

Resource Package Related to Buddhism, Military Chaplaincy and Military Service in General

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Message in support of UK military servicemembers from H.H. the Dalai Lama. The message below:

"I have always admired those who are prepared to act in the defense of others for their courage and determination. In fact, it may surprise you to know that I think that monks and soldiers, sailors and airmen have more in common than at first meets the eye. Strict discipline is important to us all, we all wear a uniform and we rely on the companionship and support of our comrades.

Although the public may think that physical strength is what is most important, I believe that what makes a good soldier, sailor or airman, just as what makes a good monk, is inner strength. And inner strength depends on having a firm positive motivation. The difference lies in whether ultimately you want to ensure others' well being or whether you want only wish to do them harm.

Naturally, there are some times when we need to take what on the surface appears to be harsh or tough action, but if our motivation is good our action is actually non-violent in nature. On the other hand if we use sweet words and gestures to deceive, exploit and take advantage of others, our conduct may appear agreeable, while we are actually engaged in quite unacceptable violence.

The ultimate purpose of Buddhism is to serve and benefit humanity, therefore I believe that what is important for Buddhists is the contribution we can make to human society according to our own ideas and values. The key to overcoming suffering and ensuring happiness is inner peace. If we have that we can face difficulties with calmness and reason, while our inner happiness remains undisturbed. The teachings of love, kindness and tolerance, the conduct of non-violence as I have explained above, and especially the Buddhist theory that all things are relative are a source of that inner peace.

It is my prayer that all of you may be able to do your duty and fulfil your mission and in due course when that is done to return to your homes and families."

~ Dalai Lama

The Buddha and the Four-Limbed Army: The Military in the Pali Canon

Matthew Kosuta Ph.D.

This paper is a summary of my Master's thesis. I undertook this study in order to clarify what I saw as an apparent contradiction in Theravada Buddhism and its pacifist ethic. Pacifism constitutes a main and ever-present theme in the Theravada Pali Canon. It best expresses itself in ethical conduct (sila)[1], which is founded, on the concept of universal love and compassion. The practice of this ethical system is absolutely necessary in order to attain nibbana. Yet, after the introduction of Buddhism into the now Theravada countries, Sri Lanka and Buddhist Southeast Asia (excepting Vietnam), a strong military tradition has continued in these countries, remaining side by side with the Buddhist pacifist ideal.

The coexistence of a pacifist ethic and a military tradition creates an apparent contradiction. In an attempt to better understand this paradox, I studied the treatment of the military in the Pali Canon.[2] The general focus of my studies is the interaction between a pacifist religion, in this case Theravada Buddhism, and the military apparatus that protects the country within which this religion is found. Specifically, within the boundaries of my thesis I examined the canonical texts relative to this question. My study had three objectives: first, examine how the Pali Canon treats the subject of the military; second find the attitude, whether implicit or explicit, expressed by this treatment; and third, verify the accuracy of the Pali Canon's description of the military by comparing it to contemporary sources also treating the ancient Indian military. I feel that an analysis of the military in the Pali Canon allows us to better understand Buddhism, pacifism, and militarism in their various contexts.

My working hypotheses were as follows: strong ties even inseparable ones can exist between a pacifist religion and the military; the canon must in some way, support military action; and a pacifist religion has no real means of affecting the military.

The theory framing this study states: Pacifism and militarism are diametrically opposed. The military references found in the Pali Canon were Sanskrit and contextualized both historically and philosophically. The historical context being the world of the kshatriya (Sanskrit, this term rather than the Pali khattiya will be used throughout as it is already well known) and the ancient Indian four-limbed army (caturangini sena), the four limbs being chariots, elephants, horses, and foot soldiers. The philosophical context being Theravada ethical and soteriological theory.

I found that the Pali Canon treats the military in a variety of different ways, which I arranged in six main categories. The first category I titled Scenery, Symbol and Security. This category contains the Doctrinally neutral references, ones in which the military appears as part of the background or scenery of the passage. It may appear as a symbol of the power and prestige of a king or as security for him or the state. The military may well be used in teaching a point of Doctrine, but it does not constitute the subject of the teaching. So, no opinion is given or a judgment rendered on the military, and its absence

would cause more a loss of color than substance and in no way affect the meaning of the passage.

Next, comes the category of Mundane (lokiya) vs. Transcendental (lokuttara). Here are the references in which the Pali Canon places the military in the mundane; thus, military actions are the performance of mundane actions as opposed to being the performance of otherworldly or transcendental actions. Buddhist laity typically operate within the mundane, while someone performing Path actions, usually a monk, operates in the transcendental (Reynolds, 1979). The Canon makes it clear in numerous passages that military action is not conducive to following the Path; that it should be recognized as such and renounced. The Buddha himself, in his last life and in previous lives, renounced the apex of kshatriya life, that of a king. The skills and actions of a warrior are said to lead to a rebirth in a purgatory or hell. But, the military does not find itself singled out and condemned more harshly than any other mundane profession, action or skill. In fact, even when being condemned as ultimately unproductive, the Pali Canon often corroborates the high social status of the military within the mundane.

Not surprisingly, due to the mundane position of the military, a set of monastic regulations governing a monk's interactions with the military has been laid out in the Viniyapitaka (the Book of Discipline) and this makes up the third category: Monastic Discipline and the Military. Some of the more important rules include: a monk may visit an army that has marched out of its garrison only if he has sufficient reason and if his stay does not last longer than three days; monks are forbidden from viewing a mock combat, army deployment, or an army review. These regulations were necessary, for some monks still had the desire to witness the above activities. Idle gossip, which includes talking of military matters, has also been forbidden. One of the crucial references in this study concerns the regulation banning soldiers in the king's service from joining the sangha (the monastic community). This passage leads one to believe that the Buddha made a political decision in recognition of Buddhism's need for protection from physical dangers.

The military also figures in the category treating the utopic rule of the cakkavattin (a Wheel Turning King). Here, the military plays a strange role where the cakkavattin maintains a complete four-limbed army and his sons are described as "foe crushers"; yet, neither performs a military function. They seem to appear only as a necessary symbol of kingship. The next category I termed The Metaphor: Nibbanic Action is War. Here the military plays an important role in serving as the referent in this metaphor. Striving for nibbana, i.e. performing Path actions, is so difficult that the Buddha expresses this 4anskrit4 in a series of analogies, which express the powerful metaphor Nibbanic Action is War. In order to explain the difficulties of Path actions, and the superior qualities and skills necessary to overcome them, a monk is frequently told that he must be like a warrior or elephant skilled in battle. The Canon frequently speaks of "conquering" various mundane elements, and just as a raja would have his senapati, his army leader, the Buddha had his second in command the dhammasenapati, Doctrine army leader. And finally, there is the Buddha's "battle" with Mara just before his enlightenment. The use of military elements in such a fashion expresses implicitly a 4anskrit4e attitude towards the military.

The final category is titled The Bodhisatta[3] in Battle. Here we find militarily involved Jataka or past life stories of the Buddha. In them the Bodhisatta and future arahants participate in military conflicts. Several of these Jataka present the battlefield as an excellent place to perfect energy (viriya, often appearing as perseverance in translations). Several stories raise questions as to the karmic fruits reaped by the Bodhisatta because of his military actions. As we have seen these karmic fruits should be negative, but the Canon remains silent on the matter. From the Jataka we learn that being a soldier in no way negates one's ultimate ability to attain nibbana; and, in fact, being a soldier might be an aid, since, as seen in the category Nibbanic action is War, a superior soldier has the necessary qualities for a monk to succeed. The fact that the Bodhisatta and the future arahants were able to perform military actions and still reach the ultimate Buddhist goal could and can reassure any Buddhist soldier that with the right effort their ultimate well-being could and can be assured. Within the Jataka, the military and military actions come across as perfectly normal in ancient India.

