

## BUDDHISM AND GLOBAL PEACE : PERSPECTIVES ON CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY

Damodar Jnawali, PhD

Department of Geography Education

[damoder21@hotmail.com](mailto:damoder21@hotmail.com)

### Abstract

*Present paper deals with the major principles of Buddhism and its need for maintaining global peace. The concept of philosophy, Buddha as an Incarnation of Vishnu, origin and evolution of Buddhism and its spatial diffusion, the Buddhist Councils, major Schools of Buddhism, and Buddha's Teachings for global peace are the major areas of discussion in this paper. Buddha's Teachings provide many practical techniques that are useful for calming anger, controlling desire and creating harmonious relationships. Present world is full of violence and corruption. People are in need of comfort that comes from a spiritual path and teaches nonviolence, contentment, compassion, generosity of spirit, and peace of mind. Buddhism teaches us to cultivate peace in our hearts and work to relieve the sufferings of all living beings. Peace at national as well as global level can be possible only if we apply Buddhism in our daily life.*

**Key words:** Philosophy, culture, religion, spatial diffusion, avatara, Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana, global peace.

### CONTEXT

Geography may be defined as the study of space and place, and of movements between places (Park, 2004). The subject makes an attempt to investigate diverse issues about human activities over the globe. Its discussions begin with the following questions:

- Where is the phenomenon located?
- Why is it located there?
- How and why does it affect the people in this place?
- In what other places do people confront this issue?
- What alternatives do people have to improve the existing situation?

If any event occurs in an area, it first affects the neighbourhood. After that the event or new idea starts to spread to other parts. The process of spread is known as spatial diffusion in geography. Present world, due to the faster growth of transport and communication, has become a cultural complex because the world communities share several distinctive cultural traits (Brown, 2001). Buddhism can be accepted as a cultural and religious phenomenon. Religious geography focuses on the study of geographical factors influencing religions and giving rise to new forms of cultural and religious beliefs influencing attitudes of the people in a region or community.

Generally, a person interested in the study of religion may have a little interest in the study of geography. However, many interesting questions about how religion spreads and influence the people's lives are rooted in geographical factors.

In this context, they are studied from a geographical perspective. The major religions of the world are associated with particular racial groups, cultures, political systems and lifestyles (Park, 2004). It is difficult to imagine Thailand without Buddhism, Nepal and India without Hinduism, and the British world without Christianity. A religion has no limited boundary. Buddhism is its example since it has spread up to the western world.

Buddhism is accepted as a religion as well as a philosophy. Philosophy is a discipline associated with the process of involving investigation, analysis, and development of ideas. It deals with a general understanding of values and reality. The discipline is used to a) clarify the important ideas and concepts about God, moral obligation, knowledge, causation, etc, b) solve issues and problems, c) provide logic and ethics, d) give a conceptual analysis and a theoretical aspect, e) proceed by reasoning and argument, f) pose ultimate questions, and g) deal with interdisciplinary knowledge. The frequently raised issues in a philosophical study are: nature of the universe, nature of God, nature and destiny of soul and laws of the soul's life respectively.

If we want to trace out the history of the Hindu philosophy it started during the period of the Upanishads (900-500 B.C.). There are six schools of the Hindu philosophy that accepts the existence of the Vedas. The Vedas are regarded as the major root of all the religions. The dictum "Vedokhilo Dharma Moolam" is very popular. The Samkhya, Vaisheshika, Nyaya, Yoga, Purva Mimamsa and Uttara Mimamsa (Vedantadarshan) are the six schools of the Hindu philosophy. Vedantadarshan is also known as Brahmasutra.

The Samkhya, propounded by Kapila regards the universe as consisting of two eternal realities: purusha and prakriti. The prakriti (nature) is composed of three gunas (dispositions): satva, raja and tama. If the equilibrium among the gunas is disturbed, the creation of the world starts. The Vaisheshika system proposed by the sage Kanada deals with an atomic pluralism. The God is accepted as a major force to create consciousness among atoms. The Nyaya School founded by Gautama seeks to find out valid sources knowledge and differentiate them from false opinions. The sources of knowledge are perception, inference, comparison and testimony.

