

About War & Peace

"If we are evolving over infinite time,
then every action in our lives has infinite consequences
for ourselves and others."

Robert Thurman

INTRODUCTION

Unfortunately, as long as we can remember, war appears to be raging somewhere on this planet, and it even has a prominent subject in the Kalachakra tantra. Although Buddhism is well-known for the practice of non-violence, the Kalachakra tantra predicts a future war against 'barbarians', after which the teachings of the Buddha will prevail on earth for a long period.

This war is actually seen mostly referring to the 'inner war' of a practitioner who tries to conquer the 'inner barbarians' in the form of delusions like anger, greed, ignorance etc. However, the texts predict an external war in 2424 between Shambhala and the 'barbarians'. The prospect of a religious war in Buddhism and the relation between Kalachakra and world peace can be confusing to say the least.

A QUOTE

From 'The Inner Kalacakra Tantra' by Vesna Wallace

The second chapter of the Kalacakra tantra depicts the individual as the battlefield, in which the war that will be waged between the Kalki and the Barbarians in the land of Mecca is already taking place within the body of the individual. In that internal battlefield, Kalki, who is the individual's correct knowledge with his army of four divisions - the four Immeasurables - wages battle with the vicious king of the Barbarians, Krnamati, who is the evil within one's own body, the path of non-virtue. Krnamati's fourfold army, which consists of the four classes of Maras in the body, is led by the general Asvatthama, who is one's own spiritual ignorance. Kalki's victory in this battle is the attainment of the path of liberation, and within the body, the destruction of Asvatthama is the eradication of the fear of cyclic existence. The established lineages of Kalki's sons Brahma and Suresa are the pure Buddhas, who have become the nature of one's psycho-physical aggregates, elements and sense-bases.

KALACHAKRA AND WORLD PEACE

from 'Taking the Kalachakra Initiation' by Alex Berzin

What exactly is the connection between Kalachakra and world peace, and why do so many people attend? Although empowerments for other tantras are intended for only a small number of disciples at a time, there is a historical tradition of conferring the Kalachakra initiation to large crowds of people. Buddha first gave it to the king of Shambhala in order to unite them against the threat of a possible

invasion and avert annihilation. This is the origin of the association of the Kalachakra empowerment with world peace and the tradition of conferring it upon large numbers of participants.

According to the Kalachakra presentation of historical cycles, barbaric hordes periodically invade the civilized world and try to eliminate all possibilities for spiritual practice. A future invasion is predicted for the year 2424 of this common era, when it is said there will be another brutal world war. At that time help will come from Shambhala to defeat the barbarians. A new golden age will dawn, with everything conducive to spiritual practice, particularly of Kalachakra. All those who have previously received the Kalachakra initiation will be reborn at the time on the victorious side. The highest motivation for receiving the empowerment is to be able to practice the Kalachakra methods now in order to achieve enlightenment in this very lifetime. Nevertheless, people have traditionally flocked to the initiation with the motivation of planting karmic seeds to connect themselves with this future golden age so as to complete its practice then.

HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA'S NEW MILLENNIUM MESSAGE

From the Lama Yeshe Archives

Many people seem to be excited about the new millennium, but the new millennium in itself will be nothing special. As we enter into the new millennium things will be the same; there will be nothing unusual. However, if we really want the next millennium to be happier, more peaceful and more harmonious for humankind we will have to make the effort to make it so. This is in our hands, but especially in the hands of the younger generation.

We have had many experiences during this century—constructive as well as extremely destructive ones. We must learn from these experiences. We need to approach the next millennium more holistically, with more openness and farsightedness. If we are going to make the right kind of efforts to make the future of the world better, I believe the following matters are of great importance.

While engaging in material progress and taking care of physical well-being we need to pay equal attention to developing peace of mind and thus taking care of the internal aspect of our being.

Along with education, which generally deals only with academic accomplishments, we need to develop more altruism and a sense of caring and responsibility for others in the minds of the younger generation studying in various educational institutions. This can be done without necessarily involving religion. One could therefore call this 'secular ethics', as it in fact consists of basic human qualities such as kindness, compassion, sincerity and honesty.

