

## Peace talk

The Abbott of Redbridge Buddhist Vihara, Venerable Pethigamuve Hemarathana thero, the other venerable Buddhist monks, all the leaders of other faith groups and community leaders, I welcome you all on behalf of Redbridge Buddhist community.

Today we also have a group of devotees gathered at the temple to join the monthly retreat which traditionally take place on the full moon day, or the Sunday near the full moon day.

World peace or international day of peace is celebrated on 21<sup>st</sup> of September each year since 1981 after the declaration of world piece day by the United Nations. This is aimed at recognising and strengthening peace between and within all nationals and people.

We must feel happy that most of us have not experienced the world wars of the past, yet we are very far from the ideals of peace goal expected by all of us.

I feel honoured and privileged for being invited to address this large gathering on behalf of Redbridge Buddhist community. This peace walk is organised by the mutli faith group in Redbridge to recognize the importance of peace as well as to promote peace within our community.

Whatever the religion we follow, whoever the leader of our faith group, we all expect harmony, peace and wellbeing of the community. Today we have a gathering from all the religious groups to encourage peace and this event should send a message to the world, how much we value world peace.

Lord Buddha 2600 years ago explained the importance of peace and advised us how to achieve peace within a community. He himself set as an example by advocating and practicing non-violence throughout his life. Lord Buddha himself intervned as a negotiator stopping a number of wars and preventing mass scale massacres during his office.

Once there was a serious dispute between the people from the kingdom of Kosala and kingdom of Shakyans over the water from river Rohini in ancient India. They assembled on either side of river Rohini preparing for a great battle. Lord Buddha himself walked to the battlefield just before the war had begun, and settled the dispute saving thousands of lives.

In another occasion, two famous kings named Chulodara and Mahodara declared war against each other over a very precious throne studded with extremely precious gems. Lord Buddha who Knew this would end in a devastating bloodshed, visited the majestic palace where the throne was kept. After listening to Lord Buddha's advice, both parties came to a compromise and put an end to the plan of war.

Teaching of Lord Buddha in achieving peace is very simple yet most profound in effect. He has laid down five simple principles for every individual to follow. He advised us to refrain from killing, stealing, committing adultery, false speech, and taking intoxicants. I strongly believe all other religious leaders also advise more or less the same thing. Or even a person who does not belong to any faith group who would value simple ethics of a civilized society would certainly agree upon those principles.

Lord Buddha again explains how to practice this virtue with a saying, that everybody is afraid of death, and everybody trembles at violence. Apply this understanding to yourself and practice accordingly. If you are afraid of death so the other is, hence refrain from killing. If you want to protect your own assets, so the other person as well, hence refrain from taking what's not given. You will not be happy to know that your partner committing adultery, so your partner also will not be happy if you commit adultery, hence refrain from it. If you would like to know the truth and only the whole truth, so be the others, hence refrain from false speech. Would you be happy to see your partner or the child becoming a substance misuser, alcoholic dependant or a drug addict? Do you want to become an addict and waste your life, so refrain from taking intoxicants.

If every single individual in the society would abide by those principles there would not be any need of fight between the communities, or wars between the countries.

Lord Buddha explains in great detail the psychology behind those antisocial behaviours leading to disharmony and conflict. Greed, hatred and delusion are three psychological factors governing all those behaviours. If you think carefully and analyse the events occurred prior to any conflict or a war, you will be able to trace back the cause as greed, hatred or combination of the two, due to not comprehending the reality, in other words delusion.

Lord Buddha advises his disciples to eliminate those psychological factors by practicing virtue, mindfulness and developing wisdom. There by you correct the mind that creates conditions for conflict. Since the mind is the fore runner for every single action, one with a purified mind will be the most peaceful person in the world. By this method, over the years millions of people have become peaceful followers of nonviolence.

In order to achieve this, Lord Buddha again gives us practical hints asking us to develop loving kindness. He advises us to spread loving kindness to all living beings, not only humans. No matter what the body shape and size is, whether living closer or very far, invisible or visible, already born or waiting to be born. Lord Buddha further advises us to spread loving kindness to the living beings in all directions, east, west, north, south, upwards and downwards. Protect all living beings just as a mother taking care of her only child. This practice should be cultivated to the extent that you will be mindful of loving kindness during all activities in a day.

May all beings be peaceful and happy.

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Please all of you recite with me.

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