The main text of the Yoga Darshana is the Bhagavad Gita dealing with Karma-Yoga; Jnana Yoga; Dhyana-Yoga; and Bhakti-Yoga. Purva Mimamsa attempts to establish the authority of the Vedas whereas Uttara Mimamsa (Vedanta) is associated with the teaching of the Upanishads. This is also related to the later part of the Vedas.

Religion as a complex component comprising various aspects is an inseparable part of human behaviour, language, thought and culture. It is a part of individual life and provides certain guidelines to a society. Sociologically, religion may be explained as a 'unified system of beliefs and practices' uniting human beings into a single moral community. There are a number of religions in the world. Major religions by their followers are presented in table 1.

The world population has marked 6.5 billion in 2006. The data in table 1 indicate that the Christianity represents the largest population (32.3%) followed by Islam (21%), Hinduism (14.5%) and secular or nonreligious group (13.7%) respectively. The share of Buddhist population at global level is 5.8%.

The followers of a specific religion are counted through the records of organizations, population census, surveys, estimates based on indirect data, and field work. However, the relevant data on each of the religions at global level are not available. These are based on rough estimates.

The main objective of this paper is to deal with the major principles of Buddhism and its need for maintaining global peace.

**Table 1**

Major religions and their adherents

Country	Number
Christianity	2 billion
Islam	1.3 billion
Hinduism	900 million
Secular/Zonreligious/Agnostic/Atheist	850 million
Buddhism	360 million
Chinese traditional religion	225 million
Primal-indigenous	150 million
African Traditional & Diasporic	95 million
Sikhism	23 million
Juche	19 million
Spiritism	14 million
Judaism	14 million
Bahai	6 million
Jainism	4 million
Shinto	4 million
Cao Dai	3 million
Tenrikyo	2.4 million
Neo-Paganism	1 million
Unitarian-Universalism	800 thousand
Rastafarianism	700 thousand
Scientology	600 thousand
Zoroastrianism	150 thousand

Source: Adherents.com database. September 2002

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Present paper is based on secondary sources of information. For this purpose, seminar papers, research reports and other documents published were searched and reviewed. Selected materials were also searched through internet. Discussion is based on qualitative approach with specific reference to cultural geographic perspective starting with the area of origin of Buddhism and its destination and its need in maintaining global peace.

## BUDDISM AND GLOBAL PEACE

### Buddha as an Incarnation of Vishnu

About the incarnation of the God, the Lord Krishna in the Geeta has said to Arjuna:

*Yada yada hi dharmasya glanirbhavati bharata  
Abhyutthanam adharmasya tadatmanan srijamyaham  
Paritranaaya sadhunam vinashaya cha duskritam  
Dharma samsthapanarthaya sambhabami yuge yuge.  
Srimadbhagavadgita 4 (7 & 8).*

*Ye te chansa kala punsa Krishnastu bhagavan swayam  
Indrari vyakulam lokam mridayanti yuge yuge.*

Srimadbhagavat 1 (3 – 28)

*Ittham yad yada badha danavottha bhavishyati*

*Tada tadavateeryaham karishyamyarisankshayam.*

Saptasati 11 (54-55)

Lord Krishna said that the God incarnates on the earth in order to restore religion, punish the evil and protect the weak and the righteous living beings. The same message is available from the Srimadbagatamahapurana and the Saptasati, an extract from the Markandeyapurana. Generally, all the incarnations of God are associated with Lord Vishnu, because Vishnu is the preserver of the worlds and the purpose of an incarnation is also the same. The incarnation of Vishnu's varies from time to time according to the situation. Generally, ten incarnations are popular. Nine of them have already appeared. The tenth incarnation has not yet come.

The Varaha-Purana mentions 10 and the Bhagavata Purana records 24 (22 in Prathama Skandha and two later on) incarnations of Vishnu. They are Kumara, Varaha, Narada, Nara Narayana, Kapila, Dattatreya, Yajna, Rishabha, Prithu, Matsya, Kurma, Dhanvantari, Mohini, Narsimha, Vamana, Parashurama, Vyasa, Rama, Balrama, Krishna, Buddha, Kalki, Hansa and Hayagriva respectively.