This past century in some ways has been a century of war and bloodshed. It has seen a year-by-year increase in defense spending by most countries in the world. If we are to change this trend we must seriously consider the concept of non-violence, which is a physical expression of compassion. In order to make non-violence a reality we must first work on internal disarmament and then proceed to work on external disarmament. By internal disarmament I mean ridding ourselves of all the negative emotions that result in violence. External disarmament will also have to be done gradually, step by step. We must first work on the total abolishment of nuclear weapons and gradually work up to total demilitarization throughout the world. In the process of doing this we also need to work towards stopping the arms

trade, which is still very widely practiced because it is so lucrative. When we do all these things, we can then hope to see in the next millennium a year-by-year decrease in the military expenditure of the various nations and a gradual working towards demilitarization.

Human problems will, of course, always remain, but the way to resolve them should be through dialogue and discussion. The next century should be a century of dialogue and discussion rather than one of war and bloodshed.

We need to address the issue of the gap between the rich and the poor, both globally and nationally. This inequality, with some sections of the human community having abundance and others on the same planet going hungry or even dying of starvation, is not only morally wrong, but practically also a source of problems. Equally important is the issue of freedom. As long as there is no freedom in many parts of the world there can be no real peace and in a sense no real freedom for the rest of the world.

For the sake of our future generations, we need to take care of our earth and of our environment. Environmental damage is often gradual and not easily apparent and by the time we become aware of it, it is generally too late. Since most of the major rivers flowing into many parts of south-east Asia originate from the Tibetan plateau, it will not be out of place to mention here the crucial importance of taking care of the environment in that area.

Lastly, one of the greatest challenges today is the population explosion. Unless we are able to tackle this issue effectively we will be confronted with the problem of the natural resources being inadequate for all the human beings on this earth.

We need to seriously look into these matters that concern us all if we are to look forward to the future with some hope.

January 1, 2000

CULTIVATING COMPASSION TO RESPOND TO VIOLENCE: THE WAY OF PEACE

by Thich Nhat Hanh

For Warmth

I hold my face in my two hands.
No, I am not crying.
I hold my face in my two hands,
to keep my loneliness warm
two hands protecting,
two hands nourishing,
two hands preventing
my soul from leaving me in anger.

I wrote this poem during the Vietnam War after I heard about the bombing of Ben Tre city. The city of 300,000 was destroyed because seven guerrillas shot several rounds of unsuccessful anti-aircraft gunfire and then left. My pain was profound.

All violence is injustice.

Responding to violence with violence is injustice, not only to the other person but also to oneself. Responding to violence with violence resolves nothing; it only escalates violence, anger and hatred. It is only with compassion that we can embrace and disintegrate violence. This is true in relationships between individuals as well as in relationships between nations.

What needs to be done right now is to recognize the suffering, to embrace it and to understand it. We need calmness and lucidity so that we can listen deeply to and understand our own suffering, the suffering of the nation and the suffering of others. By understanding the nature and the causes of the suffering, we will then know the right path to follow.

The violence and hatred we presently face has been created by misunderstanding, injustice, discrimination and despair. We are all co-responsible for the making of violence and despair in the world by our way of living, of consuming and of handling the problems of the world.

Understanding why this violence has been created, we will then know what to do and what not to do in order to decrease the level of violence in ourselves and in the world, to create and foster understanding, reconciliation and forgiveness.

In this moment, we invite our spiritual teachers, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed, Moses, Gandhi, Mother Theresa, and so many others, to be with us, to support us, so that we can hold in our arms the suffering of America as a nation, the suffering of humanity as a family, the suffering of the earth as a home for all of us. We need their energy so that we can become lucid and calm, so that we will know exactly what to do and what not to do, in order not to make the situation worse.

We know deep in our heart that responding to hatred and violence with hatred and violence, will only make hatred grow one thousand-fold. Only with compassion can we disintegrate hatred. This insight, this understanding should be with us in this very important moment.

If we look and listen deeply we can see that when we pray for the victims, we must also pray for the attackers. They are also victims of confusion and violence. If as a nation, America wants to be safe and secure, it has to help other nations, other peoples, feel safe and secure.

I have the conviction that America possesses enough wisdom and courage to perform an act of forgiveness and compassion, and I know that such an act can bring great relief to America and to the world right away. Such an act could be a statement of the willingness to embrace all suffering inside and outside the nation, to look deeply in order to understand better the cause of the suffering and to act according to that insight. The act could be a project to bring relief to those who actually suffer within and outside the country.

