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A Buddhist Perspective on Freedom of Religion*

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Abstract

Freedom of religion and belief is treasured by many as one of the fundamental human rights demanded by its advocates, especially on behalf of minorities in any country where the great majority profess another religion or belong to a different sect of the same religion. These groups are in a strong position when they are able to exercise their political power and utilize state authority through judicial or other mechanisms to suppress this freedom. Human rights as formulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent international instruments should be welcomed as a necessary basis for further steps towards peace and happiness, but are still not sufficient for truly lasting world peace. To achieve this end, what is also needed in any society is a positive or constructive ethic that promotes, among other core values, loving kindness, compassion, and charity. In this regard, Buddhism certainly has a lot of practical teachings to offer to the world. The Buddhist stance on freedom of religion and belief is discussed in some detail. Also addressed are the notion of religious fundamentalism, and the role of the media in the age of fundamentalism.

Key words: religion, freedom of religion and belief, human rights, Buddhism, negative ethic, positive ethic, religious fundamentalism, role of the media

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Introduction

Freedom of religion and belief has in recent years become an important sociopolitical concern in the international community. The term *religion* is understood to refer to any set or system of attitudes, beliefs, and practices either theistic or non-theistic, and either institutionalized and followed by a group or simply professed by an individual. By definition, then, a religion can be a religion insofar as it is observed by *single individuals* (in the extreme case of a personal religion), or far more commonly by *groups of individuals* sharing the same religious belief. In either case, when a particular religion is under discussion, it is often important to make it clear whether we are dealing with the tenets or in fact talking about the beliefs and conduct of certain practitioners of that religion. The necessity of this distinction becomes all the more apparent, especially when it comes to the issue of religious fundamentalism, which will be discussed later.

Understandably, the term *belief* is used alongside *religion* in this context to accommodate the stance taken by those who believe that there is no need for religion and as a result do not observe any single religion at all.

Freedom of religion and belief is held by many as one of the basic human rights demanded by its supporters notably on behalf of small communities in countries where the vast majority uphold another religion or a different sect of the same religion, who are in a strong position to exercise their political power and utilize state authority through judicial or other mechanisms to suppress this freedom. Article 18 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) defines *freedom of religion* as follows:[1]

> Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Freedom of religion in a broader sense is thus understood to include freedom not to follow any religion at all. In any event, some limitations are seen as necessary to safeguard this freedom against possible abuse. Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (1950), for instance, has made the following amendment:[2]

[1] www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/
[2] www.hri.org/docs/ECHR50.html

> Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

Such a stipulation should be acceptable to all parties concerned. The argument, whether from a moral or legal point of view, is simple and straightforward: if one demands and cherishes personal rights and freedoms, including the right to religion and freedom of belief, one should not infringe on the rights or freedoms of others, in whatever way or for whatever reason. For example, killing in the name of religion is not only unacceptable but also untenable, as it blatantly violates the other party's right to life.

To a Buddhist, the argument above is reminiscent of two verses from the *Dhammapada*, the best known and most widely esteemed text in the Pali Canon:[3]

- All tremble at violence; all fear death. Putting oneself in the place of another, one should not kill or cause another to kill. [*Dh.* 129]
- All tremble at violence; life is dear to all. Putting oneself in the place of another, one should not kill or cause another to kill. [*Dh.* 130]

Human rights as a basis for further steps towards world peace

Human rights as formulated in the UDHR and subsequent international instruments should be welcomed as a necessary basis for further steps towards peace and happiness, but are still not sufficient for truly lasting world peace. As has been pointed out by many, there is often a gap between proclamation and effective implementation, even in democratic countries.[4] The non-efficacy issue aside, measures against violation of fundamental rights and freedoms on the one hand, and safeguards against possible abuse of such rights and freedoms on the other, are seen by Buddhists as primarily constituting a negative or proscriptive

[3] Acharya Buddharakkhita (trans.). 1996. *The Dhammapada: The Buddha's Path of Wisdom.* 2nd ed. (with introduction by Bhikkhu Bodhi). Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, p. 62.