Of the 24 incarnations, the ten are considered as the most important ones. They are:

1. Varaha 2. Matsya 3. Kurma and 4. Narsimha at the beginning; 5. Vamana 6. Parashurama and 7. Rama at the middle and 8. Krishna 9. Buddha and 10. Kalki at the later period.

### Origin and Spatial Diffusion of Buddhism

Buddhism is one of the major world religions founded in the Indian sub-continent and based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, later on known as the Buddha, or Enlightened One. Today it is divided into two major branches known as Theravada, the Way of the Elders, and Mahayana, the Great Vehicle. Buddha was the founder of this philosophy. He rejected the major aspects of the Hindu philosophy and challenged the authority of the priesthood. He did not agree with the validity of the Vedic scriptures and the sacrificial cult based on them. The process of the development of Buddhism was associated with a monastic movement. Buddha did not believe caste system.

Geographically, arrangement of phenomena or events are analysed in terms of spatial distribution. In this context, Lumbini is a place where the Lord Buddha was born. Buddhism is a new idea or a new innovation. Gradually, this idea started to spread to other parts like a process of diffusion of innovation in cultural geography. Buddha attained the enlightenment in India. Nepal and India worked as the centres of innovation from which Buddhism spread to other parts of the world in innovative

waves. Diffusion is a process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels. The key elements involved in the diffusion of new ideas are the *innovation, communication channels, time, and the social system.*

Neighbourhood plays a significant role in the process of diffusion. There is a rule of distance decay function. Larger the distance less will be the possibility of accepting new innovation or idea. This rule is applied in case of Buddhism and its philosophy. Buddhism spread to the Asian countries like Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar and Laos. Today, Buddhism is found to be dominant in these countries. The top 10 countries with the largest national Buddhist populations are presented in table 2.

**Table 2**  
Top 10 Largest National Buddhist Populations

Country	Number
China	102,000,000
Japan	89,650,000
Thailand	55,480,000
Vietnam	49,690,000
Myanmar	41,610,000
Sri Lanka	12,540,000
South Korea	10,920,000
Taiwan	9,150,000
Cambodia	9,130,000
India	7,000,000

Source: Russell, 1997.

There are seven countries where Buddhism represents a large proportion of population ranging from 10,920,000 in South Korea to more than 102,000,000 in china. In Sri Lanka, 69% of the population is Buddhist followed by Hindu (15%) and Muslim (8%) respectively. Thus, Buddhism has become popular in the countries of destination.

### Major Schools of Buddhism

The Buddhist councils and conferences played a significant role for the diffusion of Buddhism at global level. The first council was held at Rajagriha immediately after the death of Buddha. It was presided over by a monk named Mahakasyapa. Its purpose was to recite and agree on the Buddha's actual teachings and on proper monastic discipline. The second great council was held at Vaisali. Its purpose was to deal with ten questionable monastic practices—the use of money, the drinking of palm wine, and other irregularities. The council declared these practices unlawful. The third council was held at Pataliputra. It was called by King Asoka in the 3d century BC. Convened by the monk

Moggaliputta Tissa, it was held in order to purify the *Sangha* of the large number of false monks and heretics who had joined the order because of its royal patronage. The compilation of the Buddhist scriptures (Tripitaka) was supposedly completed, with the addition of a body of subtle philosophy (*abhidharma*) to the doctrine (dharma) and monastic discipline (vinaya) that had been recited at the first council. The dispatch of missionaries to various countries was the result of this council. The fourth council was held about AD 100 at Jalandhar or in Kashmir under the patronage of King Kanishka but the Theravada Buddhists do not recognize its authenticity.

There are two main schools of Buddhism: **Theravada** and **Mahayana**.

**Theravada Buddhism** is associated with the 'teaching of the Elders'. The Theravadins follow the practices that passed down by the senior monks from the Buddha's time, such as living in the forests and meditating. The goal in Theravada Buddhism is to become an Arhat, a person who is free of suffering. This is also known as the Southern School.