The military appears frequently in the Pali Canon. In fact, if all the military sutta and passages were collected together in one text, they could form a separate volume of the Canon, as together they number over five hundred pages in length. However, if we place these references in the context of the entire Pali Canon, we see a minimal numerical representation. It is possible that these references have a greater impact than their numbers suggest. Also, given the wide variety of subjects covered in the Pali Canon, these seemingly small numbers may not be so in comparison to other subjects, should they also be numerically organized. The Jataka stands out as the division of the Canon, which contributed the most references. Of the one hundred ten references to the military collected nearly half of them came from the Jataka. This is important because the Jataka are the main source from which the laity obtain Buddhist instruction. Thus, there is an exaggerated importance of the Jataka in teaching the Theravada point of view on the military.

The Pali Canon's descriptions of the ancient Indian army fall in line with those of other contemporary sources. Some specific details remain uncorroborated, but these are the exceptions and not the norm. Given that the Buddha is said to have been a kshatriya and considering the number of kshatriya said to have entered the sangha, one would expect this kind of accuracy from the Canon when treating military subjects. As a whole, the military references lack in both technical details of the army and detailed descriptions of battles. The Canon never describes explicit scenes of blood, severed limbs, or the deaths of men, animals and supernatural beings, as does epic Indian literature. Whether this stems from the Canon's pacifist ethos or another source remains unclear. The Pali Canon does, however, echo the kshatriya ethos of duty and honor in battle.

In nearly all the military references women play a secondary role. Generally speaking, they represent one of two things: for kshatriya they are objects to be fought for; for monks they are objects to be avoided. In several Jataka, a king or prince, and even the Bodhisatta, fights to win one or more maidens. In the Anguttarnikaya, it is a monk's ability to resist the temptations of a woman (and thereafter gain release) that equates him with a warrior victorious in battle. The mother in the birth story of the Asatarupajataka (#100) stands out as a notable exception. It is she who suggests to her

son the successful strategy of laying siege to a city, instead of fighting a pitched battle to take it.

During this study, while trying to draw out the Pali Canon's opinion of the military, an apparent contradiction arose: the Canon alternates between explicit condemnation and implicit praise of the military. For the Pali Canon, the military seems to represent several things, both positive and negative. On the positive side, the Canon frequently praises the military and accords it great prestige – in fact the military maintains its contemporary social status unchanged. The military provides one of the best examples for the type of man, qualities, and skills necessary for attaining nibbana. The battlefield proves excellent ground for perfecting and using certain of the Ten Perfection's (dasaparamita) [4], especially energy/effort (viriya). The battlefield also provides excellent ground for fulfilling of one's duty despite great personal danger.

On the negative side, war causes death and destruction and it engenders a cycle of revenge. The Canon considers dealing with the military as "ill-gotten". And finally, the most powerful condemnation: military life and skills lead warriors to rebirth in ahell or a purgatory. To understand this contradiction we must look to when and from where the praise and condemnation is coming from. It becomes clear that praise of the military appears in a mundane context and condemnation in a transcendental context. Explicit praise of the performance of military actions come from mundane figures, such as kings, warriors, backsliding monks, and even the Bodhisatta. Condemnation and avoidance of military actions come from transcendental figures, such as the Buddha, arahants, monks, and from the Bodhisatta, kings, warriors, etc., who have realized the truth of the world from a Buddhist point of view. Since the transcendental ultimately has precedence, the final opinion of the Pali Canon toward the military must be said to be a negative one.

Even the implicit praise surrounding the military as expressed in the metaphor Nibbanic Action is War can be reconciled under this distinction. Since the transcendental was the unknown, the Buddha had no choice but to refer to the mundane in an attempt to make the transcendental understood. The metaphor must be thought of in the same way as all the other training: it is a raft to take you to the other side, but once you arrive you do not carry it along, you must leave it behind. Yet, the question remains as to why a militaristic reference point was chosen for a specific mode of Sanskrit I propose two main reasons in partial explanation for this choice. First, the aforementioned difficulties of performing Path actions. Only success under the most difficult mundane circumstances could be equated with striving for nibbana – success in battle filled this perfectly. Second, since the Buddha and many monks were kshatriya, they were trained from infancy to consider war to be their natural calling, their dharma (Sanskrit). Thinking of a difficult challenge in a military sense would have been second nature for these men.

On a final note, what did all this mean for a kshatriya of the era, and what has it meant for Buddhist soldiers through the ages? Any Buddhist soldier conversant in the Pali Canon's references to the military cannot have been or now be reassured about his profession. However, again there is a positive side. These soldiers can look at the various Jataka stories telling of the Buddha and future arahants victorious in battle and the rewards obtained therefrom. Other sutta and passages also express a 6anskrit6e attitude toward the military, and the Buddha himself recognized the necessity of an army

when he banned fighting-men in the service of a king from joining the sangha. Perhaps most reassuring is the fact that should a Buddhist be a model soldier he will also possess many of the important qualities necessary for a person to obtain nibbana. But, all this is outweighed by the condemnation the military receives when viewed with proper Buddhist insight. A soldier by virtue of his *raison d'être* violates many of the basic ethical principles of Buddhism. Professional soldiers are told that should they die in combat they will be reborn in a purgatory and the Bodhisatta at one point stated that his expert military skill would, in the end, lead to hell. It would seem that a professional soldier begins his career with a negative kammic balance sheet.

This study has shown that the Pali Canon indeed forms an explicit opinion on the military. The Canon recognizes that, in a mundane perspective, the military is ever present, of high prestige, and even necessary in some circumstances for the protection of Buddhism. But, ultimately it must be judged from the higher insight of the transcendental, the lokuttara, where it becomes evident that the military is not conducive to Buddhist ethics and thus not conducive to performing Path actions. From this point of view, the military even loses its value in the mundane, where military pursuits are seen as prideful, destructive, and in vain, engendering a cycle of revenge which only leads to more suffering.

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[1] All foreign terms are in Pali unless otherwise noted. [Due to technical reasons (notably in connection with the online edition of this journal), it has not been possible to use the standard diacritic marks (viz., nibbåna, sa[integral]gha) for the transliteration of pali and/or 9anskrit words and phrases. The Editor]

[2] The Pali Canon represents Theravada Buddhism's canonical literature. Some 85 volumes in length, it was maintained in oral form, with the first written copy not appearing till about the first century B.C.E., approximately 400 years after the Buddha's death.

[3] In Theravada Buddhism the term Bodhisatta designates someone destined to become a Buddha, this conception differs significantly from the Mahayana Bodhisattva and the Bodhisattva path.

[4] The ten qualities that a Bodhisatta must perfect in order to become a Buddha.

Buddhism & The Soldier

Major General Ananda Weerasekera

Different people have understood **Buddhism** differently. It is often debated whether Buddhism is a religion, philosophy or a way of life or not. Since Buddhism contains all these aspects one is justified in drawing any conclusion so long as one does not give an exclusive and rigid title. The Buddha-dhamma (Doctrine), as most of the scholars say, is a moral and philosophical system which expounds a unique path of enlightenment, and is not a subject to be studied from a mere academic standpoint. It is certainly to be studied, more to be practiced, and above all to be realized by oneself.

All the teachings of the Buddha deal, in one way or another with the **path**, known as **The Noble Eightfold Path**. It was the path realised and introduced by Buddha and it is as follows.

- Right views
- Right thought
- Right speech
- Right action
- Right livelihood
- Right effort
- Right mindfulness
- Right concentration

This is also known as the '**Middle Path**', since in actual practice it avoids extremes. This Noble Eightfold Path is discussed in detail in the Buddhist Texts. It is sufficient to

state that it is a **code of conduct** clearly laid down by Buddha to all four sections of the Buddhist Society. That is **Bikkhu (monks)**, **Bikkhuni (nuns)**, **Upasaka (laymen)**, **Upasika (laywomen)**.

