

CONFLICTS WITHIN & CONFLICTS WITHOUT

Practically, every one of us is used to finding out what is happening around us, through whatever avenues, printed or electronic. Even if you glance at, listen to or watch only the headlines, most of the contents of the news will be that of the results of violence in one form or another. The news may be about violence among countries, among individuals or even a person's violence against him/herself, ending in suicide. If you take off a minute to analyze the circumstances of a single case of violence, you are sure to discover that the individual or people engage in such violent activities because they have no respect or regard for the rights of others. They do not value even their own lives. They have no awareness of the fact that what is true of oneself is true of the other and vice versa. Even those who speak of 'freedom', 'democracy' and 'human rights' resort to violence to impose their form of 'freedom', 'democracy' or 'human rights'. An individual may take one's own life just because s/he is unable to cope with the stress one has to face in life-situations. Through the ages, society has evolved many ways of conflict resolution but none seem to be as effective as the observance of the Five Precepts as explained by the Buddha. He had stated that the undertaking the observance of the Five Precepts is a gift to oneself and to others. The observance of the Five Precepts is a voluntary undertaking and not a commandment from some imaginary higher being. By observing the Five Precepts one could lead a fuller life, free from remorse.

Both the Theravada and the Mahayana schools recognize the importance of the observance of the Five Precepts, with slight differences in emphasis. It would be more appropriate to discuss the differences of emphasis as we take up each precept.

Explaining the Five Precepts, the Buddha had observed that: "...in [undertaking the Five Precepts] he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings., he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity and freedom from oppression. This is the gift... great gift.....original long-standing tradition, original.....unadulterated.....unadulterated from the beginning- that is not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and is unfaulted by contemplatives and priests. This.....is the reward of merit, reward of skillfulness, nourishment of happiness, celestial, resulting in happiness, leading to heaven, leading to what is desirable, pleasurable a appealing to welfare and to happiness." –**Ravi Madanayake**

To be continued...