The school of Theravada has flourished in the countries of South and Southeast Asia. They are Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Malaysia, India, Thailand, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia (Alexander, 1996). Theravada is the strongest in Sri Lanka, Thailand and Myanmar, but seriously weakened in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. Sri Lankan monks have helped to revive Theravada Buddhism in Bali, other parts of Indonesia, and Malaysia, where it had slowly died out by the end of the fifteenth century. In Indonesia, Buddhism is officially recognized and accepted as one of the five state religions. The other four are Islam, Hinduism and the Catholic and Protestant forms of Christianity.

Buddhism in India arose as a spiritual force against social injustice, degrading superstitious rites, ceremonies and sacrifices, and tyranny of the caste system. It advocated the equality of all men; emancipated women and gave them complete spiritual freedom. Buddhism in India was almost collapsed between the 8th and 12th centuries AD. Later on, B. R. Ambedkar made an attempt to popularise it among untouchables. About 3.5 million members of the untouchable caste were converted into Buddhists under his leadership. Buddhism could not flourish in India at the end of the nineteenth century. However, the Sri Lankans with the help of British scholars founded the Maha Bodhi Society for the purpose of restoring the holy

Buddhist pilgrimage sites in India. They have been very successful and now have temples with monks at each of these sites, as do several other Buddhist traditions. In the 1950s, Ambedkar started a neo-Buddhist movement among untouchables in western India. Hundreds of thousands joined this movement. They belonged to the lowest caste. The emphasis was on gaining political and social rights for themselves. After the death of Ambedkar, it was headed by Sangharakshita, an Englishman. This form of Buddhism was especially designed for Western practitioners.

In Thailand, the Buddhist monastic community has a Supreme Patriarch and a Council of Elders with responsibility for keeping the purity of the tradition. There are two types of monastic communities, those dwelling in the forests and living in the villages. There is also a Buddhist university for monks. It is primarily for training. An attempt has been made to translate the Buddhist scriptures from classical Pali into modern Thai.

In Myanmar, the military regime brutally destroyed the monasteries where dissidents had been living, particularly in the north of the country. Now the government is giving great sums of money to the monks in order to win their support and silence. The country has a long tradition of equal emphasis on meditation and study, particularly of the "abhidharma" system of Buddhist psychology, metaphysics and ethics. There are many meditation centers where monks and teachers instruct people in basic meditation practices.

There are many isolated villages traditionally following the Burmese Buddhist tradition in southern hills along the Burmese border of Bangladesh. But their level of understanding and practice is quite low. Buddhism is still taught and practiced in a rural setting of Laos. Its practice is traditional and the monasteries are in poor condition due to the effect of the American-Vietnam War. The meditation tradition is extremely weak. Buddhism is being revived after Pol Pot's destruction and persecution in Kampuchea (Cambodia). In Vietnam, Buddhism is considered as the enemy of the state. It is thought that the monks challenge the state authority and control.

### **Mahayana Buddhism**

The **Mahayana** is also known as Northern School. It is associated with the Bodhisattva Path. A Bodhisattva is one who enlightens oneself as well as others. There are many Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in this school. Ritual is more important than in Theravada school. This type of Buddhism was originated in China and developed in the countries

of East and Central Asia. Now it is well flourished in Taiwan, Hong Kong and South Korea. Taiwan has a strong monastic community of monks and nuns. There are Buddhist programmes for social welfare. Hong Kong is also noted for monastic community. The Chinese Buddhist communities in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines give emphasis on ceremonies for the welfare of ancestors, and for prosperity and wealth for the living (Alexander, 1996). In South Korea, many monastic communities of monks and nuns are getting popular support and the tradition of meditation known as the Korean Zen has flourished.

In Japan a number of Buddhist temples are kept for tourists and visitors. However, many of them are commercialized. From the thirteenth century, the Japanese have had a tradition of married temple priests. They are not prohibited against drinking alcohol. They gradually replaced the tradition of celibate monks. Most Japanese follow a combination of Buddhism and the traditional Shinto religion. The priests perform both the Shinto and Buddhist customs. The Shinto ceremonies are popular for births and marriages whereas the Buddhist ones are practiced for funerals.

### Tibetan Buddhism

Tibet is located in the central part of Asia. The Tibetan Buddhism is in the form of Mahayana Buddhism. It is also known as Lamaism. Vajrayana Buddhism is also followed in Tibet. Tibetan Buddhism was developed here at the beginning of the 7th century CE. It follows Madhyamika and Yogacara philosophy, Tantric rituals, Theravadin monastic discipline and the shamanistic features of the indigenous religion, Bön. The system is based on reincarnating lamas and a large number of deities.

