

Interpreting Buddhism's Core Values in the Sri Lankan Ethnic Conflict: An Analysis of Arudpragasam's *The Story of a Brief Marriage*

Dinakaran S

School of Social Sciences and Languages, Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, India

Soumen Mukherjee*

School of Social Sciences and Languages, Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract—The prolonged Sri Lankan conflict in Sri Lanka occurred between the majority Sinhala govt. and the minority Sri Lankan Tamils on the island. The discrimination of identity and ethnicity led to major ruins on the land. This paper emphasizes the role of Buddhist values in Sri Lanka during the ethnic conflict. The principles of Buddhism help people rehabilitate and restore peace in the war-torn nation. In particular, the paper attempts to examine the Buddhist values practiced by the people irrespective of their religious denominations during the Civil War, through the literary landscape of Anuk Arudpragasam's *The Story of a Brief Marriage*. The noble precepts of Buddhism are four noble truths and the eightfold path, which teaches non-violence, selflessness, and tolerance. The doctrines of Buddhism restored humanitarian values at the height of the ethnic conflict in society. The current research paper helps to identify the influence of Buddhism on the people of the island nation in maintaining self-control, self-discipline, and morally upright behaviors. However, it proves the absence and ignorance of the Buddhist precepts which incited many ethnic clashes among the people. Further, it focuses on the causes of the major devastation and the collapse of the Sri Lankan socio-political system and the role of Buddhism in restoring peace in the war-torn nation.

Index Terms—Buddhism, civil war, ethnicity, non-violence, peace, and tolerance

I. INTRODUCTION

The civil war in Sri Lanka commenced in July 1983 and ended in May 2009. The eruption and occurrence of the conflict were due to many socio-political reasons. The two ethnic groups (Sinhalese and Tamils) tried to control one another by arms to attain power, regime, position, and territory. The two groups aimed to achieve peace through violence. The fighters ignored the importance of religious and humanitarian values. They attempted to gain territory and power by dominating others, instead of helping each other and thereby attaining their respective goals. The novel, *The Story of a Brief Marriage* is set as the last phase of the Sri Lankan conflict. It covers the problems of Tamil refugees in Sri Lanka on account of their ethnicity and identity. The absence of humanitarian values led to a series of inhuman actions like shelling bombs in the camp field. The protagonist of the novel Dinesh holds good deeds at the height of the conflict. He rescued the victims in the refugee camp, who needed an emergency from the conflict zone. His personal characteristics resemble the doctrines of Buddhism depicted in the novel (Arudpragasam, 2016).

Dinesh is a young Sri Lankan Tamil IDP (internally displaced person), who resides in the northern part of the island. As a result of the ethnic tragedy, he reached the refugee camp after losing his entire family. He is a kind and sympathetic character in the novel. The story is written based on the factual historical background of the Sri Lankan civil war with imaginary characters. The description of the story moves around the moral and pity virtues of victims, Dinesh, Mr. Somasundaram, and Ganga. Dinesh's charitable values played a vital role during the armed conflict. Although Dinesh has faced many crises, he didn't take revenge against the people, who are the reason for his state, as an orphan. Instead, he saved and protected many lives who needed care. He served them with zero ethnic and racial bias. Mr. Somasundaram lost his wife, son, and all his possessions in a riot, and he reached with his only daughter in the camp. He was a school headmaster and led a happy life before the hit of the war. In the camp, he met Dinesh and proposed to make him his son-in-law. Somasundaram strongly felt that his daughter Ganga's marriage with Dinesh would be the right choice to save her life. The prolonged violence in the island, led to the turbulent lives of the camp people both in real history and in the novel (Arudpragasam, 2016).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Senanayake's (2021) article critically examined the concept of 'homeland' in the view of majorities and minorities in a country. Further, the paper deals with the conflict between the Sinhala Buddhist people with Sri Lankan Tamils in Sri

* Corresponding Author.

Lanka. It also covers the role of historical books in Sri Lanka that helped to form Buddhist schools and restore their values. It comprehends that, the relationship between religion and nationalism.

Abeyssekara's (2001) work talks about the role of Buddhism and Buddhist books in shaping Sinhala Buddhist nationalism in Sri Lanka. He noted the Buddhist monks' contradictory roles, they maintained peace and compassion in the society and they triggered the violent persecution. The author included the monastic lives of the monks and detailed the religious movements in Sri Lanka. He noted the interventions of Buddhist monks in the Sri Lankan govt. politics, history, and religion.