The deciples of the Buddha whether men or women belong to many walks of life from a King to a Servant. Whatever their civil status may be a code of conduct and moral obligations for each one has been clearly laid down by the Buddha. This code of conduct is collectively referred to as Virtue (seela) which encompasses disciplined speech, disciplined thought and controlled senses. A layman or a laywoman is advised to observe the five basic precepts as the minimum limit of their 'discipline' in the society. The limits of 'seela' are different for those who have renounced the lay life in search of liberation, The

Nirvana.

However the five precepts are not commandments but aspirations voluntarily undertaken by each one. The first precept is to **abstain from taking life**. "**The life**", according to Buddhism covers the entire spectrum of living beings and are covered in 'Karaneeya Mettha Sutta' as follows.

- Tasa-Tava:- moving, unmoving
- Diga-long, Mahantha-large,
- Majjima-medium,
- Rassaka- short,
- Anuka-minute, Thula- fat
- Ditta-that can be seen,
- Additta-that cannot be seen,
- Dure-which live far,
- Avidure-which live near
- Bhuta-born,
- Sambavesi- seeking birth

Buddha's teachings are quite clear in regard to the extent to which 'love & compassion' should expand,. '**Sabbe satta bhavantu sukhitatta**', ie. '**May all beings be happy**' Buddha not only condemned the destruction of living beings as higher seela, he also condemned the destruction of the plant life. Buddhism being a 'way of life' where plant animal and human lives are protected ,how does one explain **the 'destruction and suffering caused by war.'**

War is violence, killing, destruction, blood and pain. Has Buddha accepted these? According to Buddha, the causes of war being **greed, aversion and delusion** are deep rooted in human mind. The milestones of the path being seela, samadhi and panna make the human being realize the causes that contribute to warfare and for the need for the eradication of same.

The Buddha said,

All tremble at violence, All fear death,
Comparing oneself with others
One Should neither kill nor cause others to Kill' (Dammapada)

Hence any form of violence is not acceptable . He further says,
'Victory breeds hatred
The defeated live in pain,
Happily the peaceful live,
Giving up victory and defeat (Dammapada)

Victory and Defeat are two sides of the coin of War. It is clear in Buddhism, what breeds in war whether it is victory or defeat.

Let us now deal with those having a direct involvement with **War, The King or in today's context the Government and the soldier**. Does Buddhism permit the State to build and foster an Army?. Can a good Buddhist be a soldier? and can he kill for the sake of the country? What about the 'Defence' of a country.? When a ruthless army invades a country, does Buddhism prohibit a Buddhist King to defend his country and his people? If Buddhism is a 'way of life,' is there any other way for a righteous king to battle against an invasion of an army.?

The Damma is a way of life based on Right Thought, Right Livelihood, Right Action etc. culminating in the supreme goal of Nibbana . **However it is a gradual process of training and progressing on the path through one's long samsaric journey until one**

has fulfilled the necessary conditions and is ready to let go the cycle of birth decay and death. Hence, until then the King has to rule, the farmer has to farm, teacher has to teach, the trader has to trade and so on. But they are expected to do it the Buddhist way in order to help them progress on the path.

In '**chakkavatti- sihanada sutta**' (**The Lion's Roar on the Turning of Wheel**) of the long discourses of the Buddha, Buddha justified the requirement of the king having an Army to provide guard, protection and security for different classes of people in the kingdom from internal and external threats. It refers to a Wheel Turning monarch named Dalhanemi, a righteous monarch of the law, conqueror of the four quarters who had established the security of his realm and was possessed of the seven treasures. He had more than 1000 sons who were heroes, of heroic stature, conquerors of the hostile army. Explaining the noble duties of a righteous king, Buddha also pointed out the advice given to the king in regard to his obligation to provide security for its people. The advisor tells the king " my son, yourself depending on the Dhamma, revering it, doing homage to it, and venerating it having the Dhamma as your badge and banner, acknowledging the Dhamma as your master, you should establish guard, ward and protection according to Dhamma for your own household, **your troops in the Army**, your nobles and vassals, for Brahmins and householders, town and countryfolk, ascetics and Brahmins, for beasts and birds. Let no crime prevail in your kingdom"

Explaining further the duties of a righteous king, Buddha states, "...Son, the people of your kingdom should from time to time come to you and consult you as to what is to be followed and what is not to be followed, what is wholesome and what not wholesome, and what action will in the long run lead to harm and sorrow, welfare and happiness. You should listen and tell them to avoid evil and to do what is good for the country. This sutta clearly indicates that Buddhism permits a king to have an army since a righteous king, who is also the commander of the army, knows, the righteous way to engage the army and to protect his people.

'Seeha Senapathi Sutta' of Anguttara Nikaya-5 shows how, one of the army commanders named 'Seeha' went to Buddha to clarify certain doubts on the Dhamma and how the Buddha advised him without requesting him to resign from the Army or to disband the army. Having clarified his doubts on the Dhamma, Commander Seeha requested Buddha to accept him as a deciple of the Buddha. But Buddha instead of advising him to resign from the army advised thus

'Seeha, it is proper for a popular person of your status to always think and examine when attending to affairs and making decisions ' Seeha, the commander became a sotapanna (stream enterer = first fruit of the Path) having listened to the Dhamma, but remained in the army as a commander.

In this instance too one could see that Buddha did not advise Seeha against the Army or being a commander of an Army, but only advised to discharge his duties the proper way.

King Ajasattu, had a unsatiable desire to conquer other kingdoms. He even murdered his father for the throne and aided Devadatta who was plotting to kill the Buddha. Once Ajasattu having decided to conquer the kingdom of Vajjians sent his chief minister Vassakara to Buddha to find out Buddha's views about his decision to conquer the Vajjians. Ajasttu wanted to know whether he will gain victory, cunningly using Buddha's ability to predict the future with accuracy.

Once the usual complimentary greetings were exchanged, between the Buddha and Vassakara and the purpose of his visit was made known, Buddha turned to his chief attendant Venerable Ananda with praise of the Vajjians and their noble democratic confederacy. Buddha further inquired from Venerable Ananda whether the Vajjians are strictly following the conditions of **Dhamma NOT leading to decline as taught to the**

Vajjians by Buddha to which Ven. Ananda replied 'yes'.

Then Buddha turned to venerable Ananda and declared thus, "As long as they would continue on these lines, taught them by Buddha earlier at Vasali, they cannot be defeated and not expected to decline but to prosper." The shrewd minister drew his own conclusion that the Licchavis of vajji state could not be conquered in battle at that moment, but if their unity and alliance is broken they could be defeated and ran back to his king with this news. In fact Ajasattu defeated vajjians not even three years after the Buddha's death purely by shrewdly creating disunity amongst the rulers of the Vajjians

Numerous conclusions could be drawn from this story too. **Buddha knew that both States did have strong armies and that they are needed for the protection of their people. Buddha did not advice minister Vassakara that the concept on 'Army' is against Buddhism and that he should advice the king not to declare war against Vajjis but to desolve the army.** Buddha at this instance also brought up important lessons in 'state craft.' It helped the crafty minister to adopt a different strategy to invade Vajji State, by using psychological approach first and then the physical assault next. Further, by having a conversation with Venerable Ananda Buddha indicated to minister Vassakara that even though king Ajasasattu has a mighty strong army, and have conquered several states he will not be able to defeat Licchavis so long as they adhere to the said noble policies. It is also an indirect advice to king Ajatasattu that it is in order having an army but that army will not be able to conquer people with virtuous qualities. It was also an indication to Ajasattu that he too should be a righteous king with an army where no other king could defeat him, by adhering to the said policies which will not lead a society to decline. These policies are referred to as '**saptha aparihani dhamma**' and they are as follows:

- Having meetings and assemblies frequently.
- Rulers assembling in harmony, conducting their affairs in harmony and dispersing in harmony.
- Adhering to the accepted ancient noble traditions and not extirpating the accepted established norms and traditions by introducing new laws.
- Respecting the elders, worshiping them, consulting them, and believing that they must be listened to.
- Respecting and protecting the women folk and not living with them forcibly or molesting them.
- Paying respect to all internal and external places of worship, paying homage to those worthy of veneration and continue to make spiritual offerings traditionally done.

