

## **Buddhism on Mindfulness, Social Activism, and Peace**

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### **Abstract**

*The strategy of this paper is to explore how traditional Buddhist teachings respond to contemporary challenges. The effects of these contemporary crises have brought immense tribulation globally. We humans can create and destroy the natural relationship of the environment. Since the twentieth century, Buddhism has been revived with its new way of response as Buddha's teachings mainly focus on alleviating suffering. We live in an era of symbiosis between humans and scientific technology. People are advancing with their cognitive abilities and the enhancement of technology. But, the present scenario in every region is more or less the same, i.e., detrimental. Now, the question is, who is responsible for these circumstances? The answer is that our actions cause physical and mental afflictions. In Buddhism, there is a saying that as soon as we realize the pain, there is a practical way to expunge the causes of suffering. Both in the traditional and contemporary sense of Buddhism, liberation must be the goal of everyone's life. As we know, different schools of Buddhism emerged with different convictions. One of them is Zen Buddhism, an important school of Mahayana Buddhism. Zen Buddhism, with its Engaged Buddhist outlook, responded to the crisis of social, political, economic, and environmental domains. Here, we will know how this Buddhist philosophy enhances social reformation with the perspective of peace-making culture.*

**Keywords:** *Satipatthana Sutta, Street retreat, Interbeing, Non-judgmental, Peace for others.*

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## **Introduction:**

In the third millennium, people can achieve whatever they want based on rationality and advanced technology. Though we live in an advanced period, our moral or spiritual conditions are still at stake. We incur due to our depraved thoughts. Our negative defilements are the causes of contemporary challenges like Climate change, Social inequalities, Economic instability, Pandemics, and others. Here, an expected question is- How can we reform the socio-political and economic structure to overcome the ongoing upheaval? A cogent answer is that religious convictions always corroborate human welfare. Here, the Buddhist attitude towards the present detrimental scenario is considered.

Spiritual progress is of prime concern both in traditional and contemporary Buddhism. Contemporary Buddhists or Socially Engaged Buddhists mainly focus on social, political, economic, and environmental issues. Meditation is the way to calm our disturbed minds. In Engaged Buddhism, mindfulness meditation plays a pivotal role in practical engagement. One of the Noble Eightfold Paths is Right Mindfulness. All religions change with time; nonetheless, Buddhism. The spirit of meditation was reinforced only by monks and nuns until the Theravada tradition. When the Mahayana tradition came up, mainly Zen Buddhism, the path of meditation was embraced by both monastics and lay Buddhists. Now, a question arises- How does the path of meditation or mindfulness lead someone to be socially active? On what ground does social activism justify mindful living and peace-making? Generally, meditation is a way to clear our minds. Meditation helps us to revive our senses with positivity. Interpretation of suffering has changed with time. In the past, people suffered mainly from physical illnesses. But nowadays, depression, anxiety, and stress, primarily mental illnesses, are part of our lives. We can eradicate the causes of our mental illness. Mindful living is the medicine for a healthy life and to relieve these sufferings.

In Buddhism, there are two types of suffering: mundane and spiritual. Furthermore, the Noble Eightfold Paths are categorized into three sections: *Sila* (Morality), *Prajna* (Wisdom), and *Samadhi* (Concentration). Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration are the three steps defining the *Samadhi* section. Zen Buddhism is an essential school of Mahayana Buddhism, and the followers of this school believe meditation is the key to the state of Enlightenment. Among the followers of this school, two renowned Buddhists framed their socially active outlook based

on Mindfulness. Here, we would know how they challenged the crisis to reform society as it should be.

### **Engaged Buddhism and Its Nature:**

Since the twentieth century, the world has witnessed the utmost vulnerability. At that time, different Buddhist monastics and lay Buddhists responded out of non-violence and compassion. Either someone is a Theravadin, Mahayanist, or Vajrayanist and actively engages with this society in their respective ways. Engaged Buddhism is a dual liberation movement started in the twentieth century. A wave of crisis has been laid out due to improbity in such a manner that social concordance is a prerequisite to exterminating the social, political, economic, and environmental crises. Buddhism has been revived to face those contemporary challenges with its traditional teachings, mainly ethical disciplines. These contemporary or traditional Buddhist followers who became proactive in visualizing a good life for all are popularly known as Engaged Buddhists. Here, a question can arise: Why is this movement called a dual liberation movement? A pertinent response is that this movement is also focused on self-liberation and others' liberation. It can be reckoned as an advanced version of Mahayana Buddhism (the path of *Bodhisattva*).