Shaheen et al. (2020) collaborative paper deals with the twenty-six years of bloody civil war. It focused on Dineshkanthan and other trapped civilians' lives and their crises at the height of the conflict. He represents the collective problems of Tamils in Sri Lanka and their undergone human rights violations. This article also provides the horror of conflicts between the Tamils and Sinhalese resulting in crises of innocent victims.

Imtiyaz (2014) emphasizes the emergence of Buddhist and Tamil political parties in Sri Lanka and their contribution to society. It also depicted the conflict between the two major ethnic groups in Sri Lanka due to identity and power politics. The author noted the Sinhala parties implemented many political acts and laws that were the trigger point of the war. The major cause behind the war was to win the hearts of the majority of civilians on the land. However, it resulted in the formation of various Tamil insurgent groups that stood against the laws, and that led to riots.

Alonso-Breto (2021) critically examined the final phase of the Sri Lankan civil war and the intense sufferings of the Tamils. He detailed the traumatic experiences of Dinesh, Somasundaram, and Ganga and their vulnerable state. The inhuman activities of the final phase of the conflict and its subsequent crises are noted. The author highlighted the massacres in the Tamil region and other socio-political issues in the camp field.

III. RESEARCH GAP AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The literary works mentioned above center around the interethnic disputes, the involvement of Buddhist monks and their interventions in Sri Lankan politics, human rights violations faced by Tamil on the island, and the socio-political issues on the island. The objective of this study focuses on the religious values that aid in protecting the victims of the war and identification of Buddhist principles irrespective of religion in a literary work. So, through the reading of Anuk Arudpragasam's *The Story of a Brief Marriage*, the present study attempts to address the following inquiries,

1. What are the causes and effects of the Sri Lankan ethnic riots?
2. Why are the Buddhist fundamental values being so important?
3. How do the Buddhist precepts contribute to the restoration of harmony in a war-torn nation?

IV. METHODOLOGY

The research paper adhered to a qualitative study utilizing the Sri Lankan novel, "The Story of a Brief Marriage" as a primary source, along with the various secondary books, and research papers. The research paper validates the proposed information regarding the role of Buddhist values in helping to develop humanitarian values and the protection of the victims in war-ravaged places. The study employs the themes of selflessness, tolerance, and non-violence used in the research paper could conduct the application of these characteristics of Dinesh. The incorporation of books and secondary sources validates the information in the research paper and preserves the study's dependability and validity.

V. DISCUSSION

A. Buddhism

Kalupahana's (1987) philosophical book, *The Principles of Buddhist Psychology* covers the life of Gautama to attain Buddhahood. He noted that millions of individuals were inspired by Buddha's teachings and ideologies throughout the ages and started to adopt the religion. He is represented as the most potential, moral, and ethical philosopher. History states that the sixth century saw the birth of Gautama in Lumbini Park which is situated in southern Nepal. At the age of 35, he attained enlightenment in Bodh Gaya, Bihar. It's believed that he delivered his first sermon in Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh. According to Buddha, morality and wisdom are the bases of his enlightenment. Buddha's words of moral conduct and non-violence, "If people want to live an ultimately happy life with no harm toward themselves at all, the Buddha teaches, they should start with avoiding causing harm to others, physically and verbally at the personal level, since people are afraid of physical violence and resent harsh words; and the physical and verbal harm we inflict upon others usually leads to hate and conflicts that, in turn, would bring harm to us and cost our happiness" (Yeh, 2006, p. 94).

Buddha gave much importance to the base values of kindness, respect, compassion, tolerance, and benevolence. He taught the three root causes of suffering anger, delusion, and greed. The 'five principles' of Buddhism are not to do harm, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to lie, and not to consume intoxicating substances (Mahathera, 2020). His prime focus is on the 'four noble truths' of Buddhism and the 'Eightfold Paths'. He preached that adopting the core values is the way to end human suffering. The major doctrines are as follows,

1. There is much suffering in the world.

2. The root cause of suffering is desire.
3. When desire ends rebirth ends.
4. If one wants to defeat desire, adopt the eightfold path. (Saisuta, 2012)

The symbol of the eightfold path is 'Dharmachakra'. It's an eight-spoked wheel that signifies the morals of life. Each spoke represents a unique principle. The eight noble truths are,