Soldiering was accepted by the Buddha as a noble profession. The soldier was known as "**Rajabhata.**" Buddha did not permit rajabata to become monks whilst in service as a soldier.

Once Sidhartha Gauthama's father, king Suddhodana came to Buddha and complained,

"Gauthama Buddha, my son, when you were the most suitable for the throne of a Sakvithi King, you left all of us and became a monk. Then you insulted me by begging for meals, walking house to house along the streets in my own town. The relatives laughed at me and they insulted me. Now you are trying to destroy my Army."

" Why " the Buddha asked. " What has happened to your great Army, my father."

Then the king answered, " Can't you see, my soldiers are deserting the army one by one and joining your group as monks."

" why are they becoming monks, great king and why are they leaving the Army." Asked Buddha.

" Can't you see " the king answered. " They know that when they become monks they get free food, free clothes, free accommodation and respected by all."

Buddha smiled and requested the king to go back to the Palace and said that he will settle the issue. Buddha then promulgated a law (Vinaya) for the monks to the effect that, **No soldier could become a monk whilst in military service**. This law is still valid to date. **Accordingly even today unless a soldier is legally discharged from the army or unless a soldier retires legitimately, he is NOT ordained as a monk and will not be accepted into the order of monks**. This ensures that soldiers do not desert the army even to join the Buddhist order.

Further in terms of the Vinaya (the code of conduct for monks) monks permitted to visit the battle field but they were ordered to return before the sunset. Permission was also given to visit the injured relatives in the battlefield.

Further whilst the expressly referred to five occupations as unrighteous Soldiering is not included amongst those.

The Buddha once describing the qualities of a good monk, compared those to the **essential qualities of a good king** to be as follows:

- Pure decent
- Great wealth
- **Strong army**
- Wise ministers
- Glory

Once at the city of Savatti, Buddha describing five types of monks in comparison to the five types of soldiers in the world, (**A.iii, duthiya yodhajeevupama sutta**) classified the soldiers as follows:-

- A soldier who enters the battle field armed with sword and shield, bow and arrows and who gets himself killed by the enemy during battle. This is the first type of soldier.
- A soldier who enters the battle field bravely armed with sword and shield, bow and arrows but gets injured during battle and taken to his close relatives. But he dies on the way before he reaches his relatives. This is the second type of soldier.
- Soldier who enters the battlefield bravely armed with sword and shield, bow and arrows, gets injured and having taken to his close relatives, receives medical treatment with care. But he dies with the same ailment although he was surrounded by relatives. This is the third type of soldier.
- Soldier who enters the battlefield bravely armed with sword and shield, bow and arrows, gets injured and having taken to his close relatives, receives medical treatment with care. He recovers from the injury. This is the fourth type of soldier.
- Soldier who enters the battlefield bravely armed with armourments destroys and defeats the enemy. Having won the battle he remains in the battlefield victoriously. This is the fifth type of soldier.

Similarly in '**patama yodhajeevacupama sutta**' Buddha explains five types of soldiers or warriors.

- **Type -1-** Tremble with fear, unsteady, afraid to get into the battlefield by seeing the dust and clouds created by fighting men, animals and vehicles.

- **Type - 2** - Could withstand the dust and clouds. But tremble with fear, unsteady, afraid to get into the battlefield by seeing the Standards and Banners of the enemy.
- **Type-3** - Could withstand dust and clouds, the sight of the enemy Standards and Banners But tremble with fear, unsteady, afraid to get into the battlefield by hearing the frightening noises and the battle cries in the field.
- **Type- 4** - could withstand dust and clouds, Standards and Banners of the enemy, the noises and the battle cries But Tremble with fear, unsteady, afraid to get into the battlefield by a small attack by the enemy.
- **Type -5**- could withstand dust and clouds, Standards and Banners of the enemy, the noises and the battle cries. He fights back and wins his battle. Having won, he victoriously enjoys the fruits seven days staying in the middle of the battlefield.

When the Buddha recognized a strong army as an essential requirement of the king he was also aware that the Commander in Chief of the Army was also the king of the country and that a strong Army four main divisions, then known as '**the caturangani sena**', consisting of Cavalry (horses), Elephant force, Armed vehicles and the Infantry, each having its own functions in battle.

His knowledge of the battlefield is so evident for the similes frequently quoted by him from the battlefield. In **Akkhama sutta of Anguttara Nikaya** Buddha compares five weak qualities of elephants selected to go into battle with that of 5 weak qualities of monks proceeding through the battle of 'Liberation.'

In the Sutta the Buddha says, An elephant belonging to the '**caturangani sena**' [four divisions of the Army of the ruler] will not be suitable if , it gets frightened, trembles, unable to control and withdraws,

- merely by the sight of other elephants, horses, military vehicles and soldiers in the battle field,
- merely by hearing noises and sounds of the battle cries of elephants, horses, infantry and war drums in the field,
- merely by the body smell and the smell of urine etc of other majestic elephants in the battle field,
- merely for not getting its food and water for one day or few days in the battle field.

From the above it is clear that contrary to the popular belief the Buddha has not rejected or prohibited soldiering as a profession or occupation and the right of a king or a government to have an army and to defend one's country and its people. In the contrary the Buddha has expressly recognized the necessity for a king to have an army and providing protection to the subjects of a country has been recognized as a prime duty of the king .

The Buddha in his wisdom did not expect a nation or the rulers to be lame ducks in the wake of an enemy invasion. However Buddha's expectations from one who is training to be an Arhant whether monk or layman are different and it should not be mistaken with the Buddha's expectations from the laity burdened with numerous worldly responsibilities. It is also because the Buddha in his wisdom did not expect every 'Buddhist' to opt for Arahantship nor to become an ascetic renouncing the worldly affairs. To the majority Buddhism is a way of life rather than a faith, philosophy, or a religion.

However it should be stressed that a soldier like all others is subject to the law of Kamma and will not escape the Kammic fruits of "taking the Life" of a sentient being (panatipatha) even though he may have had the overall noble intention of protecting his country and his people.

While killing may be inevitable in a long and successful army career opportunities for

merit too is unlimited for a disciplined and conscientious soldier.

A disciplined soldier fights his enemy in accordance with the best of traditions and norms maintained by an army. He doesn't kill a defenseless person. A good soldier provides medical treatment to the injured enemy captured. He doesn't kill prisoners of war, children, women or the aged. A disciplined soldier destroys his enemy only when his or the lives of his comrades are in danger.

Soldier is one who thrives for peace within because he is one who realizes the pain of his own wounds. He is one who sees the bloody destruction of war, the dead, the suffering etc. Hence his desire to bring peace to himself as well as to the others by ending the war as soon as possible. He not only suffers during the war but even after the war. The painful memories of the battles he fought linger in him making his aspire for true and lasting peace within and without. Hence the common phenomenon of transformation of brutal kings having an insatiable desire to conquer to incomparable and exemplary righteous kings such as Drarmasoka king of Mourian dynasty of India.

U.S. Army Sending First Buddhist Chaplain to Iraq

By Lauren Green, Fox News, October 30, 2009

New York, USA -- All Army chaplains wear the same uniform, and all of them answer to the same calling: to provide comfort and to relieve the suffering of American soldiers.