I offer my heartfelt condolences, care and love for all who are suffering tremendously at this moment. I am aware that most of us have not been able to overcome the shock. Day and night I am deeply concerned with how to heal and transform this national and global tragedy. We know that there are those of us who are trying to help, to heal and to support. We are grateful to them. We know that there are many of us who are trying to see to it that violence will not happen again.

I and many others will fast from September 21st to the 30th in order to support all who have died and all who are suffering terribly in this moment and embrace them tenderly with compassion, understanding,

and awareness. This is my prayer in action.
September 20, 2001

PRAYER FOR PEACE

***by the Great Yogi Tang Tong Gyalpo translated by Lama Zopa Rinpoche
at the time of the terrorist attack in New York and Washington.
From the Lama Yeshe Archives***

Here are the Words of Truth Pacifying the Dangers of Weapons

OM MANI PADME HUM

Great Loving Victorious One (Maitreya Buddha),
Transcendental Sublime Compassionate Eye Looking One,
Wrathful Victorious Hayagriva,
Fully Accomplished Totally Pure (Jetsun) Tara and so forth,
Merely hearing your holy names eliminates all dangers,
Objects of refuge in the nature of compassion, please pay attention!

When the sentient beings of the time of quarrelling and five degenerations
By the explosion of the great ocean of evil karma and jealousy
Are tormented by the intensive suffering of fighting and quarrelling
Please dry this up by the power of transcendental wisdom and compassion.

By letting great rainfalls of the nectar of loving-kindness fall
On the migratory beings who are enflaming the conflagration of hatred-fire
Please grant blessing with the recognition of each other like father-mother
Then increase happiness and auspiciousness.

May the multitudes of the vicious evil spirits
Who enter the mental continuum and
Change it instantly to the mind of asura
From now on never run in this area (country/world).

I am requesting for even all the sentient beings who have died in the war
To abandon from that time onwards all the evil karma, cause and effect,
Then having entered and been born in the Blissful Field (Amitabha's Pure Land)
To lead all others to that Pure Land.

Please bless all those who are born and die (samsaric beings)
To have a long life, no sicknesses, to pacify all quarrelling and fighting,
Enjoy the ten virtues, have rainfall at the right times, always have good harvests
And for all the habitat and inhabitants to be auspicious and increase.

By the ultimate reality which is pure by nature,
By phenomena having ultimate reality cause and result are unbetrayable,
And by the compassion of the Guru, Mind-seal Deity and Rare Sublime Ones,
May these pure extensive prayers be completed.

COMMENTARY BY LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

When there was unceasing war in Kham (Me Nyak), Tibet and nobody was able to create harmony, the Great Lord Yogi (Tang Tong Gyalpo) came to Kham, generated bodhicitta and just by merely saying these true words and sprinkling flowers all the vicious minds (jealousy and anger) were completely pacified and the war that had been continuous, ceased. There were prosperous harvests and so forth. The country became auspicious and peaceful. This is blessed vajra speech.

This is one of the prayers of the Great Tantric Yogi Tang Tong Gyalpo. The other prayers that he composed were to stop famine and epidemics.

His Holiness Chobgye Trichen Rinpoche who is a Guru of His Holiness the Dalai Lama (His Holiness received the Sakya Lam Dre teachings and initiations including Dorje Phurba from him) and also one of the main teachers of His Holiness Sakya Trizin was invited to one part of Nepal by the Nepalese government. Rinpoche checked what could be most beneficial for them and what prayer was most needed to benefit them. It came out that the best practice for them to do was these three prayers composed by Tang Tong Gyalpo. So then Rinpoche decided to give the oral transmission of these three prayers. That is how I found out about these prayers and I received the oral transmission from His Holiness Chobgye Trichen Rinpoche.

Through whatever merits have come from making this translation available, may wherever this text is (whichever country) and also by reading this prayer, cause all the people's hearts be filled with loving-kindness, bodhicitta and the thought to only benefit and not harm. May the sun of peace and happiness arise and may any wars that are happening stop immediately.

May there be harmony, peace and may there never be war or violence again.