1. Right understanding
2. Right thought
3. Right action
4. Right speech
5. Right livelihood
6. Right effort
7. Right mindfulness
8. Right concentration. (Mahathera, 2020, p. 244)

In order to understand the doctrine of Buddhism, we need to take into cognizance, the overall spread of religion based on terrestrial dissection. Here we may refer to Grim et al. (2012) collaborative work, which provides statistical data on the global religious landscape. There were approximately 488 million people following Buddhism worldwide, representing 7% of the world's total population as of 2010. The three primary schools of Buddhism are Tibetan, Theravada, and Mahayana. In Sri Lanka, 69.3% of people identify themselves as Buddhists. Even though Buddhists make up the majority of the population in Sri Lanka, the island has historically seen more bloodshed and black days. The likelihood of participating in war and violence is substantially lower in other Buddhist countries across the globe. Other major Buddhist nations are Bhutan, Cambodia, Myanmar, etc.

There are no prolonged bloody civil wars that have erupted in Cambodia, Myanmar, Mongolia, and other Buddhist nations in recent years as has been in Sri Lanka. There were no major conflicts in post 19th century in Bhutan. "Bhutan has done an amazing job of finding this balance. Bhutan has continually been ranked as the happiest country in all of Asia, and the eighth Happiest Country in the world according to Business Week" (Canan & Wilson, 2010, p. 1). Tashi (2004) stated the importance of love and compassion "Every Bhutanese citizen should educate himself or herself and work to develop the attitude of wanting to help others. The cultivation of altruistic mind reflects the main activity of a bodhisattva and such mental attitudes are indispensable for generating happiness for the entire society. If every citizen cultivates the feeling of compassion, it will automatically open the inner doors toward a more awakened mind, and through this process one can work meaningfully for the benefit of others" (Tashi, 2004, p. 484).

B. Buddhism in Sri Lanka

According to Perera (1988), the Indian prince Vijaya introduced Buddhism to Sri Lanka from around 236 BCE to 250 BCE. Soon, the civilians were inspired by the ideologies and teachings of Buddhism and subsequently started to adopt them into life. Buddhism and its teachings in Sri Lanka played a vital role in the post-independence era. The people who follow Buddhism's notions indulged in many humanitarian actions. For example, the Sarvodaya Movement, a Buddhist-humanitarian organization worked hard for the welfare of the people. The base inspiration of the movement was the core precepts of Buddhism and Gandhi's method of non-violence. "Sarvodaya's work as a 'Peace Movement' from 1983 to 1997 given their active mission in promoting 'nonviolence and peace' in response to Sri Lanka's rising ethnic tensions" (Rajkopal, 2019, p. 41). It effectively served and rehabilitated people in the war-ravaged nation.

Buddhism teaches that desire is the cause of human suffering. In the case of Sri Lanka, the two prominent ethnic groups who desired to hold power and extend their territory were the cause of suffering. If they could evade the desire they would have escaped from the encountered violence. Easwaran's (2021) translated philosophical book, *Dhammapada* highlights the cause of 'dukkha' is human desires and ceasing desires is the way to end suffering. The 'Pali' word *dukkha* means suffering. The root of attaining *nirvana* hood is to away from desire, "Some people are born again; evil-doers go to hell; righteous people go to heaven; those who are free from all worldly desires attain Nirvana" (Easwaran, 2021, p. 13). Buddha emphasizes that attaining the nirvana stage is the ultimate goal of life and escape from suffering. Sinhala Buddhists ignored the religious values, "Buddhism in Sri Lanka was in crisis on account of the violence. If Sri Lanka had any hope for peace, its majority Sinhalese Buddhist population would have to return to its doctrinal and spiritual roots that recognized the sanctity of all life" (Hayashi-Smith, 2011, p. 160).

Easwaran (2021) compared human desire with a monkey mind. He noted that "The thirst of a thoughtless man grows like a creeper; he runs from life to life, like a monkey seeking fruit in the forest" (Easwaran, 2021, p. 29). The author stated that the monkeys in the forest couldn't be satisfied while searching for fruits. Like, human desires always fall from one thing to another without satisfaction. According to Buddhism, the reason behind the desire is the temptation of evil Mara. Mara tempts the people's minds to attain something, mischievously. In the situation of Sri Lanka, the two ethnic groups tried to meet their demands by means of violent activities. If they had aimed to reach their goal by non-violence, people would have escaped from the violence. But none of the groups demanded their rights, freedom, recognition, power, or regime by soft corner.