<< Chaplain Thomas Dyer is the first Buddhist chaplain in the U.S. Army's history. He will be commissioned to Iraq in December.

But one chaplain stands out from the crowd. Thomas Dyer is the first and only Buddhist chaplain in the history of the U.S. Army.

Dyer will be deployed to the Middle East in December along with the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment. Although his faith is grounded in pacifism, the 43-year-old Dyer says war has become a necessary part of peace.

"My teacher has concluded that without the military, without civil protection, the world would enter into a very dark place very quickly," Dyer told Fox News. "There aren't that many caves to run to, there aren't that many mountains to go to anymore. And if we don't have protection, we suffer greatly."

A former Baptist preacher, Dyer found his new faith a few years ago through the practice of intense meditation. Born in Nashville, Tenn., he says his Christian background gives him an advantage in meeting the demands of a military with diverse spiritual needs.

"It has made me kind of like someone who is bilingual, where they can speak two languages, or bicultural," he said. "I am kind of like a bi-religious person, so I am able to make connections with soldiers in a way that is very familiar to them, so I don't look so scary or ... strange."

Less than one percent of the United States population is Buddhist, and Buddhists make up only three-tenths of a percent of the military. But Dyer has quickly gained the respect of his Christian colleagues, who make up the vast majority of military chaplains. He has also fostered a close relationship with his chaplain assistant, Spc. Jonathan Westley, who's trained specifically to protect him.

"It definitely was something different when I got to meet him for the first time last year," Westley told Fox News. "Fortunately, we clicked right from the start."

Dyer will be a spiritual guide to all soldiers, not just Buddhists. He says no matter what their faith, all soldiers at war have common spiritual needs.

"They have a lot to bear. The training is tough. The environment is rough at times ... and as a result of this they will come to someone who wants to help," he said.

Religion aside, he says, soldiers face death daily, and what matters most to them is that someone who knows what they're going through cares about their fate

Buddhist Soldiers?

Wednesday October 19, 2005

The Ministry of Defence has just appointed four new chaplains to minister to the forces, including one Buddhist chaplain. Paid between £26,000 and £37,000 the chaplain will be responsible for the care of the around 220 Buddhists in the British forces. The full story is available from the [Times](#). There were ten applications for the post, although all but three dropped out during the selection process (see the [Buddhist Society](#) for more details). The final choice is said to be "outstanding".

The idea of a Buddhist soldier might be seen to be a contradiction in terms, given the fundamental Buddhist precept of abstaining from harm; and the position of Buddhist chaplain in the army is even more fraught with problems. What is the role of the chaplain? How much, by accepting this post, will the chaplain be giving tacit support to the business of the military? Shouldn't a Buddhist chaplain be urging their followers to *put away* their guns rather than to fire them?

The argument on the reverse side is that the military is not in the business of war, but of humanitarian aid – this, at least is the image that is put forward in recruitment advertisements these days. In this view, the army is a place where one can *do good*. It may indeed be true that the army can do good, and has done good, at various times. But one should not overlook the sheer brutality of the military, the fact that the day-to-day business of war is the tearing of flesh, the laying waste of lives. Anyone in need of convincing on this account should read Jonathan Glover's *Humanity: a moral history of the twentieth century*, which explores in terrible detail how military training and service erode the moral identity of those who take part in them. Behind our rhetoric of duty and honour lies the wholesale denial of the brutalisation that takes place within the armed forces, in military training and on the field of battle. At the very least, to take on the role of chaplain without a deep moral unease one would have to possess a certain conviction in the virtue, humanity and political judgement of our leaders who make the decisions to go to war. And I fail to see how one could come by such a conviction.

This is not a new problem. There is a long and uneasy relationship between Buddhism and the military. Matthew Kosuta has published an interesting article on the relations between military power and Buddhism at the dawn of Buddhist history, as seen in the Pali Canon. The article is available from [Urban Dharma](#), and is well worth reading. Kosuta points to the ambivalence in the texts which admit that the military may, on the one hand, be "necessary", but which see clearly on the other hand that the business of war is "prideful, destructive, and in vain, engendering a cycle of revenge which only leads to more suffering." It is this reluctant concession to necessity that is interesting. Given that the world we live in is not a

utopia, can we do without the military altogether? Perhaps not, the Canon suggests. But if not, should Buddhists serve? No, the texts say. Is this not having one's cake and eating it?

Meanwhile, the new Buddhist chaplain – whose name has not yet been announced – will be taking up their post very soon. It will be interesting to see what happens next.

Buddhists in the Army attend annual conference

08 June 2010



This year's three-day Buddhist conference at the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre at Ampthill House in Hampshire focused on demystifying the practice of meditation, while offering a glorious haven to try out a variety of techniques, most of which date back more than 2500 years.

Commencing on Friday, 4 June, with chanted blessings for wellbeing by monks of all the major schools of Buddhism, attendees were addressed by a host of distinguished speakers including Mr T Samdup, the official representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Chaplain General Venerable Stephen Robbins.



Three days of sunshine allowed ample opportunity to meditate in the fresh air, implementing the Buddha's astonishingly practical advice about how to combat anxiety, inertia, scepticism, hate, and obsessive desire - the so-called 'Five Hindrances' to enlightenment.

Several presentations highlighted the value of mindfulness meditation in a variety of contexts, including Dr Caroline Hoffman's research working with breast cancer patients, and Venerable Sumana's engaging talk on how mindfulness meditation helped him reflect on the loss of a loved one.

Dr Sunil Kariyakarawana, Buddhist Chaplain to HM Armed Forces, also gave a fascinating presentation on the subject of Buddhist chanting, and played recordings of a two-year-old boy able to chant from memory entire Buddhist discourses in their original scriptural language.

Professor Upul Hewawitanagamage performed some much-loved verses of the Dhammapada (the Buddhist scripture), which he had set to music.

The conference concluded on Sunday, 6 June, with a game of croquet. And everyone left feeling revitalised and equipped with the necessary skills to maintain their meditation practice on a daily basis.

BUDDHIST CHAPLAIN TO THE MOD MEETS HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA



First ever Buddhist Chaplain to Her Majesty's Forces Dr. Sunil Kariyakarawana (Sri Lankan born) was given a personal meeting with His Holiness Dalai Lama during his recent visit to the UK.

In spite of His Holiness's week long and busy programme in the UK which drew over 20,000 people to the Nottingham arena alone, His Holiness gave a personal meeting to the only Buddhist Chaplain to Her Majesty's

Forces Dr. Sunil Kariyakarawana to discuss the Buddhist Chaplaincy to serving Buddhists in all three British Forces: Royal Navy, Royal Army and Royal Air Forces. There are currently estimated to be over 3000 Buddhists in the Armed Services.

His Holiness was delighted to hear that the serving Buddhists in the UK Ministry of defence do now have access to the ancient teachings of the Buddha and to spiritual and pastoral support. Dr. Kariyakarawana was congratulated for being the first Buddhist Chaplain and for taking the challenge of providing spiritual care to the service personnel scattered across three services, within the British islands and beyond.

HH Dalai Lama recalled the 190 year old history of Nepali Buddhists who have been serving in the Brigade of Gurkhas in the British Army and extended his fullest support and co-operation in providing moral, spiritual and pastoral care to them.

War and Buddhism

Buddhist Teachings on War

By Barbara O'Brien,

To Buddhists, war is akusala -- unskillful, evil. Yet Buddhists sometimes fight in wars. Is war always wrong? Is there such a thing as a "just war" theory in Buddhism?

Buddhists at War

Buddhist scholars say there is no justification for war in Buddhist teaching. Yet Buddhism has not always separated itself from war. There is historic documentation that in 621 CE monks from the Shaolin Temple of China fought in a battle that helped establish the Tang Dynasty. In centuries past, the heads of Tibetan Buddhist schools formed strategic alliances with Mongol warlords and reaped benefits from the warlords' victories.