ADVICE REGARDING NEGATIVE REJOICING

Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Lama Zopa offered this advice to FPMT Centers regarding the war in Afghanistan. It is a rough transcript made by Roy Harvey from the audio recording of a teaching given at Land of Medicine Buddha, Friday Oct. 27th, 2001, lightly edited by Claire Isitt.

What I wanted to mention to the Centers was to make sure you don't rejoice. It's very heavy negative karma. When we hear the name of the Taliban, or whoever, of course if there is dislike or hatred towards them, then when you hear that they have been killed or destroyed then naturally you rejoice or feel happy. Then when you rejoice, for example when you hear 1,000 people were killed or hurt, you feel happy - and then you receive the same heavy karma of having killed 1,000 people. You are sitting on the meditation cushion, and you hear the information, then simply by rejoicing or just feeling happy it's the same heavy karma as having killed 1,000 human beings even though you are not in the war. You didn't actually bomb or shoot them, you didn't do anything. But you get the same heavy negative karma as that person who actually killed 1,000 people.

So as Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo explained in Liberation in the Palm of your Hand, I thought I would mention that there is great danger when you hear the news and then immediately feel happy and

rejoice. If you have dislike or hatred towards them then this happens. If you didn't have hatred towards them I don't think the rejoicing would happen. If you have hatred or anger then the rejoicing happens, so bringing a very heavy outcome.

People who remember Lam Rim in daily life, remember about karma and what is said in Liberation in the Palm of your Hand and the Lam Rim teachings and who practice this don't need to be told. But others, who maybe heard Lam Rim but maybe don't remember it in daily life, it might be useful to just announce this or to remind those students.

When I heard the first time about the destruction in Afghanistan, where there were a few places destroyed, I was not careful at that time. The news didn't say 'people' but said some 'places' were destroyed. I was not careful with the mind and watching the mind, so I felt something kind of good or something, then immediately I remembered what I felt. There were no persons mentioned or killed, but there was a place destroyed. So after that I was more careful. So be more careful not to rejoice when you hear the news.

Of course if one meditates like this the view changes. But when you don't meditate and when your mind is not in this state, holding those sentient beings as precious, with compassion, then you see them as undesirable.

Usually you feel heavy when you don't meditate like that.

COMPASSION AND UNDERSTANDING ARE THE BEST WEAPONS AGAINST TERRORISM.

By Thich Nhat Hanh

Terror is in the human heart. We must remove this terror from the heart. Destroying the human heart, both physically and psychologically, is what we should avoid. The root of terrorism should be identified so that it can be removed. The root of terrorism is misunderstanding, hatred, and violence. This root cannot be located by the military. Bombs and missiles cannot reach it, let alone destroy it. Only with the practice of calming and looking deeply can our insight reveal and identify this root. Only with the practice of deep listening and compassion can it be transformed and removed.

Darkness cannot be dissipated with more darkness. More darkness will make darkness thicker. Only light can dissipate darkness. Violence and hatred cannot be removed with violence and hatred. Rather, this will make violence and hatred grow a thousand fold. Only understanding and compassion can dissolve violence and hatred. "Strike against terror" is a misleading expression. What we are striking against is not the real cause or the root of terror. The object of our strike is still human life. We are sowing seeds of violence as we strike. Striking in this way we will only bring about more hatred and violence into the world. This is exactly what we do not want to do.

Hatred and violence are in the hearts of human beings. A terrorist is a human being with hatred, violence, and misunderstanding in his or her heart. Acting without understanding, acting out of hatred, violence, and fear, we help sow more terror, bringing terror to the homes of others and bringing terror back to our own homes. Whole societies are living constantly in fear with our nerves being attacked day and night. This is the greatest casualty we may suffer from as a result of our wrong thinking and action.

Such a state of confusion, fear and anxiety is extremely dangerous. It can bring about another world war, this time extremely destructive.

We must learn to speak out so that the voice of the Buddha can be heard in this dangerous and pivotal moment of history. Those of us who have the light should display the light and offer it so that the world will not sink into total darkness. Everyone has the seed of awakening and insight within his or her heart. Let us help each other touch these seeds in ourselves so that everyone could have the courage to speak out. We must ensure that the way we live our daily lives (with or without mindful consumption, with or without discrimination, with or without participating in injustice ...) does not create more terrorism in the world. We need a collective awakening to stop this course of self-destruction.