There are four schools of the Tibetan Buddhism. They are identified as **Nyingmapa**, **Kagyüpa**, **Sakyapa** and **Gelugpa** respectively. **Nyingmapa** is the oldest of the Tibetan Buddhist Schools. Its doctrine is based on *ati-yoga* (extraordinary yoga). It also makes wide use of local divinities related to the indigenous, pre-Buddhist Bon religion. The monks under this school are not required to be celibate. **Kagyüpa School** places value on the transmission of teachings from teacher to disciple. *Hatha yoga* is practiced in it. It is also called the "Tibetan Zen." **Sakyapa School** is the smallest one. It is related with tantrism. **Gelugpa** is the *School of the Virtuous* and also called the *Yellow Hats*. This is the youngest of the Tibetan schools, but is today the largest and the most important one. Practices

are centered on achieving concentration through meditation in order to receive bodhisattva.

The Dalai Lama is the Head of the dominant school of the Tibetan Buddhism. From 1642 to 1959, he was the spiritual and political leader of Tibet and resided in Potala Palace in Lhasa in the winter and in the Norbulingka during summer. The Dalai Lama won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. Tibetan Buddhism is known to the world through his office. There was a Chinese takeover in 1959 and he is still in exile.

Buddhism had to face a number of problems in China. A majority of the Buddhist monasteries in the areas of the Han Chinese were destroyed. There was a Cultural Revolution during the period of 1960s and 1970s. Most of the well-trained monks, nuns and teachers were either executed or imprisoned. Many Han Chinese are interested in Buddhism but there is a lack of teachers. The government has established some Buddhist colleges to run two to four year programmes associated with Buddhism but political education has been one of the major components in its syllabus. Physical reconstruction of Buddhism has also started. Temples, pagodas and statues are being reconstructed and the Chinese government is also helping their reconstruction. Most part of the reconstruction is financed by the local communities.

### Buddhism in Europe and Australia

Buddhism has also spread to the countries of Europe and Australia. The European countries have many organizations and thousands of the European practice Buddhism in their own countries. The Buddhist population in European countries is presented in table 3.

Buddhist population is rapidly growing in a number of European countries. As a result, Buddhist Unions have been founded. Of them, the *German Buddhist Union* (Deutsche Buddhistische Union-DBU) and the Italian *Buddhist Union* (Unione Buddhista Italiana-UBI) are very popular. Such organizations are being established all over Europe. Today, more than fifteen nations have become the members of the European Buddhist Union (EBU). They are Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, England, U.K.; France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Switzerland.

### Buddhism in Nepal

Nepal is the birth place of Lord Buddha, the propounder of Buddhism. However, the Buddhist

Table 3  
Buddhist Populations in European Countries in 2000

Country	Total Population	Buddhists	%
Great Britain	58 Mill.	180,000	0.3
Germany	82 Mill.	170,000	0.2
France	58 Mill.	350,000	0.6
Austria	8 Mill.	17,000	0.2
Switzerland	7 Mill.	25,000	0.3
The Netherlands	15 Mill.	33,000	0.2
Italy	57 Mill.	75,000	0.1
Portugal, Spain, Greece	60 Mill.	a few 1000s	--
Yugoslavia and Hungary	20 Mill.	10,000	0.01
Poland and Czech Republic	49 Mill.	10,000	0.01
Russian Federation	147 Mill.	one million	0.7
Denmark and Scandinavia	23 Mill.	15-20,000	0.1

Source: Baumann, 2001.

population in this country is very small. Buddhism is the dominant religion of the people in thinly-populated northern areas. These are inhabited by the Mongoloids identified as the Sherpa, Lopa, Manangi, Thakali, Lhomi, Dolpa and Nyimba. They represent a small proportion of population in the country. The religious status of population in Nepal is presented in table 4.