Engaged Buddhism is grounded on the three characteristics. The first one is mindfulness or awareness (Pali: *Sati*). This quality needs the path of meditation. Buddha did not have any supernatural power. He has been respected by the honorific title 'Buddha' only for his awakened mind. We are also awake. But this awakening is not about sleep. It is about eradicating inner defilements and realizing one's true essence.

The second characteristic of Engaged Buddhism is the interconnection of self and the world. We are all interconnected; this thought makes us aware of living a meaningful life. A meaningful life is possible when we think of others' happiness rather than our own. When others are happy, we also feel contented. When others are harmed, we also feel their pain.

The third characteristic is the virtue of living and speaking for others. It is imperative to act. These actions are opposed in a non-violent way. When deprived people cannot raise their voices against corruption, we must be the strength of their voices.

Each of these characteristics is a guideline to the state of Enlightenment. When we perceive the world as it is, we understand there should be no 'I' and 'others'; everything is about us. Meditation is a technique to cultivate the spirit of mindfulness. When we are mindful about each action, the other two characteristics also become apparent at the time.

### **Meditation and Mindfulness:**

In Buddhism, two types of meditation are mainly accentuated. One is *Shamatha* meditation, i.e., to calm the mind, and the other is *Vipassana* meditation, i.e., gaining insight. Meditation provides us with Peace from hectic errands. In the Theravada tradition, mindfulness or *Sati* is cultivated through both *Shamatha* and *Vipassana* meditation. But in the modern secularised society, *Vipassana* meditation is mainly practised to cultivate mindfulness. There are different intentions for meditating. One does meditation to feel inner Peace. Some people meditate to feel relaxed. In the priesthood, meditation is used to acquire supernatural powers. Some others meditate to feel unification with a divine being.

Mindfulness in the ancient tradition and the contemporary period differs concerning inner guidance. In ancient times, people were more or less aware of their actions and surroundings. This mindfulness meditation is used to liberate oneself. In the twenty-first century, people are much more mentally afflicted than physically afflicted. People experience crisis, violence, and injustice to some extent. People feel depressed and distracted from their goals. Mindfulness is the key to invigorating our minds to restart our journey. Mindfulness urges us to deal with the problem and not escape it. Mindfulness is the quality, and meditation is the way to develop this quality.

The path of mindfulness became the main concentration for a Buddhists in contemporary times. If Engaged Buddhism had made its way depending on traditional spiritual standards, then mindfulness meditation would have also been discussed in conventional content. It is found in the *Satipatthana Sutta* of Majjhima Nikaya 10, Buddha discussed the four foundations of mindfulness.

*“Katame cattaro*

*Idha, bhikkhave, bhikku kaye kayanupassi viharati*

*Vedanasu vedananupassi viharati*

*Citte cittanupassi viharati*

*Dhammesu dhammanupassi viharati*

*Atapi sampajano satima, vineyya loke abhijhadomanassam*<sup>2</sup>

The four foundations of Mindfulness depend on contemplation of the body, mind, and feelings, and reflection on the nature of things. These four ways promote a healthy life free from clinging, avarice, and sorrow. A mindful being perceives the body, mind, feelings, and things as they are. Awareness is the antidote to social strife, political upheaval, and economic disruption.

### **Zen Philosophy: A Pathway to a Practical Engagement**

One of the crucial schisms of Mahayana Buddhism is the Zen school. The Zen philosophy is endeared to Asian and Western adherents because of its meditative path. The term 'Zen' itself means meditation or seated meditation (*zazen*). Bodhidharma, the founder of this school, emphasized only meditation rather than chanting sutras, incense offerings, and prostrations. *Zazen* helps the mind to be in its original position. We realize our true nature when our minds get free from egoistic delusions. A self becomes selfish when negative thoughts cloud our minds, and we fail to recognize reality. Now, the question is- Meditation prompts self-discovery, but how does it help to extend our hands to uplift others? Here, others signify both human beings and animals. Zen followers are very much aware of both social and animal well-being. Zen Buddhism emphasizes meditation as the way to attain the state of Enlightenment. Moreover, mindful living, a quality of meditation, is the key to a contented life. Now, the question is- if mindfulness means being aware of the present moment, then what does it entail for social activism or practical engagement? If someone asks- What motivates Zen followers to meditate? A Zen follower meditates to live life more fully, with fewer attachments and with inner Peace.