[4] Fellous, Gérard. 2010. 'Challenges facing human rights in the XXI[st] century: A threatened universality', Universality of Human Rights Forum, Oslo—21–22 October 2010.

ethic, albeit necessary for peaceful co-existence, particularly in a multi-racial, multi-religious, and multi-cultural society. According to the Ven. Bhikkhu P. A. Payutto, there are two extreme scenarios that should be avoided:[5]

- One extreme is a society in which its members totally disregard one another's rights, allow violations against life and property to occur, discriminate against others, and deprive people of their liberties and freedoms. Such a society is still uncivilized.
- The other extreme is a society in which its members are constantly intent on protecting their own rights to such an extent that even parents and children or teachers and students treat one another with an attitude of demanding and defending their respective rights. Such a society is doomed to become decivilized.

In the former scenario, no human rights are to be found, which is deplorable. In the latter scenario, by contrast, human rights would effectively turn out to contribute to social disintegration instead of social harmony. We should therefore not be complacent about enjoying our rights when we have them, but should instead move further towards lasting peace and harmony. To achieve this end, what is also needed in any society is a positive ethic that promotes genuine caring and selfless considerations for others. In this regard, Buddhism certainly has a lot of practical teachings to offer to the world.

Human rights as reflected in some basic Buddhist teachings

The qualities central to the concept of human rights are human dignity, equality, and freedom, all of which are compatible with and embraced by the Buddha's teachings. In short, all humans are deemed equal as human beings, and as human beings they have the freedom and capability of training themselves—morally, spiritually, and intellectually—to attain to the ultimate freedom or liberation from all sorts of suffering. In this light, although the UDHR is relatively recent and the term *human rights* is Western in origin, the concept conveyed is hardly new to Buddhists, who are already familiar with their 2500-year-old teachings such as the Five Precepts and the six directions. It should not be difficult, for example, to see how the notion of human rights is also reflected in these two teachings. The Five Precepts, considered the most basic moral principles for humans, are as follows:

[5] Ven. P. A. Payutto. 1998. *Human Rights: Social Harmony or Social Disintegration* [in Thai and English]. Bangkok.

1. Abstinence from killing;
2. Abstinence from stealing;
3. Abstinence from sexual misconduct;
4. Abstinence from telling lies;
5. Abstinence from drinking alcohol.

On the whole, these precepts are meant to prevent people from violating others' rights, e.g. to life and property. Although drinking alcohol in itself is not a violation, getting drunk can easily lead to such violations. Abstinence from drinking is understandably included as a foolproof safeguard against potential violations under the influence of alcohol.

The Buddha's teaching on how to 'worship the six directions', on the other hand, is concerned with interpersonal relationships between a householder and the people to whom he is related in one way or another, i.e. the people around him in the 'six directions':

1. parents as 'the east': how children should treat their parents and how parents should treat their children;

2. teachers as 'the south': how students should treat their teachers and how teachers should treat their students;

3. wife and children as 'the west': how a husband should treat his wife and how a wife should treat her husband;

4. friends and companions as 'the north': how friends should treat their friends and how their friends should reciprocate;

5. servants and workmen as 'the nadir': how employers should treat their employees and how employees should treat their employers;

6. monks as 'the zenith': how laypeople should treat monks and how monks should treat laypeople.

The practical advice on how family and community members ought to treat one another can be seen as a constructive ethic complementary to the proscriptive ethic of the Five Precepts, both of which are crucial to the wellbeing and prosperity of society.

The Buddhist stance on freedom of religion and belief

Regarding the more specific issue of freedom of religion and belief from a Buddhist perspective, the following is a quote from part of a conversational exchange in *Kārandiya Jātaka* (*Jātaka* No. 356):[6]

[6] The translation is based on the Thai version translated from the Pali by Ven. P. A. Payutto in his *Immortal Words: A Selection of Buddhist Proverbs* [in Thai].

> 'Different people have different views; it is impossible to make them all think alike.'
>
> 'Just as the earth cannot be levelled, so humans cannot all be made the same.'

This self-evident truth should serve as a reminder not to expect everyone else to share one's own views, religious ideas included, and might also explain why there are so many disparate beliefs and religions. Although it is perfectly acceptable for a Buddhist, especially when requested or invited, to engage in dialogue with people from other religions, he is not supposed to impose his own attitude or conviction upon others, or indeed to try to convert them by force, threat or deception.