C. Sri Lankan Civil War

In the history of Sri Lanka, the ‘Black July’ or ‘1983 riot’ was the vilest attack and the noted year as the official start-up of the war. In the conflict, most of the innocents were targeted based on their race, ethnicity, and religion. Bullion assessed the effect of the conflict as “An estimated 74,000 soldiers and civilians have been killed in Sri Lanka’s bloody conflict since July 1983, when fighting erupted in the northern Jaffna peninsula between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sri Lankan Armed Forces (SLAF). It is reckoned that over 8,00,000 Tamil refugees have fled the island since then, with the flow to Europe, North America, and Australasia estimated at 15,000 to 18,000 people a year at its peak” (Bullion, 2005, p. 117). The Sri Lankan Tamils are linguistic minorities, they were well-represented in the administration and education sectors in Sri Lanka. The disgruntled Sinhalese started fighting against them: “Sinhala majority has consistently restricted Tamils’ rights as Sri Lankans in educational and employment policies” (Deegalle, 2006, p. 2).

Sinhalese treated the Sri Lankan Tamils as the invaders of the island, “The Sinhalese believe that Sri Lanka is largely a Sinhalese-Buddhist country and all other religious or language groups are alien” (Hennayake, 1989, p. 402). The author Hennayake (1989), emphasized that Sinhalese were concerned and treated other identities as aliens on the land. Even the Sinhala govt. also had a biased attitude toward the implementation of political acts. The first implemented law was ‘The Ceylon Citizenship Act’ in 1948. The government justified that this act could control the alien population in Sri Lanka. This act controls the rights of the Tamils on the island, “The action was justified by the Ceylonese leadership on various grounds. It was argued that the Estate Tamils, or ‘Indian Tamils’ as they were then called, were an unassimilated alien population with no long-term interest in the island—they were ‘birds of passage’ in the words of the first Ceylonese Prime Minister, Don Stephen Senanayake” (Shastri, 1999, p. 66).

Sri Lanka’s first prime minister, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike implemented ‘The Sinhala Only Act (1956)’ which made Sinhalese the official language of the nation. Followed by the govt. implemented ‘the Policy of Standardization Act in 1971’ which affected the Sri Lankan Tamil students’ education due to the education reservation policy system favored by the Sinhala students. The next one was ‘The Srimavo Shastri Pact (1965)’, which limits the citizenship of Sri Lankan Tamils. The implemented laws and acts restricted the rights of Sri Lankan Tamils. It resulted in the Sri Lankan Tamils being forced to reach back to Tamil Nadu and other nations. The bias in education, losses of recognition, employment, language, and citizenship triggered to riot. It resulted in the rise of numerous Tamil insurgent groups on the island. Among the strongest militant groups was the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam). It started to bolster its forces, and a sizable number of minorities joined the conflict and fought for the loss of rights. They demanded a separate state known as ‘Eelam’ to regain their rights and laws.

The Tamil militant groups took arms to attain their demands. In the late 1980s, the heat of the war burst out all over the nation. In 1980 Jaffna Library was burnt. In 1983, thirteen Sri Lankan soldiers were killed by LTTE’s first assault. It was a suicide bomb attack in northern Jaffna (Bullion, 2005). Followed by the ‘Anti-Tamil riot’ led to more devastation on the island. It resulted in the loss of countless lives and forced displacements, Tamil homes and shops were targeted (Ratti, 2004). The cost of the war on the island is the loss of peace, loss of lives, the destruction of properties, the collapse of the county’s economy, the fall of governance, the identity crisis, forced displacements, ruins of the holy sites, and societal and individual losses. According to recent estimates, the fighting has resulted in over 64,000 deaths and over 2 million forced displaced persons in Sri Lanka (Deegalle, 2006). The three decades of civil war came to an end in 2009.

