

## PEACE AND WAR IN MAN'S MIND

— Nirmal C. Sinha

In the aftermath of the World War statesmen and thinkers of the West said "War begins in the mind and is fought in the field later". Western thinkers in the nineteenth century and since have sought to trace the origins of war in clash of interests. The Trojan War originated as much in pursuit of love as in pursuit of trade. The Crusades were not so much to uphold the Cross as to gain direct access to the eastern markets. The Mongols and Huns, and much earlier the Aryan nomads, had carried sword and fire into the homes of peace loving prosperous peoples.

In the aftermath of the World War, Western leaders like Clement Attlee ignored the theories of bread or love and traced the passion for war to man's mind. Attlee and others did not know that 2500 years earlier Gautama Buddha had said "All objects occur in the mind first".

### II

"Mind precedes all objects. All objects are mind made. Mind is the principal of all objects. If one acts or speaks with impure mind, Sorrow follows as the wheel (of cart) follows the hoof (of bullock)".

"Mind precedes all objects. All objects are mind made. Mind is the principal of all objects. If one acts or speaks with pure mind Happiness follows inevitably as the shadow".

The *Dhammapada*, a contemporaneous work of Buddha's time and a record of Buddha's word, opens with the above verses. The rendering in English is my humble endeavour.

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The two verses constitute the root of all living. The Doctrine of Buddha is known as the Science of Cause, Hetuvidya. Buddha in the two opening verses of Dhammapada squarely holds the mind as the cause of all sorrow and happiness. Sin and Virtue, Violence and Non-violence, so on and so forth - all the objects proceed from the mind. Thus Mind, and not God, was the subject of Buddha's enquiry. The saints and scholars who trod the path of Gautama Buddha built a grand edifice of mental and moral science from which the Western specialists of metaphysics and psychology are drawing inspiration in a systematic manner.

### III

Mind as sixth sense is a speciality of Indian thought from earliest days. Gautama Buddha and his successors went far ahead of Brahmanical and other thinkers. Buddhist saints and scholars prescribed ways and means for edification or sublimation of mind, that is, transformation of Mind into Mind for Enlightenment.

As base metal may be turned into gold, Chitta may be turned into Bodhichitta. Sages and savants following the trail of Buddha Sakyamuni and earlier Munis and Rishis advised total differentiation between Nitya and Anitya and cultivation of non-attachment or renunciation. Viveka cum Vairagya has been India's technology for transformation of man as Ramakrishna Paramahansa repeatedly reiterated in his dialogues (vide *Kathamrita*).

It was this technology which Buddha practised. Born a prince Gautama Siddhartha renounced the world and through investigations and dialectics as well as austerities and penances realized the unreality of the Samsara and the reality of the Dharma. Gautama Siddhartha was born into Kshatriya caste and in his preachings rated the Kshatriya caste as higher than the Brahmana caste. Yet he most categorically classed the Kshatriya occupation as a false or wrong means of livelihood.

One can enjoy the blessings of Samsara only if he has firm resolution to renounce the material contents of Samsara. *Isa Upanishad* opens

with this injunction. After Buddha Sakyamuni, this way of life was practised by Maurya Asoka. Buddha took the vow of renunciation even though born into purple; Asoka retired from the career of aggression even though he was victorious. One became Sannyasi without tasting the pangs of poverty, the other became Sannyasi without tasting the humiliation of defeat. In both cases, Vairagya sprang from Viveka. These are the finest examples of Bodhichitta and historical examples of how the mind of man can rise from a low level to a high altitude; in the language of visionary this is Saddharma-Pundarika (Sacred White Lotus) emerging out of clay. Prophets and saints are visionaries par excellence as are the heretics and revolutionary thinkers.

#### IV

Dipankara Atisa too was a prophet and a revolutionary. Details of his life in Tibet are not known in India today. Nor the elite in India today know why Atisa is ranked as second only to Buddha in Mongolia. Why even after embracing Communism as a way of life Mongols and Buriats would prize Buddha and Atisa as their national heroes? And Atisa never journeyed beyond Central Tibet and no one ever proposed that Atisa should journey towards Baikals Karakoram! Answers to this question are not relevant to what I write now.

What is relevant here is that Atisa was ever conscious of the need to transform Chitta into Bodhichitta. In *Bodhipathapradipa*, which Atisa wrote while in Western Tibet, is writ large Atisa's concern for Mind and Mind for Enlightenment.

The nomadic pastoral communities of Tibet and later of Mongolia did transform 'base metal' into 'gold' when they banned warfare and sublimated their martial vigour into spiritual endeavour. Tibetans and Mongols, no doubt became 'less strong' and fell easy prey to Han imperialism. The loss in terms of material power was, however, like dust in the balance of civilization. Savants like H. G. Wells have found Asoka and Christ more important than Napoleon and Hitler. Mankind today hankers for peace or at least for survival. Let us strive for Bodhichitta and not for nuclear explosion,