Here, inner Peace is paramount for cultivating a concerned mind for others. But, the most important thing one should remember is that Zen Buddhists believe Enlightenment is possible amidst our daily activities. When we want to be a part of the Zen school, the foremost thought is that one has to meditate throughout the day to enlighten oneself. But, it is not de facto that a Zen mind needs

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<sup>2</sup> Bhikkhu Anandajoti, *Mahsatipatthanasuttam: The Long Discourse about the Ways of Attending to Mindfulness*, 2011, pp. 10-11

to be attached to daily activities, such as talking with others and listening to others, as everything we encounter in our everyday life is practised. Meditation does not proceed to escape from communal living. A Zen mind gradually treads into a world of living for others and brings Peace to others. In this regard, we can consider the cogitation of two Engaged Buddhists, Thich Nhat Hanh (an Asian Engaged Buddhist) and Roshi Bernie Glassman (a Western Engaged Buddhist), both of whom are traditional Zen practitioners who advanced their social engagement within the foundation of mindfulness for peace cultivation.

### **Thich Nhat Hanh's Philosophy**

#### **A Modern Interpretation of the Four Noble Truths:**

Thich Nhat Hanh, a veteran Vietnamese monk, was a victim of the Vietnam War of 1954. He tried to cope with that phenomenon with his longtime acquisition. Buddhism is not about worshipping Gautama Buddha. It is about the social consciousness of one's mind. Hanh decided to make Buddhism present in every aspect of our lives. He first pioneered the term Engaged Buddhism in one of his writings. As we know, Buddha's teachings are pragmatic. Hanh decided to cease the war with a non-violent and compassionate response. While perceiving the causes of suffering, he reinterpreted the Four Noble Truths with a contemporary outlook.

Buddha perceived suffering in the form of old age, physical illness, and death. In the pre-colonial era, people suffered due to a lack of material needs and bodily afflictions. While living in an advanced age, poverty is under control. Health span and lifespan are enhanced due to advanced medical technology. But what is mental illness? This question needs a pensive outlook. Hanh did not say there is no suffering in this world, but rather happiness. Happiness and suffering are both experienced in this world. The fact is that everything depends upon an individual and their response. Nowadays, most people suffer due to stress, anxiety, and despair, and these causes someone to attempt suicide. Hanh preached in his Dharma Talk on how to face trouble rather than escape it. The cause of ill-being is rooted in our way of accepting. Traditional stands and contemporary stands differ in one point. The reason is mainly mentally based. Why do people become so violent and misled by wrong actions? Living in an advanced age, people always crave more and more. They ultimately turn their life into machines. They forget to live each moment

of life. This kind of attitude leads to wrong perceptions, misunderstanding and violence. Buddha, by his sayings, wanted to make us aware of reality. The reality is that life would be troublesome. We must recognize the causes of our suffering, and then it is easy for us to come out of it. A conscious mind and the correct perception make much work simple. If there is a difficulty, there is also a way to deal with it. Mindful living makes our lives peaceful and smooth. Buddha's way of making us realize the world's reality is through concrete terms. Well-being and ill-being are both present in our way of understanding. By Hanh's clarification, it is clear that depending on time, the types of suffering and their causes of suffering are somehow different, but the path to cease them is the same. When we can remove the darkness of our minds, we can feel the light, which makes others' lives peaceful, too. The paradigm of the Four Noble Truths in contemporary times:

1. "Ill-being: tension, stress, anxiety, fear, violence, suicide, etc.
2. Roots of ill-being (the making of ill-being): craving, hate, wrong, perceptions, hectic life, communication, deadliness
3. Cessation of ill-being= well-being: relaxation: relaxation, lightness, Peace, reconciliation, compassion, communication, insight
4. Path of well-being: the Noble Eightfold Path."<sup>3</sup>

He reiterated in many of his writings the way to combat ill-being, i.e., the theory of Mindfulness. Mindful living is the foundation for a harmonious society. Hanh exclaimed, "Mindfulness frees us of forgetfulness and dispersion and makes it possible to live fully each minute of life."<sup>4</sup> When walking, eating, and talking with others, we must be conscious. Not only is consciousness required for every phenomenon, but we must be aware of the reality of our lives. We are all interconnected, and mindful living is the key to realizing the truth

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<sup>3</sup> Hanh, Thich Nhat, *The Mindfulness Bell, A Fresh Take on the Four Noble Truths*, Issue 49, Vietnam: Plum Village, 2008, p. 8