Perhaps the best way to appreciate the Buddhist stance on freedom of religion and belief is to go back in time and see what the Buddha himself did.

At one time, the Kālāmas of Kesaputta, perplexed by and doubtful about different, conflicting doctrines preached by different religious teachers, turned to the Buddha for help. Here is his answer:[7]

> Come, Kālāmas. Do not go by oral tradition, by lineage of teaching, by hearsay, by a collection of scriptures, by logical reasoning, by inferential reasoning, by reflection on reasons, by the acceptance of a view after pondering it, by the seeming competence of a speaker, or because you think, 'The ascetic is our teacher'. But when you know for yourselves, 'These things are unwholesome, these things are blamable; these things are censured by the wise; these things, if undertaken and practised, lead to harm and suffering,' then you should abandon them ... But when you know for yourselves, 'These things are wholesome, these things are blameless; these things are praised by the wise; these things, if undertaken and practised, lead to welfare and happiness,' then you should engage in them.

This passage shows how broad-minded, fair, and shrewd a teacher the Buddha was, unlike other religious teachers who would explain and elucidate

[7] Nyayaponika Thera and Bhikkhu Bodhi (trans.). 1999. *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: An Anthology of Suttas from the Anguttara Nikaya.* New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, pp.65–66.

their own doctrines and disparage, debunk, revile and vilify the doctrines of others. As it turned out, the advice thus given could readily be put to use by his audience when he went on to preach his own doctrine, so that they could decide for themselves whether to accept his teaching or not. What is at issue here is that the Kālāmas, through their own intellect, could exercise their freedom of thought. The late Ven. Walpola Rahula offered the following explanation:[8]

> The freedom of thought allowed by the Buddha is unheard of elsewhere in the history of religions. This freedom is necessary because, according to the Buddha, man's emancipation depends on his own realization of Truth, and not on the benevolent grace of a god or any external power as a reward for his obedient good behaviour.

Even amid his own disciples, the Buddha at one time advised them to make a thorough investigation—through the eye and the ear—of his bodily and verbal behaviour, to find out for themselves whether or not he should be accepted as their fully enlightened teacher, so that they might be convinced beyond any doubt about the validity of his dispensation.[9]

The Buddha was known for his tolerance towards other religions. A case in point was Upāli's conversion. When this prominent supporter of the Jains asked the Buddha to accept him as a lay follower, the Buddha told Upāli—owing to the latter's well-known status in society—to think twice. Upon Upāli's confirmation, he went on to advise that he and his family should continue their support to the Jains as before.[10]

On the other hand, the Buddha also taught his disciples how to react to criticism and praise by followers of other religions. When others should criticize the Buddha, the Doctrine, or the Monastic Order, they ought not to be angry, resentful or upset on that account; otherwise they would not recognize whether what others say is right or not. Instead, they must explain what is incorrect as being incorrect. When others praise the Buddha, the Doctrine or the Monastic

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[8] Ven. Dr. Walpola Sri Rahula. 1959 [2008]. *What the Buddha Taught.* Oxford: Oneworld Publications, p. 2.

[9] From Vīmaṁsaka Sutta. For the full text of this discourse, see Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (trans.). 1995. *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha.* Kandy, Sri Lanka: The Buddhist Publication Society, pp. 415–418.

[10] From Upāli Sutta. For the full text of this discourse, see Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (trans.). 1995. *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha.* Kandy, Sri Lanka: The Buddhist Publication Society, pp. 477–492.

Order, the followers ought not to be pleased, happy or elated; they should instead acknowledge the truth of what is genuinely true.[11]

The Buddhist stance on Apostasy

The closest Pali equivalent to what is known as apostasy in other religions is *aññasatthuddessa* or *aññasatthāruddessa*[12], i.e. professing allegiance to someone other than the Buddha as Teacher (after declaring oneself as a Buddhist). Technically speaking, apostasy on the part of a worldling or ordinary person, whether a layman or a monk, can happen. It is, however, an impossibility for a noble or holy person, starting with one in possession of the right view or understanding of the Dhamma.[13]