Some ethnic groups like the Gurung, Lepcha, Tamang, Magar, Newar, Yakkha, Thami and Chepang in the central Nepal are the followers of Buddhism. Populations of these groups are larger

Nepal is a multi-cultural and multi-religious country. Its cultural aspects are influenced by Buddhism. Tibetan Buddhism is widely practised in Nepal. The Newar people practice Vajrayana Buddhism. During the period of the Ranas, there was a great control over Buddhism. After the overthrow of Rana dynasty, Buddhism gradually developed in the country. Theravadins played a great role for the revival campaign. Presently, there are three main Buddhist schools; Tibetan Buddhism, Newar Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism.

Table 4  
Religious composition of population in Nepal

Religion	Percentage share		
	1981	1991	2001
Hindu	89.50	86.51	80.62
Bouddha	5.32	7.78	10.74
Islam	2.66	3.53	4.20
Kirat	--	1.72	3.60
Jain	0.06	0.04	0.02
Christian	0.03	0.17	0.45
Sikh	--	--	0.03
Bahai	--	--	0.01
Others	2.43	0.14	0.35
Not stated	--	0.10	--
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: CBS, 1995 & 2003.

compared to those of the northern ones. They were in close contact with the Hindu castes. So they are also influenced by Hinduism. Tibetan Buddhism has also been adopted by the Kirant tribes like Limbu and Rai of the eastern hill region in our country.

In 1824, Mr. Brian Hodgson, a British diplomat, discovered a great number of Sanskrit Buddhist manuscripts in Nepal. This work has brought about a revolutionary change in the history of Buddhism. The European people got information on Buddhism in the early part of this century. Copies of these works total 381 bundles and have been distributed

to make them accessible to European scholars (Shakya, date unknown).

Prof. Jayadeva Singh in his "Introduction to Madhyamika Philosophy" has stated that "Books on Mahayana Buddhism were completely lost in India. Their translation existed in Chinese, Japanese and Tibetan. Mahayana literature was written mostly in Sanskrit and mixed Sanskrit. Scholars, who have made a study of Buddhism, hardly suspected that there were also books on Buddhism in original Sanskrit." Similarly, Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji states that "One great service the people of Nepal, particularly the highly civilized Newars of the Nepal valley did, was the preservation of all the manuscripts of Mahayana Buddhist literature in Sanskrit. It was similarly the great achievement of people of Nepal to have preserved the equally valuable original Sanskrit texts of Mahayana Buddhism (Shakya, date unknown)." Thus, Nepalese Buddhism has contributed to academic world by supplying the Sanskrit manuscript.

### **Buddhism for Peace and Political Stability**

Buddhism is not directly related to political aspects. Its major thrust is to guide the society towards humanism. In the same way, its objective was to find out the problems of society and provide suggestions to guide it towards humanism, welfare of its members, and more equitable sharing of resources. Buddha also discussed about the importance and the prerequisites of a good government. He stated that if the head of the government becomes corrupt, the country could become corrupt. He gave a message against corruption and about humanitarian principles of a good government. Buddha said, "When the ruler of a country is just and good, the ministers become just and good; when the ministers are just and good, the higher officials become just and good; when the higher officials are just and good, the rank and file become just and good; when the rank and file become just and good, the people become just and good." Buddha encouraged the spirit of consultation and the democratic process. This is shown within the community of the order in which all members have the right to decide on matters of general concern.

Buddhism has played an eminent role in Sri Lankan politics. It has worked as a unifying force for a majority the Sinhalese. The monks have to maintain close relationships with the lay community, whose members supply them with food, shelter, and clothing. The Sinhalese people have paid devotion to Buddhism. A number of organizations, such as the All-Ceylon Buddhist Congress, the Colombo

Buddhist Theosophical Society, the All-Ceylon Buddhist Women's Association, and the Young Men's Buddhist Association have been founded. They are supporting the Sinhalese nationalism. Individual monks are also involved in party politics. In this context, Buddhism has also become a source of political motivation in Sri Lanka.

The ten rules for Good Government mentioned in the Jataka are known as 'Dasa Raja Dharma'. These rules can be applied by any government which wishes to rule the country peacefully. The rules were as follows:

- Be liberal and avoid selfishness
- Maintain a high moral character
- Be prepared to sacrifice one's own pleasure for the well-being of the subjects
- Be honest and maintain absolute integrity
- Be kind and gentle
- Lead a simple life for the subjects to emulate
- Be free from hatred of any kind
- Exercise non-violence
- Practice patience and
- Respect public opinion to promote peace and harmony.