<sup>4</sup> Hanh, Thich Nhat, *The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1975, p. 15

## **The Order of Interbeing:**

Hanh's most remarkable contribution to this society is the Order of Interbeing (*Tiep Hien*). This community has umpteen lay Buddhist practitioners and monastics all over the world. If someone wants to practice Engaged Buddhism, the Order of Interbeing is perfect. We must uplift our minds with wisdom, compassion, and Peace- the three Buddhist guiding principles to restore our society to its original position. Hanh realized that happiness and peacefulness are prominent elements for an individual and a culture. Let us know why Hanh used the terms '*Tiep*' and '*Hien*' in his life dictionary. The Vietnamese word *tiep* means "continuing", and *hien* means "realizing". Engaged Buddhism is an updated version of Buddhism. This movement needs some essential qualities that an individual should live with. When someone in their true nature wants to be socially engaged, they must be guided by some principles. These principles are the pillars of Engaged Buddhism and the Order of Interbeing. The principles are: non-attachment, direct experimentation, appropriateness, and skillful means.

- **Non-attachment:** When we first hear this term, it makes us think of non-attachment from what? This is from views, theories, ideas, etc. Hanh enlightened himself with this thought: we should not be attached to any theory as the ultimate truth. Every religious preacher promotes their Dharma in the form of theories. These theories are only a guiding means. They are not absolute truths. Everything changes with time; likewise, these theories are also circumstantially based. Buddha's teachings are also acknowledged as a raft. About this, there is a *sutta* named *Alagaddupama-sutta*, where Buddha clearly stated his teachings should be followed as a means, not as an end. As we know, clinging to material belongings, loved ones, or ideological inflexibility leads to an ordeal in any form.
- **Direct experimentation:** This principle is most conducive to practical engagement with this society. A meditative mind entails living every moment and gathering lessons for a better experience. Hanh introduced a meditation retreat or meditation walk where many people participate and walk together for a while. These social gatherings during his lifetime allowed him to listen to others. He became a victim of the Vietnam War, and his philosophical ground turned into direct experience.
- **Appropriateness:** Buddhism has approximately 84,000 sutras, which are the gateways to practice Buddhism daily. Religion is not about worshipping a divine being. Instead, it seeks

unification among human beings. Buddhism is endearing to many thinkers for its compassionate and non-violent approaches.

- **Skillful means:** Skillful means are how to comprehend Buddhism in their daily activities. Different ordained monastics made the Buddha's teachings accessible to ordinary people. Buddha's teachings are available in Pali and Sanskrit languages so that people can practice them in their own efforts in particular circumstances.

These four principles form the basis of Hanh's foundation, the Order of Interbeing and Engaged Buddhism. When we want to practice something, proper knowledge is required. With its various traditions and theories, Buddhism intends to enhance the standard of living. It is accurate that we cannot recognize anyone as a pioneer of this movement. If there are many pioneers, then one of them must be Thich Nhat Hanh. His understanding of Interbeing is based on the teachings of *Pratityasamutpada*, *Anatta*, and *Sunyata*. While witnessing the Vietnam War, he realized how he could be happy when others suffered. His notion of Interbeing prompted that the individual and the society "inter-are".

### **The fourteen precepts of the Order of Interbeing:**

These fourteen precepts are the pathways to gaining knowledge about what Engaged Buddhism mainly promotes. Hanh developed these fourteen precepts to practice Buddhism daily for community members and lay Buddhists. The members of the Order of Interbeing are advised to chant these fourteen precepts once every week. These precepts were forged during wartime to "not only to help people develop serenity and learn to look more deeply into themselves but also to look deeply into conditions in the world."<sup>5</sup>

1. "Do not be idolatrous about any doctrine or theory, even a Buddhist one.
2. Do not think the knowledge you presently possess is a changeless, absolute truth.
3. Do not force others to adopt your views, whether by authority, threat, money, or even education.
4. Do not avoid contact with suffering.
5. Do not accumulate wealth while millions remain hungry.
6. Do not maintain anger or hatred

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<sup>5</sup> Queen, Christopher S., *Engaged Buddhism in the West*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000, p. 51

7. Do not lose yourself in distraction, inwardly or outwardly
8. Do not utter words that create discord or cause your community to split apart
9. Do not say untruthful things for the sake of personal advantage
10. Do not use the Buddhist community for personal gain or transform your community into a political party
11. Do not live with a vocation that is harmful to humans or nature
12. Do not kill. Do not let others kill.
13. Possess nothing that should belong to others.
14. Do not mistreat your body.”<sup>6</sup>

From the above-stated guidelines, one of the significant questions for Hanh’s Engaged Buddhism has been whether to improve this society; Hanh emphasized personal spiritual transformation. Hence, a social reformation would be possible. What did he say about institutional change? An institution comprises individuals, so to make something better, we should change our perspective on this world. When a transition from one to many is possible in the case of spiritual enhancement, we can perceive an institutional change to some extent.