When a Buddhist monk is found to have departed from the Buddha's Teaching to embrace another religion (i.e. a case of apostasy), or committed any of the Major Offences, he will be expelled from monkhood. Expulsion from monkhood is the most straightforward way to deal with the issue on the basis of actual facts. If a person does not subscribe to the tenets of Buddhism or abide by the Monastic Order any longer, or if he has violated the monastic rules to the extent that he forfeits his right to remain in the Order, then he is supposed to leave. From the vantage point of that person, departure from monkhood is the best way for him to express his integrity and transparency, by acting in accordance with reality. It is fair and honourable behaviour towards other members of the Sangha community, in which he is unwilling or no longer has the right to live, as disrobing shows that he will not take advantage of that community simply by exploiting its form, or outward appearance, for self-serving purposes. It would indeed be strange for him to still claim his membership in it, in which case it must be taken to be clandestine or deceptive conduct. It would even be stranger if he should further claim that to remain in the Order was his personal freedom of religion. If such

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[11] From Brahmajāla Sutta. For the full text of this discourse, see Walshe, Maurice (trans.). 1995. *The Long Discourses of the Buddha.* Kandy, Sri Lanka: The Buddhist Publication Society, pp. 67–90.

[12] Ven. P. A. Payutto. 2002. *Dictionary of Buddhism.* [in Thai, but with English translations interspersed]. Bangkok.

[13] From Bahudhātuka Sutta. For the full text of this discourse, see Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (trans.). 1995. *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha.* Kandy, Sri Lanka: The Buddhist Publication Society, pp. 925–930.

a claim were to be made, it would not be freedom to profess a religion, but freedom to destroy one.

In summary, two important points can be noted as follows:

- Defrocking, though technically the most severe degree of penalty in Buddhism, can hardly be called punishment in the usual sense of the term. It simply reflects a true freedom to do things in an honest and open way.
- In Buddhism there is not any sort of punishment that might threaten one's life or even inflict bodily pain.[14]

Asoka the Great and his legacy of Buddhist kingship

The spirit of freedom of thought, tolerance and sympathetic understanding was adopted by Emperor Asoka of India in the third century BCE. Although he was a converted Buddhist himself and made Buddhism a state religion, he was also a patron of all religions. The following much-quoted passage is from the 12th Edict of Asoka:[15]

> One should not honour only one's own religion and condemn the religions of others, but one should honour others' religions for this or that reason. In so doing, one helps one's own religion to grow and renders service to the religions of others too. In acting otherwise one digs the grave of one's own religion and also does harm to other religions. Whosoever honours his own religion, and condemns other religions, does so indeed through devotion to his own religion, thinking 'I will glorify my own religion'. But on the contrary, in so doing he injures his own religion more gravely. So concord is good: 'Let all listen, and be willing to listen to the doctrines professed by others'.

Asoka's policy of freedom of religion and tolerance is one of his important legacies, as it became a model for monarchs in other countries in later generations. In Thailand over 300 years ago, for example, after Siam (its former name) was made a vicariate apostolic by Pope Alexander VII on 22 August 1662 in the reign of King Narai during the Ayudhya period, it became the first country in the

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[14] Ven. P. A. Payutto. 1999. *Looking at World Peace against the Backdrop of Globalized Civilization.* [in Thai]. Bangkok.

[15] Ven. Dr. Walpola Sri Rahula. 1959 [2008]. *What the Buddha Taught.* Oxford: Oneworld Publications, pp. 4–5. ISBN13: 978-1-85168-142-6.

Far East to receive evangelization efforts because it was the only country in Southeast Asia where the Catholic Fathers could establish themselves safely.[16] One Father even said, 'I do not believe there will be any other country in the world with so many different religions where followers of each religion can observe their rites and rituals so freely as in Siam.'[17]

In present-day Thailand, while the status of the king as a Buddhist and the supreme patron of all religions is constitutionalized, the status of Buddhism as the state religion is not. The great majority of Buddhist Thais are known to have lived peacefully and harmoniously with followers of other religions for centuries. Thailand is perhaps the only country where leaders of major religions have equal opportunity to give their New Year blessings on national television during the same broadcast.