Regarding the behaviour of rulers, Buddha provided following suggestions:

- A good ruler should act impartially and should not be biased and discriminate between particular groups of subjects against another.
- A good ruler should not harbor any form of hatred against any of his subjects.
- A good ruler should show no fear whatsoever in the enforcement of the law, if it is justifiable.
- A good ruler must possess a clear understanding of the law to be enforced. It should not be enforced just because the ruler has the authority to enforce the law. It must be done in a reasonable manner and with common sense.

The Buddha's emphasis on the moral duty of a ruler to use public power to improve the welfare of the people had inspired Emperor Asoka in the Third Century B.C. to do likewise. Emperor Asoka, a sparkling example of this principle, resolved to live according to the Dhamma and served his subjects and all humanity.

Buddha should be considered as a social reformer. He did not agree with the caste system, recognized the equality of people, spoke on the need to improve socio-economic conditions, recognized the importance of a more equitable distribution of wealth among the rich and the poor, raised the status of women, recommended the incorporation of humanism in government and administration, and taught that a society should not be run by greed

but with consideration and compassion for the people.

Many scholars and critics have pointed out that the commercialization of Buddhism has resulted in the moral decline and dishonourable scandals within the Sangha in Thailand. Santikaro Bhikkhu, an American monk living in Thailand discussed about corruption of the Thai monks. His paper was published in the *Asia Week*. He mentioned that money has replaced Buddhist moral values in the Sangha and this has resulted in the decline of the monastic discipline. Instances of Sangha misconducts include a wide range of scandals such as corruption, utilisation of temple property, drug abuse and sex scandals.

There are a number of causes of conflict at national as well as global level. The main causes of conflict are associated with disparity between rich and poor, racism, ethnic conflict and lack of information. Disparity between rich and poor is a source of acute suffering. It keeps the world in a state of instability, conflict and war. Racism is also an evil, working as a barrier to peace. Lack of communication among peoples also undermines the efforts towards peace. Buddhism is based on the teachings of Buddha. The core concept of Buddhism or the enlightenment is the realization of the Four Noble Truths. They are mentioned below.

#### *(1) Life as suffering*

This is more than a mere recognition of the presence of suffering in existence. It is a statement that, in its very nature, human existence is essentially painful from the moment of birth to the moment of death. Even death brings no relief, for the Buddha accepted the Hindu idea of life as cyclical, with death leading to further rebirth.

#### *(2) Ignorance of the nature as the cause of suffering*

All suffering is caused by ignorance of the nature of reality and the craving, attachment, and grasping that result from such ignorance.

#### *(3) End of suffering by overcoming ignorance and attachment*

Suffering can be ended by overcoming ignorance and attachment.

#### *(4) Noble Eightfold Path to be followed for the end of suffering*

The path to the suppression of suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path, which consists of *right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right-mindedness, and right contemplation.*

The Buddhist canon (Dharmagrantha) is known as the Tripitaka, or Three Baskets, because it consists of three collections of writings: the *Sutra Pitaka*, a collection of discourses; the *Vinaya Pitaka*, the code of monastic discipline; and the *Abhidharma Pitaka*, containing philosophical, psychological, and doctrinal discussions and classifications.

Firstly, Buddha spoke about the equality of all human beings. The classification of human beings should be based on the quality of their moral conduct. Secondly, Buddha encouraged the spirit of social co-operation and active participation in society. This spirit can motivate a better political process of modern societies. Thirdly, since no one was appointed as the Buddha's successor, the members of the Order were to be guided by the Dhamma and Vinaya, or in short, the Rule of Law. Until today every member of the Sangha is to abide by the Rule of Law which governs and guides their conduct. Fourthly, the Buddha encouraged the spirit of consultation and the democratic process.