Hanh’s philosophy undergirds a theoretical framework for social and environmental evolution. His spiritual and conceptual understanding stipulated that Buddhist teachings could be revived with time. What is important for social reformation? A mindful response is that our spiritual conviction is the bedrock of a peaceful society.

### **Bernie Glassman’s Philosophy**

#### **A Zen Mind in Western Culture: A Social Implication**

Roshi Bernie Glassman is recognized as one of the most inventive Western exemplars of Engaged Buddhism. His influence is not only confined to the Western world but also in Asian countries. Like Ambedkar, Bernie was attracted to Zen Buddhism. He was led into a Zen monastery in his college life. There, he learned that if one is not ready to serve others, that person can still be a part

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<sup>6</sup> Keown, Damien, *Buddhist Ethics: A Very Short Introduction*, New York, U.S.A.: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 36

of the Zen community. However, if someone does not practice meditation, that person can no longer be a Zen member. When he started practising meditation, his mental upliftment reached such a place where he was a part of the helpless people. He decided to help those homeless people in Yonkers, New York. During his working period in an industrial warehouse, he witnessed many vagrants who lived their lives on the street for several years. They did not have enough material support. This situation made him think of others to provide them with physical and mental support. With his mindful living, Glassman developed an empathetic outlook rather than a sympathetic one. One thing Glassman, with his philosophical approach, defined Buddhism as it is. Buddhism is a way of life to realize the truth. When pain is a truth of life, happiness can also be a part of this life. It entirely depends on our ways of responding to the circumstances. Glassman's Engaged Buddhism is a pragmatic approach. Before we say something for others, let us once live the life of those people who struggle daily for their primary needs.

### **The Zen Peacemaker Order:**

Glassman was recognized as a veteran Zen master spiritual talker, impacting novice monastics and lay Buddhists. Glassman, with his wife Jishu Holmes and a group of Zen teachers, founded the Zen Peacemaker Order in 1996. It is an international organization grounded in the traditional Buddhist teachings. Glassman formed his organization based on the Three Jewels or *Triratna* of Buddhism- *Buddha*, *Dhamma*, and *Sangha*. He marked his movement for social liberation by emphasizing the Three Precepts-

- “I vow to do no harm
- I vow to do good
- I vow to cultivate the awakened mind for the sake of all beings.”<sup>7</sup>

Zen Peacemaker Order (ZPO) is based on three principles, which sound paradoxical, but Glassman himself practically followed them to alleviate the suffering of others. He reinterpreted Buddhism with the idea of knowing the world through the eyes of others. Spirituality comes from within if we truly regulate the principles with awareness. The three tenets of ZPO are: (1) Not-knowing, (2)

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<sup>7</sup> Glassman, Bernie, Zen Peacemaker Order, *The Three Pure Precepts*, <https://zenpeacemakers.org>

Bearing Witness, and (3) Healing oneself and others. Let us know in what sense Glassman upheld these three standards:

**1. Not-knowing:** This term makes us think critically. The term ‘not-knowing’ leads to the source of all knowledge. If someone has learned much about many things, why may they say they know nothing? We all know about the saying of Socrates- ‘I know that I know nothing.’ Similarly, in the Zen Soto School, the Zen master behaves as if they don't know anything and wants to listen to others. The foremost reason for becoming a member of the Soto school is just sitting. It promotes an attitude of listening, patience, and caring. A person who thinks they know adequately about themselves and this world. They would not have as much eagerness as a novice mind does.

In Glassman’s book *Instructions to the Cook*, the term 'doubt' is used as the first ingredient for preparing the supreme meal. He noted: “When we live our life fully, our life becomes what Zen Buddhists call the supreme meal”<sup>8</sup> Doubt is a state of knowing something freshly. In one of his interviews, interrogated by Christopher Queen, Glassman asked why such an enlightened being insisted on not knowing. He replied that unknowing is equivalent to the source and essence. The not-knowing principle allows us to rediscover the world with the eyes of others.