D. *The Role of Buddhist Values in the Sri Lankan Civil War*

According to Harris (2008) Buddhism and its teachings tend to be a therapy for civilians in Sri Lanka. His view of the religion is that “Buddhism is a holistic approach toward easing life’s suffering and in restoring balance” (Harris, 2008, p. 16). The principles of Buddhism developed humanitarian values at the height of the conflict. The importance of humanitarian values is depicted in the book, *Buddhism Conflict, and Violence in Modern Sri Lanka*. It covers that humans are generally scared of violence and prefer only kindness, “All sentient beings fear violent activities. When a rod or any form of violent act falls on them, they become frightened, it states, in particular, that all living beings are scared of death, all living beings value their own lives” (Deegalle, 2006, p. 5). Also, the author highlighted the subsequent impacts of violence “If we analyze problems such as the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka, it is clear beneath terrorism, extremism, war and the abuse of human rights lie key issues: the growing unemployment among the youth, the lack of resources to provide a decent living, healthcare and education for all sections of the population, the severe imbalance in distributing wealth, the corruption in the political system and the lack of public accountability about national problems” (p. 8).

Buddhism teaches not to kill or hurt others but instead to lead life on the path of non-violence. The same path was adopted by the Indian icon, Mahatma Gandhi. His chosen root to victory for independence is also the path of non-violence. His law of life and socio-political actions is ‘Ahimsa’ (non-violence). The book, *Gandhi on Non-violence* by Thomas Merton differentiates between the ‘himsa’ and ‘ahimsa’. “Since himsa (violence) degrades and corrupts man, to meet force with force and hatred with hatred only increases man’s progressive degeneration. Non-violence, on the contrary, heals and restores man’s nature, while giving him a means to restore social order and justice. Ahimsa is not a policy for the seizure of power. It is a way of transforming relationships to bring about a peaceful transfer of power, effected freely and without compulsion by all concerned because all have come to recognize it as right” (Merton, 1965,

p. 38). However, none of the violent actions could ever be ethically justified. The fact is that no religion or ethnic group is higher than others, but none of the groups acknowledged this.

However, 70% of Sri Lankans are Buddhist, but they failed to adopt the three core precepts of Buddhism during the war period. A victory achieved through violence is not desirable and would not be considered that as a true victory. No living beings want to lead a life in the center of war-torn areas, everyone has the fear of violence and death. The better way to restore peace in the war-torn nation is to spread the values of humanity and non-violence. Apart from the religious precept, this would help to improve humanitarian acts among the people. So, the finest way to restore harmony to the war-ravaged territories is to adhere to Buddha's teachings of morals. According to Orjuela (2008), "non-governmental organisations and other civil society groups and networks have become increasingly significant actors in war-torn Sri Lanka-tending to the wounds inflicted by war throughout the country, engaging in development efforts, monitoring human rights abuses and organising peace programmes and protests against the war" (Orjuela, 2008, p. 7).

Sri Lanka's noble humanitarian movement, 'Sarvodaya Shramadana' was inspired by the values of Buddhism. The people in the movement have worked hard for the welfare of the people who have undergone suffering. The volunteers are part of the movement, they served and saved thousands of lives during conflicts. People in the movement were united on zero ethnic and religious bias. Ingram (1990) emphasized the humanitarian action of Ariyaratne's family "We had seventeen Tamil brothers and sisters living in our house. One day a Sinhalese gang came to the door, and my young daughter went out and said, "My parents' instructions are that if my father is here, he will have to be killed before any Tamil family member is touched. If my mother is here, she will die first. Now, as I am the oldest in the family and my parents are not home, I will have to die before you touch them." Perhaps she didn't realize the gravity of what she was saying, but the people did not harm her. They apologized and went away" (Ingram, 1990, p. 137).

E. *The Identification of Buddhist Doctrines in The Story of a Brief Marriage*

The acceptance of hardship made by others is the quality of tolerance. It's one of the distinguished moral and noble qualities. Dinesh attitudes and characteristics in the novel resemble the quality of tolerance. Ambedkar replicates Buddha's Dhamma teachings and the importance of tolerance in the chapter, 'The Man Who Was Siddhartha Gautama'. Here, Buddha's tolerance wins over the intolerant Yakkha Alavaka. Buddha was treated badly by angry Yakkha. In lieu, the insulted Buddha showed tolerance and did not take revenge. In the end, Yakkha was inspired by Buddha's tolerance and nature of kindness (Ambedkar, 1957). Dinesh tolerated the prolonged attacks of the Sri Lankan army. He tolerated the hurdles and hardships made by them and held good conduct. It resulted in winning Mr. Somasundaram and the camp people's hearts. Though he was affected by conflicts, his actions in the novel replicate the quality of tolerance.