Religious fundamentalism

To most people, the term *religious fundamentalism* often carries a pejorative connotation, suggesting overly strict and literal interpretation of the religious tenets, particularly when such adherence is seen as the root cause of religious exclusivism and extremism, leading to intolerance, to persecution, and ultimately to violence.

On religious violence, the late Ven. Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda made the following observation:[18]

> It is quite natural for cunning and selfish people to take advantage of any kind of virtue, but let all religionists of today bear in mind that those who fight and shed blood in the name of religion, do not follow religious principles and do not serve the cause of humanity. They fight for their own personal gain or power by using the name of a religion....

Religious fundamentalism, as explained above, is obviously incompatible with the Buddhist tenets, simply because violence in whatever form, whether under the disguise of religion or not, is unacceptable. To explain the Buddhist stance

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16 'France–Thailand relations', http://en.wikipedia.org/

17 Ven. P. A. Payutto. 2010. *Chronology of Buddhism in World Civilization* [in Thai]. 4th ed. Bangkok.

18 Ven. Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda. 1996. 'Buddhist attitude towards other religions' in *Gems of Buddhist Wisdom*. 2nd ed. Kuala Lumper: Buddhist Missionary Society, p. 503.

on this, there is no better way than to quote several verses from the *Dhammapada*:[19]

- 'He abused me, he struck me, he overpowered me, he robbed me'—those who harbour such thoughts do not still their hatred. [*Dh.* 3]
- 'He abused me, he struck me, he overpowered me, he robbed me'—those who do not harbour such thoughts still their hatred. [*Dh.* 4]
- Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world; by non-hatred alone is hatred appeased. This is an eternal law. [*Dh.* 5]
- By harming living beings, one is not a noble man. Through harmlessness towards all beings, one is called a noble man. [*Dh.* 270]
- To avoid all evil, to cultivate good, and to cleanse one's own mind—this is the teaching of the Buddhas. [*Dh.* 183]
- Enduring patience is the highest austerity. 'Nibbāna is supreme,' say the Buddhas. He is not a true monk who harms another, nor a real renunciate who oppresses others. [*Dh.* 184]
- Not despising, not harming, restraint according to the code of monastic discipline, moderation in food, dwelling in solitude, devotion to meditation—this is the teaching of the Buddhas. [*Dh.* 185]

The last three and a half verses (*Dh.* 183–185 with *Dh.* 185 consisting of one a half verses in the source text), in particular, are called the Principal Teaching (*ovādapātimokkha* in Pali), or the Fundamental Teaching, not only of this present Gotama Buddha, but also of all other Buddhas, past and future. This should automatically dispel any doubts once and for all as to whether there is such a thing as 'Buddhist fundamentalism' or the Buddhist counterpart of religious fundamentalism in the sense explained above.

As religious fundamentalism essentially stems from differing views among followers of the same religion on how their teachings should be interpreted, one might wonder how disagreements are to be resolved about certain teachings claimed to be Buddhist. Here is an important passage from *Pāsādika Sutta*,[20] in which can be found the Buddha's own advice on this:

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[19] For the whole text of the *Dhammapada*, see Acharya Buddharakkhita (trans.). 1996. *The Dhammapada: The Buddha's Path of Wisdom.* 2nd ed. (with introduction by Bhikkhu Bodhi). Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society.

[20] Chanawangsa, Somseen. 2010. *Dhamma Bilingualized.* Bangkok, p. 1.

> Therefore, Cunda, these doctrinal items I have made known with superknowledge, all the assemblies [i.e. monks, nuns, and male and female lay followers] should convene and rehearse together, cross-checking meaning against meaning, and letter against letter, without contradiction, by which means this religion may continue and be established for a long time for the welfare and happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, and for the good, welfare and happiness of gods and humans.

It is noteworthy that in this passage the importance of language is also stressed. The phrase *meaning against meaning, and letter against letter* is effectively in accordance with the modern linguistic notions of 'content' and 'expression', the two basic facets of human language. This might serve as a reminder that care has to be taken when linguistic interpretation of any text is involved, whether it be literary, legal, philosophical, or religious.