Buddhism is based on the principle of non-violence and directs us towards transformation in our way of life. We are attached to material desire. This attachment should be transformed to spiritual values. We always give a slogan of peace. Peace is actually a state of inner tranquility. It is the enlightenment attained by Buddha which is also known as "nirvana." It is possible only if our mind becomes free from greed, hatred and ignorance. The essence of Buddhism is the interdependence of all living beings and other phenomena. It teaches us that all the things can exist through their interrelationship with all other phenomena. The principle of mutually supportive coexistence is essential for the welfare of human beings. This is the core thinking of Buddhism. It would be better to recite the beautiful epic poem of Edwin Arnold that offers great respect to Lord Buddha.

#### **"The Light of Asia"**

Edwin Arnold

*So that the Devas knew the signs, and said  
"Buddha will go again to help the World."*

*"Yea!" spake He, "now I go to help the World"*

*This last of many times; for birth and death*

*End hence for me and those who learn my Law.*

*I will go down among the Sâkyas,*

*Under the southward snows of Himalaya,*

*Where pious people live and a just King."*

*Ah! Blessed Lord! Oh, high deliverer!*

*Forgive this feeble script, which doth thee wrong,  
measuring with little wit thy lofty love.*

*Ah! Lover! Brother! Guide! Lamp of the law!*

*I take my refuge in thy name and thee!*

*I take my refuge in thy law of good!  
I take my refuge in thy order! Om!  
The dew is on the lotus! — rise, great sun!  
And lift my leaf and mix me with the wave.  
Om Mani padme hum, the sunrise comes!  
The dewdrop slips into the Shining Sea!*

## CONCLUSION

Present paper is an attempt to deal with the major principles of Buddhism and its need for maintaining global peace. The concept of philosophy, major schools under Hindu Philosophy, Buddha as an Incarnation of Vishnu, Origin and Evolution of Buddhism and its spatial diffusion, the Buddhist Councils, the Schools of Buddhism, and Buddha's Teachings for global peace were the major areas of discussion in this paper. Buddhism has two major schools of the Theravada and Mahayana but the ultimate goals of both the schools are to secure and maintain peace, happiness, social welfare and harmony in human society all over the world.

We can conclude that the principles and teachings of Buddhism should be followed in order to maintain peace at global level. In this aspect, the new democratic government has to play a crucial role. The establishment of the Siddhartha University in Nepal will be a noble step in this area.

We have to join hands with all in order to raise the world-embracing vision of a Buddha where all nations, races and creeds will come to love one another, and injustices, wars and discrimination will vanish. We have to develop better understanding among the peoples with different cultures and cooperate together to improve the lives of the people not only spiritually and intellectually, but also socially, economically in terms of proper utilization of resources available.

We are in need of changing the world in which harmony and cooperation will prevail. The Buddha's teachings contain many practical techniques for calming anger, controlling desire, and creating harmonious relationships. In a world as full of violence and corruption as ours, people seek comfort and wisdom from a spiritual path that teaches nonviolence, contentment, compassion, generosity of spirit, and peace of mind. Buddhism teaches us to cultivate peace in our hearts and work to relieve the sufferings of all living beings, without exception. Now, in this time of fear and uncertainty in Nepal, Buddha's message of peace and compassion is very essential to unite us all in an atmosphere of peace and political stability. Buddhism must address current social problems such as racism, sexism, environmental deterioration, and economic injustice. We must join

hands to demonstrate our commitment towards peace by correcting social and economic inequalities.

*Asato Ma Sadgamaya; Tamaso Ma Jyotir-Gamaya  
Mrityor-Ma Amritam Gamaya*

Lead me from the unreal to the real; lead me from darkness to the light and lead me from mortality to immortality.

*Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah Sarve Santu Niramayah  
Sarve Bhadrani Pasyantu Ma Kaschid-Duhkha-Bhag-  
Bhavet*

May all be happy; may all be free from disabilities; may all behold what is auspicious and may none suffer from sorrow.

*O creator of the Universe!*

*We meditate upon thy supreme splendour.*

*May thy radiant power illuminate our intellects,  
destroy our sins, and guide us in the right direction.*

*Om Shanti Shanti Shantih!*

**Acknowledgement** This is a revised version of the paper presented at the seminar organized by the Siddhartha University on November 18 2006. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Bhikshu Dr. Sunanda Mahasthvir and Mr. Shiva Prasad Munankarmi for their encouragement to prepare this paper.

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