Arudpragasam noted the heart-boiling incident at the start of the novel, a small innocent boy who had one hand amputated and was on the verge of losing one leg. At the age of six, the boy was oblivious to the meaning of conflict, but he was caught without any intervention. The same kind of explosion already caused the death of the boy's parents, "According to the boy's sister the injury had come from a land mine explosion four months before, the same accident that killed their parents also" (Arudpragasam, 2016, p. 2). Though the family was not part of the war, the violence hit a second time. It illustrated that militant and insurgent groups did not value the importance of non-violence. If they adopted religious values, it would boost to strengthen interethnic unity, peace, and justice, and respect the individual's life. It would reduce harming others, conflict, arms, fear, and physical and mental trauma of the victims. On the other hand, the consequences of violence were harming the people, loss of life, displacement, destruct of the stream of society, and mental illness. Although Dinesh was facing many hurdles, while rescuing the victims, he felt pleased and satisfied about himself for helping the people. In Buddhism, Buddha stated that real pleasure should be gained from helping others instead of hurting, "Seeking one's own happiness, [s]he, who harms other pleasure-seeking sentient beings with a rod, will not experience happiness hereafter. Seeking one's own happiness, [s]he, who does not harm other pleasure-seeking sentient beings with a rod, will experience happiness hereafter" (Deegalle, 2006, p. 6).

The other instances of Dinesh's nature of tolerance are also praiseworthy. Dinesh tolerated his body aches and rescued the war victims. On the verge of saving lives on the battlefield, he fails to take care of himself. Even though Dinesh was not a hospital staff and was not paid for his job, he spent much time in the camp clinic. His selfless nature was exposed whenever the bomb exploded in the camp area, "All day since the shelling, he had been helping out around the clinic, the cries of the wounded and grieving flooding every space between his ears, and all he wanted now was a quiet place in which to sit, rest, and think, somewhere he could contemplate in peace the proposal he had received earlier that morning" (Arudpragasam, 2016, p. 6). According to Menike (2022), one's life should be useful to others instead of selfishness, "my existence is not only about my happiness, my freedom, my peace, and so on but also about my infinite effort to abstain from violence against another, irrespective of my desire for self-fulfilment" (Menike, 2022, p. 84).

Although Dinesh lost his family members and was forced to settle in the refugee camps in the novel, he was not ready to take revenge on the assailants. His adherence to non-violence path helps to reduce further casualties and subsequent crises. Actually, the disease of intolerance widely causes more devastation. For example, Saraswathi represents an intolerant character in the novel, Munawceera's *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*. After losing her two brothers, she joined an insurgent group and took revenge on the Sinhalese through a suicide bomb attack. Here, her violent path led to self-murder and killed several Sinhalese victims. Her ferocious characteristics resulted in more

devastation in her family and society. In the end, Saraswathi's parents lost their sons along with Saraswathi (Munaweera, 2016).

Selflessness is a kind of noble behavior, and it guides to helping others with zero bias. One who has the quality of selflessness and cares about others' feelings and emotions is truly a noble soul. Instead of being concerned about 'I', 'me', 'mine', and 'myself' it is better to feel and consider others' pain, empathy, desire, feelings, and emotions. The selfless nature of Dinesh's acts is reflected throughout the novel. He was not worried about protecting his life in the battlefield areas instead, he kept attempting to save the lives. In the first section, he saved many victims on the battlefield. In the second section, he married Ganga to safeguard her life. In the third section, he built many dugouts in the camp fields to hide the victims. And in the fourth section, he saved the birds and small creatures. These numerous incidents exemplified his selflessness and tolerant characteristics. Dinesh's selflessness relates to the character, Karna in Mahabharata. Though Karna was offered the Pandava kingdom and Draupadi by Lord Krishna, he was not tempted by that. Instead, he stood with Duryodhana. Before facing the Kurukshetra war, Karna knew his identity, he would fight against his brothers, and he would die. But still, he was not ready to leave Duryodhana and it shows his selfless characteristics, "He was left by his mother. He lost his own identity as Kshatriya. Karna was called sutaputra. His brothers teased him because of his caste. He got the novel Identity by Kuru scion Duryodhana when he declared himself Anganarsh. (the king of Anga Pradesh). He remained indebted to his friend till his last breath. He very politely declined to accept the new identity offered by lord Krishna. He was above from material and mundane pleasures of life. His character attracts our attention because of his selfless instinct" (Jha, 2020, p. 1482).