The role of the media in the age of fundamentalism

The age of fundamentalism, which we are now in, is also the age of globalization and the age of information explosion. Repercussions of an event or incident at a particular place and a particular time which used to be minor and trivial can now become enormous, proliferating, and far-reaching. As a result, despite the multifarious differences in race, language, culture, religion, and political ideology, all humans should perceive themselves as members of the same global village. When any problem arises—natural or man-made, economic or ecological, religious or political—that might threaten humanity in whole or in part, we should all come together and join forces to resolve it, putting aside our differences.

When it comes to issues of human rights in general and issues of religious fundamentalism in particular, such issues are no longer sources of concern confined to human rights activists or religious experts, but all sectors in society should also contribute to the solutions, especially the media, given their power and reach.

Apart from entertainment, the media is primarily concerned with information dissemination. It would therefore be of value to examine, from a Buddhist vantage point, what sort of information is to be imparted, when, and how. The following is a summary of what the Buddha himself did and did not do:[21]

[21] From Abhayarājakumāra Sutta. For the full text of this discourse, see Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (trans.). 1995. *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha.* Kandy, Sri Lanka: The Buddhist Publication Society, pp. 498–501.

• What he knows is untruthful, inaccurate and unbeneficial, which is also unwelcome and disagreeable to others, he does not speak.

• What he knows is truthful and accurate but unbeneficial, which is also unwelcome and disagreeable to others, he does not speak.

• What he knows is truthful, accurate and beneficial, even though unwelcome and disagreeable to others, he knows the opportune time to speak.

• What he knows is untruthful, inaccurate and unbeneficial, even though welcome and agreeable to others, he does not speak.

• What he knows is truthful and accurate but unbeneficial, even though welcome and agreeable to others, he does not speak.

• What he knows is truthful, accurate, beneficial and also welcome and agreeable to others, he knows the opportune time to speak.

To put it another way:

• The Buddha never speaks what he knows is untruthful and inaccurate, which by default is also unbeneficial.

• The Buddha never pleases his audience simply by speaking only what is welcome and agreeable to them.

• The Buddha never speaks what he knows is unbeneficial even though it is truthful and accurate.

• Even though he speaks only what he knows is truthful, accurate and beneficial, he chooses the right time to speak, irrespective of whether or not it is welcome and agreeable to his audience.

To know what is truthful, accurate and beneficial is a matter of wisdom, but to choose the right time to speak what is truthful, accurate and beneficial—no matter whether or not it is welcome and agreeable to the audience—is not merely a matter of wisdom but also of compassion. So one important lesson for Buddhists to learn from this is that throughout the 45 years of his ministry, the Buddha set an example of the proper stance on two things: to act towards truth and reality with wisdom, and to behave towards fellow beings with boundless compassion.

Concluding remarks

Perhaps there is no better way for a Buddhist to conclude the discussion of the contribution of religion to world peace than to quote an illuminating and touching passage from the late Ven. Walpola Rahula's article 'Buddhism in the Western World'[22] as follows:

[22] Ven. Dr. Walpola Sri Rahula. 'Buddhism in the Western World'. www.budsas.org.

It might be asked: What is Buddhism's answer to social unrest, social conflicts? Its answer is very clear. As the first verse of the Dhammapada[23] teaches, all unrest, all conflicts, all disturbances are first born in the mind. Conflict or war is nothing but an external manifestation of greed, hatred, ill-will, violence, [and] ignorance born in the minds of men. Social conflict is nothing but an individual conflict on an enormous scale. There is no society apart from individuals, and there is no social conflict apart from individual conflict. If there is peace within individuals, then society is peaceful. So, in order to have a peaceful world, we have to produce peace within individuals, providing them with social, economic, moral and spiritual security. This is Buddhism's answer. It is clear, but enormously difficult to achieve. Yet unless it is achieved, no amount of treaties and pacts on paper can produce real peace in the world.

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[23] The first verse of the Dhammapada reads:
Mind precedes all mental states. Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought. If with an impure mind a person speaks or acts, suffering follows him like the wheel that follows the foot of the ox.

Ven. Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda. 1996. 'Buddhist attitude towards other religions' in *Gems of Buddhist Wisdom.* 2nd ed. Kuala Lumper: Buddhist Missionary Society.

Ven. Dr. Walpola Sri Rahula. 1959 [2008]. *What the Buddha Taught.* Oxford: Oneworld Publications.

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