accessed Feb. 2015. <http://www.cpt.org/resources/writings/sider>
- <sup>10</sup> Christian Peacemaker Teams. *Mission Statement*. Accessed Feb. 2015. <http://www.cpt.org/about/mission>
- <sup>11</sup> Christian Peacemaker Teams. *Statement of Identity*. Accessed Feb. 2015. [http://www.cpt.org/about/identity\\_statement](http://www.cpt.org/about/identity_statement)
- <sup>12</sup> Christian Peacemaker Teams. *2013 Year In Review*. Accessed Feb. 2015. [http://www.cpt.org/files/Annual%20Report%202013\\_0.pdf](http://www.cpt.org/files/Annual%20Report%202013_0.pdf)
- <sup>13</sup> Christian Peacemaker Teams. "Our Work: Violence Reduction Projects." Accessed Feb. 2015. <http://www.cpt.org/work>
- <sup>14</sup> The Pluralism Project At Harvard University. *Research Report: Interfaith and Faith Peace Organizations (2013)*. Accessed Feb. 2015. <http://www.pluralism.org/reports/view/39>
- <sup>15</sup> In discussing how peace organizations utilize the three approaches of active peace work, it is important to consider that though a peace organization may choose one approach as their prime area of focus they may, and most likely will, use the other two approaches out of necessity.
- <sup>16</sup> International Network of Engaged Buddhists. *Vision, Aims and Objectives*. Accessed Feb. 2015. <http://www.inebnetwork.org/ineb/concept>
- <sup>17</sup> Buddhist Peace Fellowship. *Mission*. Accessed Feb. 2015. <http://www.buddhistpeacefellowship.org/about-bpf/mission/>
- <sup>18</sup> Ariyaratne, A.T. "NONVIOLENT BUDDHIST PROBLEM-SOLVING IN SRI LANKA." Accessed Feb. 2015. <http://www.infolanka.com/org/srilanka/issues/ariya.html>
- <sup>19</sup> Premasiri, P. D. "Sri Lanka and the Sarvodaya Model." *INTEGRATION OF ENDOGENOUS CULTURAL DIMENSION INTO DEVELOPMENT*. New Delhi, 1997. Pg. 86.
- <sup>20</sup> An active Buddhist Peacekeeping organization could be named: a team, a force, or a brigade.
- <sup>21</sup> An ethic motivating these western organizations would seem to be that of responsibility for the violence and conflict western influence has produced. An obvious critique of western international peacekeeping organizations would be their lack of focus on peacekeeping violence and conflicts within their own nationalities.
- <sup>22</sup> Coy, Patrick G. "Nonpartisanship, interventionism and legality in accompaniment: comparative analyses of Peace Brigades International, Christian Peacemaker Teams, and the International Solidarity Movement." *The International Journal of Human Rights*. 16.7 (2012) 1–19. Taylor and Francis Online. Web. 12. Accessed Feb. 2015.
- <sup>23</sup> Society for the Study of Peace and Conflict. *South Asian Conflict Monitor*. Accessed Feb. 2015. <http://www.sspconline.org/sacm>
- <sup>24</sup> Weber, Thomas. *Gandhi's Peace Army: The Shanti Sena and Unarmed Peacekeeping*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 1995. Pg. 207.
- <sup>25</sup> Sarvodaya. *FAQ: Does Sarvodaya have a religious affiliation?* Accessed Feb. 2015. <http://www.sarvodaya.org/about/faq>
- <sup>26</sup> Christian Peacemaker Teams. *Frequent Questions: Do I have to be Christian to join?* Accessed Feb. 2015. <http://www.cpt.org/about/faq#3>