In the camp hospital, the doctors and nurses came to know about the final attack in the field. They ignored the injured patients and instead tried to escape to protect themselves. However, Dinesh knew the information but didn't want to escape from the camp because he was concerned about helping the victims who required care. His prior concern was to protect the victims. Though he has many tasks, his priority concern to do the following societal work, "Even if he had some specific tasks to do if he was digging a grave for the dead, or helping transport the wounded to the hospital or clinic, still he felt he didn't quite know what he was doing or where he was going" (Arudpragasam, 2016, p. 19). Buddharakkhita (2008) stated the importance of selfless service to people, "To one ever eager to revere and serve the elders, these four blessing accrue: long life and beauty, happiness and power" (Buddharakkhita, 2008, p. 40).

Dinesh and his fellow displaced persons lived in fear due to the violence in the camp field. Due to the fear of the conflicts, the children and women learned to hide in the dugouts. Dinesh walked towards a thin, leafless tree. Whenever he hears the bomb sound, he comes out of his shelter and runs to save the victims of the armed conflict without fear of life. The conflicts made Dinesh restless, his weary body against the tree's base, pressed the bark against his back and stretched his legs, so that the muscles in his quadriceps, which had been overworked from excavating, could finally unwind. Dinesh may use arms against the Sinhalese if he decides to pursue violence. Though his ethnic group had been targeted and he had access to weapons in the camp, he didn't prefer to respond (Arudpragasam, 2016). In the book, *Buddha Taught Nonviolence, not Pacifism* depicted the Buddha's words of non-violence. "Non-violence is a prerequisite to, and the first step of the Buddha's teaching. It appears not as a belief, but as a practical necessity to the intentional and aware path of Dhamma" (Fleischman, 2022, p. 7). He insists that hurting other living beings is misconduct. A person who disregards the suffering of others attempts to find serenity through violence. In a place of violent persecution, everyone needs tranquility and leisure.

Arudpragasam (2016) included the cruelty of the conflict in the novel, "Dinesh had once seen a man with an amputated arm wandering around after the shelling as if in search of his missing body part; he picked up the different forearm he found on the ground and tried each one on like he was shopping for new clothes, pursing his lips with dissatisfaction at each mismatch of size or complexion" (Arudpragasam, 2016, p. 18). The victim's search for his missed body part scenery affected him a lot though he urged to save his life. In Buddhism, when Siddhartha explored the outside world, he saw the miseries of people, "On his way to the park his observant eyes met the strange sights of a decrepit old man, a diseased person, a corpse and a dignified hermit" (Mahathera, 2020, p. 6). Soon, he decided to leave his worldly possessions and started to serve people through his teachings. In this way, whenever Dinesh found the crisis of the people, he came out of his tent and started to rescue them.

Dinesh treated his fellow refugees gently and lovingly. In his early displacement, he learned that a woman lost her son, who reached next to his shelter with her husband and twelve-year-old daughter. She always preferred to read the Bible to distract her mind from the hard times. She has hope that her son will return one day. Dinesh could feel the pain of the woman and he started to treat her as his own mother. He took much care of her to come out of her mental trauma, "He would do anything she asked him to do, and sometimes even before she asked, as though no sooner was a thought formed in her mind than he would begin to act on it" (Arudpragasam, 2016, p. 114). Tilakaratne (2020) mentioned the two keynotes of life are compassion and wisdom. That strengthens the fragile minds, "In Buddhism two virtues, compassion and wisdom, are endorsed as supreme. It is held that the Buddha's behavior is motivated by these two virtues" (Tilakaratne, 2020, p. 319).

Mr. Somasundaram had much faith in Dinesh to take care of his daughter. After Dinesh's nuptial bond with Ganga, he hid his taste of both agony and pain. He knew that, if he expressed his agony or cried in her presence, that would affect the fragile heart of Ganga. So, he expressed his grief in her absence or after she slept, "If Ganga was sleeping still he would be able to cry right beside her even, in the soft and solicitous silence of her sleep" (Arudpragasam, 2016, p.

119). Once, Ganga enquired about Dinesh's mood and the strain of work in the camp clinic. He replied that a generous person only could manage to work, "I can't imagine working in the clinic every single day. It must be difficult, no, with all the blood and everything? You must be a selfless person" (p. 136).