**2. Bearing Witness:** The second tenet of the Zen Peacemaker Order is the most enthralling one. Glassman had a dream to experience communal living with vagrant people. While working in Yonkers industrial town, he noticed many homeless people living on Yonkers Street, New York. He decided to start a street retreat program. The term retreat means an act or process to realize one's true essence. Street retreat prompts a sojourn in the street with helpless people for a week or more. This mode of living allows us to enhance our understanding of the wholeness of life. Living in the street, begging for food, and wearing rumpled clothes leads us to cultivate our minds and become aware of our limitations, needs, and desires. In America, this street retreat program received a positive response. Glassman experienced many people in his surroundings with great amenities, though they wanted to be more affluent. This site encouraged him to make those people feel like they are in a place where they witness the pain a real sufferer lives with.

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<sup>8</sup> Queen, Christopher S., *Engaged Buddhism in the West*, Wisdom Publications: USA, 2000, p. 96

Street retreat can also be termed a Spiritual retreat. In his time, Glassman organized many street retreat programs with the thought of people from different countries and religions taking part in this program. In this way, they can share each other's life experiences. The two elements intensify the tenet of bearing witness- one is the spirit of knowing others' incredible life journeys, and the other is inter-religious friendliness and inter-faith. These street programs have two facets, which are entirely experience-based, from the philosophical side, realizing the oneness of self and others, and from the visceral side, overcoming uneasiness and being sociable.

- 3. Healing:** The third tenet is healing oneself and others. Glassman, an enlightened being, understood the Buddhist doctrine, i.e., *Pratityasamutpada*. He realized that when we try to mitigate others' suffering, we also find a way to live a happy life. A unified life does not mean having huge material things. It mainly reminds us that we and others are not separated. We are one. First, heal a mind with compassion and Peace, then practice these qualities. Glassman's approach is to experience the world with the eyes of those deprived people.

Bernie Glassman's approach to communal living with the derelict may be extraneous. Generally, his approach of perceiving the world with the eyes of others is efficacious. When we know that realizing the pain of others asks for communal living in the street, this sounds inconsistent, even for those who behave with utmost propriety. But, Glassman gave social evidence by leading a vagrant life for some days to promote a message of knowing the world with a mind of not-knowing. This outlook enhances the idea of inter-religious friendliness and interfaith.

## **Conclusion:**

In the contemporary period, Buddhist teachings are promulgated by Engaged Buddhist individuals and group activists in a dignified way. Mindfulness or a conscious state keeps a person steady, distressed, and compassionate. Spiritual transformation is the key to eradicating inner defilements. Thich Nhat Hanh and Bernie Glassman both attained a state of Peace and decided to move forward to bring Peace to others. They engaged their spirituality to settle social issues with mindfulness. Meditation retreats are meant to improve one's concentration and help realize that we are all interconnected. An Engaged Zen always focuses its social activism movement on the feature of

Buddhist ethics, i.e., a non-judgmental attitude. A quality is asked to cultivate before someone engages in Zen monasticism. The quality is to listen to others; it means a Zen monk must listen to the pain-stricken monk before preaching the Buddhist discourses. If we start judging someone, we cannot help sufferers enrich their minds with spirituality.

Here, two of these Engaged Buddhists exemplify the essence of Buddhism on the grounds of peace-making. From a Zen background, Thich Nhat Hanh and Bernie Glassman manifested the idea of Pure Land Buddhism. In Pure Land Buddhism, there is a belief that while devoted to the Buddha Amitabha, one can achieve Rebirth in the Pure Land, which is considered a blissful realm. With their social liberation movements, Thich Nhat Hanh and Bernie Glassman demonstrated the idea of the Pure Land in this life. We do not need to think of Rebirth to experience heavenly bliss. A blissful life is possible in this birth only with spiritual thinking and beneficial actions. Engaged Buddhists never express interest in the theory of Rebirth. They believe we can transform our inhumanity into humanity in this life with wisdom and compassion. We must remember that a practical engagement towards social, political, economic and environmental affairs is preceded by spiritual engagement. Spiritual evolution comes from ethical living with the principle of Right Understanding. Social reformation urges mindful living and a culture of Peace and respect for all living beings. If asked, can a Zen mind be an engaged Buddhist? We can unequivocally enunciate that there is a transition from traditional Zen to contemporary Zen regarding their response to social activism. Considering these two Zen minds, we can conclude that Buddhism is emerging to disseminate the essence of Peace in every corner of the world.

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