The links between Zen Buddhism and samurai warrior culture were partly responsible for the shocking collusion of Zen and Japanese militarism in the 1930s and 1940s. For several years a virulent jingoism seized Japanese Zen, and teachings were twisted and corrupted to excuse killing. Zen institutions not only supported Japanese military aggression but raised money to manufacture war planes and weapons.

Observed from a distance of time and culture, these actions and ideas are inexcusable corruptions of dharma, and any "just war" theory that arose from them were the products of delusion. This episode serves as a lesson to us not to be swept up in the passions of the cultures we live in. Of course, in volatile times that is easier said than done.

In recent years Buddhist monks have been leaders of political and social activism in Asia. The Saffron Revolution in Burma and the March 2008 demonstrations in Tibet are the most prominent examples. Most of these monks are committed to nonviolence, although there are always exceptions. More troubling are the monks of Sri Lanka who lead the Jathika Hela Urumaya, "National Heritage Party," a strongly nationalist group that advocates a military solution to Sri Lanka's ongoing civil war.

Is War Always Wrong?

Buddhism challenges us to look beyond a simple right/wrong dichotomy. In Buddhism, an act that sows the seeds of harmful karma is regrettable even if it unavoidable. Sometimes Buddhists fight to defend their nations, home and family. This is not "wrong." Yet even in these circumstances, to harbor hate for one's enemies is still a poison. And any act of war that sows the seeds of future harmful karma is still akusala.

Buddhist morality is based on principles, not rules. Our principles are those expressed in the Precepts and the Four Immeasurables -- loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. Our principles also are kindness, gentleness, mercy and tolerance. Even the most extreme circumstances do not erase those principles or make it "righteous" or "good" to violate them.

Yet neither is it "good" or "righteous" to stand aside while innocent people are slaughtered. And the late Ven. Dr. K Sri Dhammananda, a Theravadin monk and scholar, said, "The Buddha did not teach His followers to surrender to any form of evil power be it a human or supernatural being."

To Fight or Not to Fight

In "What Buddhist Believe," the Venerable Dhammananda wrote,

"Buddhists should not be the aggressors even in protecting their religion or anything else. They must try their best to avoid any kind of violent act. Sometimes they may be forced to go to war by others who do not respect the concept of the brotherhood of humans as taught by the Buddha. They may be called upon to defend their country from external aggression, and as long as they have not renounced the worldly life, they are duty-bound to join in the struggle for peace and freedom. Under these circumstances, they cannot be blamed for becoming soldiers or being involved in defence. However, if everyone were to follow the advice of the Buddha, there would be no reason for war to take place in this world. It is the duty of every cultured person to find all possible ways and means to settle disputes in a peaceful manner, without declaring war to kill his or her fellow human beings."

As always in questions of morality, when choosing whether to fight or not to fight a Buddhist must examine his own motivations honestly. It is too easy and too common to rationalize one has pure motives when in fact one is fearful and angry. For most of us self-honesty on this level takes extraordinary effort and maturity, and history tells us that even senior priests with years of practice can lie to themselves.

Love Your Enemy

We are called upon also to extend loving kindness and compassion to our enemies, even when facing them on a battlefield. That's not possible, you say. Maybe it isn't; I can't say I've ever tried it myself. Yet this is our path.

However, over the years I've met people who seem to think that one is *obligated* to hate one's enemies. I hear them say *how can you speak well of someone who hates you?* Well, if people want to hate me that's their business, but I can choose not to hate them back. And if you have to fight someone, then fight. But hate is extra.

So often in human history, war has sewn seeds that ripened into the next war. And often, the battles themselves were less responsible for evil karma than the way occupying armies treated civilians, or the way the victor humiliated and oppressed the conquered. At the very least, when it is time to stop fighting, stop fighting. History shows us that the victor who treats the conquered with magnanimity, mercy and leniency is more likely to achieve the lasting victory and eventual peace.

Buddhists in the Military

Today there are more than 3,000 Buddhists serving in the U.S. armed forces, including some Buddhist chaplains. Today's Buddhist soldiers and sailors are not the first in the U.S. military. During World War II, approximately half of the troops in Japanese-American units such as the 100th Battalion and the 442nd Infantry were Buddhists.

In the Spring 2008 issue of *Tricycle*, Travis Duncan wrote of the Vast Refuge Dharma Hall Chapel at the U.S. Air Force Academy. There are 26 cadets currently at the academy who practice Buddhism.

At the dedication of the chapel, the Reverend Dai En Wiley Burch of the Hollow Bones Rinzai Zen school said, "Without compassion, war is a criminal activity. Sometimes it is necessary to take life, but we never take life for granted."

Noncombatant status

The Geneva Conventions (Protocol I, 8 June 1977, Art 43.2) are clear that medical personnel and chaplains are noncombatants: they do not have the right to participate directly in hostilities. The widely held view that the Conventions require chaplains to be unarmed is untrue. (The fallacious argument begins with the fact that the Conventions specifically permit medical personnel to bear arms but do not mention chaplains. This misses a key point: the specific permission given in Protocol I, 8 June 1977, Art 13.2(a) refers to civilians, not service personnel).

It is generally assumed that during WWII chaplains were unarmed. Crosby describes an incident where a US chaplain became a trained tank gunner and was dismissed for this "entirely illegal, not to mention imprudent" action. At least some UK WWII chaplains serving in the Far East, however, were armed: George MacDonald Fraser recalls "the tall figure of the battalion chaplain, swinging along good style with his .38 on his hip" immediately behind the lead platoon during a battalion attack. Fraser asks "if the padre shot [an enemy], what would the harvest be ... apart from three ringing cheers from the whole battalion?".

In recent years both the UK and US have required chaplains, but not medical personnel, to be unarmed. Other nations, notably Norway, Denmark and Sweden, make it an issue of individual conscience. There are anecdotal accounts that even US and UK chaplains have at least occasionally unofficially borne weapons: Chaplain (then Captain) James D. Johnson, of the 9th Infantry Division, Mobile Riverine Force in Vietnam describes ("Combat Chaplain: A Thirty-Year Vietnam Battle") carrying the M-16 rifle while embedded with a combat patrol. Since 1909 US Chaplains on operations have been accompanied by an armed 'Chaplain Assistant', however perhaps on this occasion it was felt that an unarmed uniformed man would draw unwelcome attention.

Captured chaplains are not considered Prisoners of War (Third Convention, 12 August 1949, Chapter IV Art 33) and must be returned to their home nation unless retained to minister to prisoners of war.

Inevitably, serving chaplains have died in action, sometimes in significant numbers. The U.S. Army and Marines lost 100 chaplains killed in action during WWII: a casualty rate greater "than any other branch of the services except the infantry and the Army Air Corps". Many have been decorated for bravery in action (five have won Britain's highest award for gallantry, the Victoria Cross). The Chaplain's Medal for Heroism is a special U.S. military decoration given to military chaplains who have been killed in the line of duty, although it has to date only been awarded to the famous Four Chaplains, all of whom died in the USAT "Dorchester" sinking in 1943 after giving up their lifejackets to others.

In the United States, military chaplains have rank based on years of service and promotion selection. They are identified in uniform of both rank and religious symbol insignias.

Christianity is not the only faith to have chaplain-equivalent positions. Other religions, such as Judaism, Islam and Buddhism may also provide chaplains for military service. The British Armed Forces traditionally only employed Christian and Jewish chaplains; the appointment of four civilian chaplains (Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh) occurred for the first time in October 2005; they bear the relative rank of lieutenant-colonel. In the United States Armed Forces, a Muslim military chaplain was commissioned for the first time in 1993 and a Buddhist chaplain in 2004.