"Buddhists are taught to show the same tolerance, forbearance, and brotherly love to all men, without distinction; and an unswerving kindness toward members of the animal kingdom" (Lopez, 2002, p. 13). As Dinesh holds the nature of love and kindness not only with people but also with birds and invertebrates. He rescued a small, injured black crow in the middle of the night when explosives were being released. After being rescued, he discovered that its wings were damaged, "He could only either put it out of its misery or simply let it be. If he killed it he could release it from this last stretch of difficulty, while if he left it living it would have no choice but to wait, would have to go on suffering till it died. Ganga advised him to slay it rather than allow it to continue to suffer" (Arudpragasam, 2016. p. 157). Ganga's words echoed the Buddha's words that 'death is the salvation of suffering'. Dinesh, however, refused to kill it; instead, he told her that he would assist it as much as possible, until its demise. The second example is, when he was in elementary school, he rescued a wounded defenseless gecko and nursed it back to health. His noble characteristics link with the Buddhist verse, "Someone does not become noble by harming living things. Through not harming any living things He is called noble" (Roebuck, 2010, p. 174).

VI. CONCLUSION

The characteristics of Dinesh examined in the paper serve as an example of humanitarian acts. He preferred non-violence, selflessness, and tolerance throughout the descriptions in the novel that exemplify fundamental Buddhist principles. If everyone embraces the fundamental values in their daily lives, that would result in a reduction of conflicts. Encouraging humanitarian values is the path to bring harmony to a war-torn nation. Developing values among the people could prevent future violence and conflict. The inhumane were made harm to people to obtain power, possessions, and favors were useless.

"The teachings of all religions should center here, for without wisdom there is no reason" (Carus, 2010, p. 66). Despite the several religions in Sri Lanka, Buddhism captured maximum hearts due to its moral and ethical lessons. If Buddhists adopted religious values, the cause and effects of the conflicts somehow could be controlled. The prolonged crises on the island occurred because people were not ready to be compassionate to each other, due to the absence of religious and humanitarian values. The only way to end the conflict is to consider or value others' suffering. The structure of human existence is dependent on one another. Taking revenge, and dominating others are led to further conflicts. Adopting the teachings of Buddha's fourfold and eightfold paths, are the antidotes to violence and restoring harmony in the war-torn nation.

Buddhist teachings are generally viewed as the moral and ethical nature of life. The core values are universal truths, "He taught the dharma both to the rich and the poor, to the powerful and the destitute, to gods and humans, and even to nonhumans" (Lopez, 2002, p. 54). People in Sri Lanka differentiate themselves from others based on group, caste, ethnicity, religion, race, language, border, or state. They failed to evade the prejudices and unite based on identities, traditions, culture, and aesthetics. Spreading love and compassion toward others is the prime teaching of all religions. The religious and humanitarian values between the groups strengthen and stabilize the peace. Undoubtedly, the spiritual teachings of Gautama Buddha help to control harming others and wrongdoings. One's life would be incomplete when he/she fails to adapt to the religious core teachings. The majority of people in the world are inspired by religious precepts and adopt them into their lives. These influences would be reflected in everyone's actions, either deliberately or unintentionally. It helps the society and nation in stable mode. In this way, the paper concludes that adopting Buddhism's core values helps to develop humanitarian values and restore harmony in the war-torn nation.

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Dinakaran. S., a research scholar at VIT-Vellore, School of Social Sciences and Languages, holds M.A., and M. Phil degrees in English Language and Literature from Tiruvallur University, Vellore, and a B.Ed. from TNTEU. Under the mentorship of Dr. Soumen Mukherjee, he explores critical aspects of English Literature. He enriches both academia and the classroom. He has five years of teaching experience in various colleges including DSCET, Chennai, Jeppiaar SRR Engineering College, Chennai, and LBASC, Kanchipuram.



Soumen Mukherjee is an accomplished Associate Professor at VIT-Vellore, distinguished for his remarkable academic contributions. His academic journey encompasses profound research, exemplified by numerous publications and citations, establishing him as a notable authority in his field. As an educator and mentor, Dr. Mukherjee nurtures excellence and continues to inspire and shape the academic landscape at VIT-Vellore intellectual growth of aspiring scholars. His dedication to advancing knowledge and fostering academic excellence inspires and shapes the academic landscape at VIT-Vellore and beyond.