

THE POSSIBILITY OF PERMANENT PEACE

WE, Japanese Buddhists, are in full sympathy with the purposes of the Washington Conference now taking place under the management of the American Government, and we earnestly pray for its success in every possible way. If we could reduce armaments in different nations, leading up to the establishment of permanent peace not only in the Far East but all over the world, this would be a real blessing humanity has not yet known in its history. Those who know how the recent World-War started and what a havoc it brought in five years will realise what an important signification this Conference is going to have in the history of the world. The eleventh of November, the day when the war came to terminate four years ago, was most thoughtfully chosen as the opening day of the Washington Conference, so called.

No lengthy arguments are needed as to the desirability of peace and the horribleness of war. No one desires to repeat what we have experienced during as well as after the five years of the War carried out on the most gigantic scale history has ever witnessed. How eagerly we hailed the Versailles Conference in which a League of Nations was to be organised to insure permanent peace! But we are afraid we were too hasty in the beginning to expect too much of the Conference, for things have developed since not a little disappointing to our perhaps over-sanguine hopes. Some powerful nations have not joined the League, and there are many circumstances yet which may eventually prove to be quite disastrous to the healthy growth of the still infantine League. In one sense the Washington Conference is a continuation of the Versailles one, it is a sort of American substitute for the League of

Nations somewhat limited in scope but springing from the same general motive to establish permanent peace between nations.

It is a fine thing no doubt to have all possible questions settled beforehand that may arise in the Pacific and in the Far East, plunging the interested nations into warlike entanglements. If disarmament could do it, let us at once be saved from wasting millions of dollars on battleships and other most expensive instruments of war. But such complications are liable to rise not only in the Far East but in other parts of the world; and it would be a splendid idea to have all sorts of conferences in all international affairs, including disarmament and everything. But there are many things even the keenest eye-sight of the best seasoned statesmen or diplomats cannot foresee, and causes of war may rise at any moment where they are least suspected. National interests are so conflicting, and international politics is such a complicated affair. It is one way to settle such complications by a series of conferences, but this is not fundamental, for we may never come to an end of conferences, where, naturally, stronger nations will have the most to say and the most to gain. We may thus finally be compelled again to arm ourselves to the teeth. This is not the way to establish permanent peace.

The first step towards this must be started from the spiritual side of life and not from its material, egotistic, and commercial side. It is wonderful to see how far we are wandering away from the proper path of spiritual culture which constitutes real civilisation. We are just thinking of our own interest, comfort, our own welfare, and when an otherwise neighbourly nation somehow happens to cross our way, we are so incensed as to demand their clearing off in a most peremptory manner. Most of our international difficulties come from one nation's asserting itself too much at the expense of other nations. As long as we are bent on

promoting our own interest regardless of its effects on others, whether they are individuals or nations, we are sure to encounter some obstacles lying in our way. To remove these warlike preparations becomes imperative, which inevitably later break out in hostile engagements. Peace is the remotest ideal when such conditions are allowed to prevail.

The easier grow the means of travel and communication, the more frequent and the closer is intercourse between nations, and there are more occasions between them that will involve them in complications. It thus becomes imperative for each nation to strictly observe the laws of justice and fair play, and to practise the principles of humanity and universal brotherhood. National and racial pride is all right as far as it goes, but when it is carried to such a degree as to conflict with others, it grows dangerous, and we ought to be quite careful about flouncing it too much. Between individuals certain standards of conduct are observed, but between nations, though we claim to be civilised, these are sometimes quite ignored. Races cannot be reduced to one, and even if this can be done it is the open question whether it is a desirable thing in the interest of humanity. States and nations too exist and cannot be coalesced into one; and in this case too we cannot see if a complete amalgamation of all nations with different cultures and ideals and histories is really beneficial to the development of civilisation. In human life variety is necessary to keep up its vitality. Those that go against this law, individuals and states, are bound to work out their own destruction and extinction. Unity in variety and variety is unity—this is the fundamental law of existence.

The main thing is to recognise the truth of Buddhism which teaches the oneness of all things in Buddha-nature existing in them and making them move and keeping them alive. When we are united in this Buddha-nature, free from ignorance and irrational self-assertion, we know how to

preserve multitudinosity without interfering with its essential oneness. Harmony will thus prevail not only in one's individual life but in international relations. Permanent peace can never be attained by merely appealing to diplomacy or to the subtle machination of political strategists, however highly trained in their profession. Religion must come in and the spiritual truth must be put in active operation in order to establish the real and permanent foundation of peace.

When war breaks out we are so reckless in spending millions of yen and sacrificing thousands of human lives, which could be devoted to the advancement of science and art and to the enhancement of real human welfare. All the energy, all the science, and all the resources that a nation can command at the time are most magnanimously offered to the insatiable god of war. And what do we gain from all this? Does not the recent World-War teach us some lessons in this? Both the vanquished and the victorious are losers, not only materially but morally and spiritually. How can we then go on building battleships and other machines of destruction that cost so much and yet are serviceable only for a few years? Why do we not spend half as much for the education of the people and for other peaceful preparations which are so urgently needed by them? Instead of being ready for war, is it not far better to prepare for peace? We are in fact too well prepared for war, and naturally we desire one to test our preparedness. If things went otherwise, perhaps we would never think of warlike activity. We may all long for power and gain, but when we know how much we have to pay for them, not only when we are enjoying peace but when war goes on, I cannot see, even from the economical point of view, why such a costly power is really so desirable. When we are victors there may be some feeling of pride rising in our hearts, but such a feeling

is after all too childish, too nonsensical, to be cherished by us. If, on the contrary, we lose the game, what a catastrophe it would be! This does not require any comment. Germany was so well prepared for war, quite sure of being a conqueror, the programme was all made up beforehand. But what was the outcome of the five years' reckless carnage? The lesson is too dear to learn again.

When this article is out, perhaps the Conference is in full swing at the other side of the ocean. The representatives of the participant nations may be working out the schedule they have prepared in the interest, so called, of their own people. They are all sincere, I have no doubt, in wishing to reduce armaments and to build up the lasting bases of peace in the Pacific, in the Far East, and then all over the world. The Conference is one of the greatest events in the history of nations, but we as Buddhists cannot but help wishing them—all those trained diplomats and statesmen in Washington—to have always an eye on the spiritual phase of human life, where really lies the permanent principle of world-peace, and not to be carried away by too narrow national interests and self-asserting, power-coveting policies which are sure to bring the Conference into a tragic comedy or burlesque. The Versailles Conference was more or less disappointing, for the statesmen did not have time enough to reflect on the War and its disastrous consequences and were too eager to follow up the old history of statecraft and diplomacy. But the present Conference meets after a mature survey of all the conditions that have arisen since the termination of the War. They then have no excuse to be swayed merely by false national pride and the too limited feelings of racial discrimination.

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