The Buddhist equivalent term for chaplain may be the Sanskrit word "purohita". In medieval Japan, Buddhists priests of the Jishu sect accompanied samurai armies and were known as "jinso" (literally, "camp priests"). The Japanese Imperial Army and Navy until the end of World War II maintained Buddhist chaplains, although the present-day Japanese "Jieitai" "Self-Defense Force" does not. Currently the United States, United Kingdom, Royal Thai Army and the Republic of South Korea Armed Forces (ROK) employ Buddhist military chaplains. The Buddhist Churches of America (BCA), the mainland United States branch of the Nishi Hongwanji-ha Jodo Shinshu tradition, became the first endorser for military chaplains of Buddhist faith in 1987. An initial attempt by the BCA to create a Buddhist chaplain occurred during World War II when Japanese-Americans who were of the Buddhist religion enlisted in the U.S. Army from the internment camps, but this request was denied by the War Department. Christian chaplains then served these troops.

Can a Buddhist Join the Army?

Can Buddhist Join the Army?.

By

Ven. K. Sri Dhammananda

You can be a soldier of Truth, but not the aggressor.

One, Sinha, the general of the army, went to the Buddha and said, ‘ I am a soldier, O Blessed One. I am appointed by the King to enforce his laws and to wage his wars. The Buddha teaches infinite love, kindness and compassion for all sufferers: Does the Buddha permit the punishment of the criminal? And also, does the Buddha declare that it is wrong to go to war for the protection of our homes, our wives, our children and our property? Does the Buddha teach the doctrine of complete self-surrender? Should I suffer the evildoer to do what he pleases and yield submissively to him who threatens to take by violence what is my own? Does the Buddha maintain that all strife including warfare waged for a righteous cause should be forbidden?’

The Buddha replied, ‘He who deserves punishment must be punished. And he who is worthy of favor must be favored. Do not do injury to any living being but be just, filled with love and kindness.’ These injunctions are not contradictory because the person who is punished for his crimes will suffer his injury not through the ill-will of the judge but though the evil act itself. His own acts have brought upon him the injury that the executors of the law inflict. When a magistrate punished, he must not harbour hatred in his heart. When a murderer is put to death, he should realize that his punishment is the result of his own act. With his understanding, he will no longer lament his fate but can console his mind. And the Blessed One continued,’ The Buddha teaches that all warfare in which man tries to slay his brothers is lamentable. But he does not teach that those who are involved in war to maintain peace and order, after having exhausted all means to avoid conflict, are blameworthy.

‘Struggle must exist, for all life is a struggle of some kind. But make certain that you do not struggle in the interest of self against truth and justice. He who struggles out of self-interest to make himself great or powerful or rich or famous, will have no reward. But he who struggles for peace and truth will have great reward; even his defeat will be deemed a victory.

‘If a person goes to battle even for a righteous cause, then Sinha, he must be prepared to be slain by his enemies because death is the destiny of warriors. And should his fate overtake him, he has no reason to complain. But if he is victorious his success may be deed great, but no matter how great it is, the wheel of fortune may turn again and bring his life down into the dust. However, if he moderates himself and extinguishes all hated in his heart, if he lifts his down-trodden adversary up and says to him’ Come now and make peace and let us be brothers,’ then he will gain a victory that is not a transient success; for the fruits of that victory will remain forever.

‘Great is a successful general, Sinha, but he who conquers self is the greater victor. This teaching of conquest of self, Singa, is not taught to destroy the lives of others, but to protect them. The person who has conquered himself is more fit to live, to be successful and to gain victories than is the person who is the slave of self. The person whose mind is free from the illusion of self, will stand and not fall in the battle of life. He whose intentions are righteousness and justice, will meet with no failures. He will be successful in his enterprise and his success will endure. He who harbours love of truth in his heart will live and not suffer, for he has drunk the water of immortality. So struggle courageously and wisely. Then you can be a soldier of truth.’

Apology of a Buddhist Soldier

Around the neck of every American soldier hangs a pair of “dog tags” on a metal chain. Their purpose is to identify the name, Social Security number, blood type, and religious denomination of the owner’s mortal remains upon his or her death. On the final line of my dog tags one finds a designation many find curious: Buddhist. I am one of the few Buddhist commissioned officers in the U.S. Armed Forces not of an Asian ancestry.

Although being a Buddhist in the U.S. Army is novel, it is a novelty based on simple geography (if I were a Burmese soldier no one would comment) and the fact that the relationship between Buddhism and the profession of arms is a subject given precious little discussion in the West. I have noticed that Western students of the dharma are often quick to erect a wall separating the history of Buddhism on one hand and the history of war on the other. I can certainly appreciate why. Many individuals, especially in this post-Vietnam era, are naturally drawn to spiritual traditions that appear untainted by the injustices of war. So it only seems natural that many of my fellow Euro-American Buddhists

would be uncomfortable with the suggestion that soldiers in Buddhist societies have been just as adroit in accommodating the first Buddhist precept on nonviolence as soldiers in Judeo-Christian societies have been in accommodating the Fifth Commandment.

Considering the long historical relationship between Buddhism and the profession of arms in many Asian societies, I find the alignment of Buddhism with strict pacifism somewhat presumptuous. Whereas strict pacifism rests on a categorical rejection of violence, what has come to be known as the “just war” tradition rests on the mitigation of injustice by military force. In the West, the “just war” doctrine is usually associated with Saint Augustine, the seventh century theologian who argued that war could be a means toward a just end. Unfortunately, it was not long before the Christian church was using Saint Augustine to legitimize bloodthirsty wars, starting with the Crusades.

On the other hand, it was none other than Shaku Soen Zenji, the Japanese Buddhist monk credited with first introducing Zen to the West, who came closest to articulating a Buddhist “just war” doctrine. Just ten years after his influential address to the 1893 World’s Parliament of Religions in Chicago, he defended Japan’s participation in the Japanese-Russian War and served as a chaplain for Japanese soldiers fighting in Manchuria. In serving as a military chaplain, Shaku Soen was following a Japanese Buddhist tradition going back for centuries. In his words are strong echoes of Augustine: “War is an evil, and a great one indeed. But war against evil must be unflinchingly prosecuted until we reach the final aim.”

The history of Buddhism and the profession of arms begins, as it were, in the beginning, in the fourth century B.C.E. Before his monastic career, Prince Siddhartha was a practicing member of ancient India’s warrior caste, the Kshatriya. A century later, the great warrior-emperor Ashoka, the first Buddhist monarch, built a memorial stupa at the site of the training hall where the young prince drilled in the arts of warriorship. The various codes governing the profession of arms were already highly developed in the Buddha’s time. Some of these even included military rules of conduct with ethical guidelines limiting the use of force that resonate with current international human rights accords such as the Geneva Conventions. From the days of the great Indian epic the *Mahabarata*, the Kshatriya warrior class had been bound by the rules of *dharma*, which included the protection of civilians and those no longer capable of resistance.

The monastic rules of the *Vinaya* prohibited monks from direct military service, or even observing military exercises. Yet insofar as war is one of the greatest causes of human suffering, it was regarded as a legitimate concern by the Buddha. He demonstrated numerous times that he was willing to address war as a political and social reality. For instance, the Buddha stopped a great battle between his own clan, the Shakyas, and their adversaries, the Koliyans. He is recorded as advising the warrior king Yoddhajiva that death in battle was not a path to salvation and discussing with King Prasenadi of Kosala the similarities of monastic and military discipline.

Beginning with the conversion of the Indian emperor Ashoka in the third century B.C.E., a significant factor in the spread of Buddhism across Asia was the sponsorship of the dharma by the warrior class in various Asian societies, especially in societies at the height of their military prowess. However, although many kings and soldiers followed Ashoka’s example by becoming monks later in life, there are no historical examples of rulers subjecting their realms to unilateral disarmament after embracing Buddhism.

There is a very important historic distinction, however subtle, between the ethical basis for use of force in Buddhist societies as compared with those of the West. This distinction is very evident if one compares the role that Ashoka played in the spread of Buddhism with the role that the first Christian monarch, the Roman Emperor Constantine, played in the spread of Christianity. After spending the greater portions of their lives as military leaders, both emperors issued broad edicts of religious tolerance. However, whereas Constantine's edict failed to stop the cycle of religious wars that began with his death and lasted for a thousand years, Ashoka's edicts of nonviolence and tolerance survived him and are still influential to this day.

Ashoka's edicts succeeded in establishing an ethical tradition that, while not outlawing war, at least did not sanction the use of aggressive military force for the sole purpose of religious proselytization. Even though Ashoka himself did not completely dismiss the use of force and even retained the death penalty in extreme cases, Mahatma Gandhi pointed to Ashoka as his predecessor in his mission of nonviolence.

In China, Buddhism reached its cultural zenith under the patronage of the T'ang, a dynasty renowned for sustaining peace and prosperity by means of efficient military strength and organization. Remarkably, one of the main threats to the security of the T'ang empire was the expansion of Tibetan military influence in the seventh and eighth centuries under the Tibetan Yarlung Dynasty, the very same dynasty that was simultaneously introducing Buddhism to Tibet. Centuries later, the Tibetans skillfully converted the aggressively warlike Mongolians to Buddhism.

In Japan the military class influenced the development of Buddhism. The samurai military class aided the Zen, Pure Land, and Nichirin schools of Buddhism in shifting the balance of power away from the older Tendai and Shingon esoteric schools. Similarly, in Southeast Asia the triumph of the Theravada school over the Mahayana traditions of Buddhism was in part due to the sponsorship and the military conquests of the eleventh-century Burmese king Anawrahta.

The relationship between Buddhism and the profession of arms has not been limited to Buddhist warriors and monarchs, however; it has also included Buddhist scholars and philosophers. In the Mahayana tradition Buddhist masters often gave advice on what they considered the ethical use of military force. For example, the great second century Indian philosopher Nagarjuna counseled his royal disciple, King Udayi, on the need for a ruler to secure his domain from the threat of banditry. At that point in history, this would have been more of a military operation than a police action. The Mahayana philosopher Asanga even argued that it is ethical to forcibly overthrow a monarch who has tortured his subjects.

Western adherents of my own Vajrayana tradition often appear to overlook the fact that there were both secular and monastic military organizations in Tibet before the Chinese invasion. The monastic soldiers, called *dobdos*, belonged to a special class of monks who defended the three main Gelugpa monasteries in central Tibet. Traveling in India and Nepal a few years ago, I discovered that even today Gelugpa monks serve in special, all-Tibetan, frontier forces of the Army of the Republic of India. While I do not claim to be in any position to judge the doctrinal correctness of such monastic military practices, they do point to a view of the military profession that I have not found among Buddhist practitioners and scholars in the West. Even Sulak Sivaraksa—the renowned exiled Thai Buddhist peace activist who has opposed the repressive actions of the military leadership in Thailand and

criticized the support that the military has received from the Buddhist hierarchy there - has called for the creation of an international military organization comprised of a permanent international peacekeeping force.

A real danger exists when a society is not willing to address military issues. This is especially true in a democratic society, where responsibility extends to each individual citizen. Too often the false cloak of righteousness can be used to mask what is really an indifference to the suffering of others. A horrendous example of this was the peace celebrations in the United States in 1972 when, even as "our" boys were coming home, there was nothing even approaching peace in Southeast Asia. The massive genocide about to burst forth on the "killing fields" of Cambodia would soon make it evident that what we were really celebrating was the distance between us and a war in which we retracted from further responsibility.

In general, peace movements and peace initiatives too often center on the prevention of war rather than focusing on the suffering of those already caught in the hell of war. War is to peace as sickness is to health. Just as it would be unfeeling for health care professionals to work only on the prevention of illness and not its treatment, I suggest that dealing only with the prevention of war and not the conduct of war is an inadequate approach to the suffering of war. Until just recently, the indifference of our Western societies gave a green light for the conduct of a genocidal war in Bosnia. The position the West now plays in the post-cold war world reminds me of an armed man sitting in hotel room with a loaded pistol hesitating to go to the aid of a woman being murdered in the next room. The fact that he is not sure whether he should be holding a pistol does not relieve him of his immediate obligation to go to the defense of his neighbor.

In any ethical consideration of war, Buddhist or otherwise, it is critical to examine the deliberate destruction of civilian populations in modern war, despite international treaties such as the Geneva Conventions. The introduction of personal firearms - which increased the distance between combatants - was a first step toward the depersonalization of one's enemy. Over the last century aviation and the creation of weapons of mass destruction have increased that distance so far that we can no longer even see one another. To a military operator engaging a target, aircrafts, tanks, and even cities appear as nothing more than computer-generated symbols lacking humanity or physical existence.

I am not singing a song of nostalgia for ancient warfare. Even with ethical codes such as the Kshatriyan *dharma* of the Buddha's time, atrocities were far too common. However, the history of the last century testifies to the fact that passing the colors from the more aggressive and selfless warriors of the past to the more collectivized and functionary soldiers of modern times has not been an occasion for celebrating the human race.

His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, once said, "Even in warfare, it is better to be aware of the suffering of others and our own discomfort for causing them pain. Warfare is killing. It is 100 percent negative. The way it is mechanized today is even worse. Where warfare remains 'humanized,' I mean where it remains in touch with true human feelings, it is much safer." The Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh, who personally witnessed the horrors of Vietnam, wrote, "You cannot just separate people and say some are violent and some are not. That is why people with love, compassion, and nonviolence should be everywhere, even in the Pentagon, in order to encourage

nonviolent attitudes within those we think are our enemies.” As war becomes more of a campaign against economies and societies instead of battles between armies, the truth becomes obvious that today it is the unarmed civilian who has become the primary target in military conflicts. It is now completely acceptable to sacrifice a multitude of an enemy nation’s women and children in order to save even a mere handful of our own soldiers. We are truly in a post-heroic period of military history.

In September of 1994, I landed in Haiti with the Multinational Forces sent to provide a safe and secure environment for the return of democracy. Concerned with human rights violations occurring in the proximity of U.S. forces and having realized that my superiors had no immediate plans to stop the abuses, I attempted to conduct an unauthorized survey of prisoners held in the National Penitentiary in Port-au-Prince and was court-martialed for doing it.

The Army initially tried to discount my efforts as the actions of an oddity—a *Buddhist* oddity—who probably should not have been serving as an intelligence officer during a military operation in the first place. I disagree. The problem was not that I tried to bring alien beliefs into the military - as if I imagined that Buddhists held a monopoly on ethics or morality. My actions were based on American military tradition and international law, which, coincidentally, complement rather than detract from the ethical principles of my spiritual faith. Thankfully, due to the support of my case by organizations such as PAX Christi (the Catholic Peace Movement), the Friends Service Committee, and Catholic Workers, and by many ministers, rabbis, priests, bishops, and nuns, the Army wisely decided to drop all references to religion in their case against me. Sentenced to dismissal from the Army rather than prison by a military court-martial last May, I am appealing my conviction for disobedience and insubordination on principles of superior international law. I will remain on active duty until the final review of my case by the Secretary of the Army and Court of Military Appeals.

The Buddha counseled his followers to accept the world as it is while at the same time using every means at our disposal to relieve the suffering of others. George Bernard Shaw said: “The worst sin towards our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them: that’s the essence of inhumanity.” These words apply to those who hate wars, those who fight them, and those who do both.

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