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‘FREEDOM FROM HATRED’: THE ROLE OF *KHANTI* IN COMPLEMENTING THE WORK OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW (IHL)

Alex Wakefield 

ABSTRACT

This article explores the Buddhist quality of *khanti*. *Khanti/ksānti* translates as patience, forbearance or tolerance, and includes the notions of non-retaliation and forgiveness. Understood in Buddhist texts as the opposite of anger and hatred, *khanti* may support measures of international humanitarian law (IHL) which prevent unlawful reprisals and other atrocities motivated by revenge in the context of war. As with IHL, Buddhism emphasises common humanity through the recognition of universal suffering. By drawing on Buddhist narratives and treatises, which apply the analysis of non-self (*anattā*) to anger itself as a basis for *khanti*, this article demonstrates that *khanti* is regarded as particularly appropriate for dealing with conflict. *Khanti* addresses the immediate psychological responses of victims of violence during conflict, thus offering immediate relief of suffering and preventing its further escalation. This article suggests that the *brahmavihārās*, particularly loving-kindness (*mettā*), may practically develop the quality of *khanti*. Just as mindfulness meditations have been used in the secular and global contexts, so too *mettā* practice as the development of *khanti* could be utilised alongside military training and the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross to enhance compliance with IHL.

KEYWORDS Buddhism; IHL; *khanti/ksānti*. *mettā*; *dosa* (hate); *kodha* (anger); non-retaliation; forbearance; forgiveness

Introduction

Buddhism is often acknowledged as possessing a strongly pacifistic position, yet it also does not seek to deny that war is a lived experience for many. Conflict remains an inevitable fact of life; precious time and resources may be wasted in ongoing arguments for its abolition, whereas efforts to minimise its consequences may prove more productive. This is the position taken by international humanitarian law (IHL), which aims to reduce the effects of war – to limit the adverse ‘humanitarian consequences of armed conflicts’ (Melzer 2016, 17). Thus, the laws of IHL find common ground with several Buddhist teachings, considering how suffering can be mitigated, and especially suffering that is a result of military action.

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One such teaching is that of *khanti* (Pali) or *ksānti* (Sanskrit). This is the Buddhist concept of patience, forbearance and tolerance: the capacity to let go of interpersonal resentment and to cultivate a quality of acceptance and forgiveness. As one of the *pāramitās* or perfections (see Bodhi 1978), which are associated with virtuous conduct, Buddhism has long considered *khanti* a core aspect of its path of moral practice. Particular to Buddhism is the understanding that the self is ‘interpenetratively co-dependent with others’. James Whitehill describes this as allowing the *pāramitās* to ‘flow necessarily into the community on many levels, materially, verbally, and mentally, in a subtle, looping reciprocity’ (Whitehill 2000, 26). Thus, the practices work both on the level of the individual and for greater humanity. Pertinent links may be uncovered between the Buddhist concept of *khanti* and the humanitarian basis of IHL. By exploring the distinctive quality of this Buddhist virtue, one may discern new methods with which both Buddhism and IHL may deal with adversity in times of war.

This paper will explore the theoretical links between the Buddhist concept of *khanti* and the principles of IHL, and propose certain applications for its support of the latter. Beginning with an exploration of the context behind IHL, and how *khanti* has been understood in the Buddhist textual tradition, it will explore the role the virtue has taken in Buddhist thought, primarily as a response to the unwholesome/unskillful quality of anger. Finally, it will suggest a practical application for the cultivation of *khanti* through the four meditative techniques, the *brahmavihārās* (and particularly that of loving-kindness, *mettā*) as a means of harnessing the benefits of patience for potential use within the work of IHL.

Khanti and the ethical framework of IHL

The virtue of *khanti* consists of an enduring patience, forbearance and forgiveness. In Buddhism, it acts as one of the six or ten *pāramitās*, perfections, which characterise a virtuous person, cited by James Whitehill as informing moral efforts not only for oneself but also for the wider community (Whitehill 2000, 26). *Khanti* as a *pāramitā* attests to its core position at the heart of Buddhist ethical practice.

The *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* (section 1341), the first book of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka section of the Theravāda scriptural canon, defines this *pāramitā* as ‘That patience which is long-suffering, compliance, absence of rudeness and abruptness, complacency [in the sense of contentment, *attamanatā*] of heart’. Caroline A. F. Rhys Davids notes here that the final three stand in direct opposition to synonyms of *dosa* (Pali), covering anger, hatred and aversion (Rhys Davids 1974, 324). *Dosa* is one of the three roots of unwholesome actions, which are so defined precisely because of the suffering (Pali *dukkha*) that they bring either to oneself or to others (Harvey 2000, 48). In contrast,

khanti as non-hatred/non-anger contributes to wholesome actions that are free from these results, moving the practitioner instead towards a state free from such suffering (Harvey 2000, 48).

A fundamental acknowledgement of the human condition is an attitude found across Buddhist ethical teaching, based on our shared journey through the cycle of rebirths. The Buddha considers this point himself:

It is not easy, bhikkhus, to find a being who in this long course has not previously been your mother ... your father ... your brother ... your sister ... your son ... your daughter. For what reason? Because, bhikkhus, this *samsāra* is without discoverable beginning ... (SN 15.14–19)

A similar understanding of mankind's common humanity allows IHL to establish and maintain its ethical framework. The minimisation of suffering becomes possible through adherence to certain principles of IHL – the balance of humanity and military necessity, distinction, proportionality, precaution, humane treatment and the prohibition of unnecessary suffering (ICRC 2014). They govern decisions on who may or may not be targeted, the humane treatment of prisoners of war, and how to impartially administer aid to the wounded based on need alone. Acts of retribution against protected persons, and those that do not fulfil a strict military purpose, are forbidden, and a culture of reciprocity is encouraged regarding the observance of IHL rules.

Non-retaliation, or non-vengeance, is fundamentally about a response to anger. When certain principles of IHL are not adhered to in conflict (for instance, by using weapons that have been banned because they cause superfluous injury), retribution may be an option chosen by wronged parties who are angered by unnecessary suffering. This response is often not limited to military personnel; the father who has lost his son may seek revenge on the serviceman who killed him or those he associates with the perpetrator. IHL is in some respects an antidote to this cycle of retribution – while it does not deal explicitly with conflict resolution, it is understood that the prevalence of atrocities or violations of IHL may provoke further ones in return, thereby exacerbating and prolonging a conflict (Muñoz-Rojas and Frésard 2004, 8). This parallels the structure within which Buddhism perceives anger to be functioning; it is easy for hatred to warrant hatred in return. Sallie B. King notes:

Due to the law of karma, violence produces further violence. Violent acts sow karmic seeds that bear fruit in retaliatory violence from the one who suffered the original blow. One may win today, only to suffer the revenge of the defeated later ... (King 2013, 633)

This understanding is best summarised with the verse from the *Dhammapada* that ‘never here [in this world] do hatreds cease by hatred. By freedom from hatred they cease: This is a perennial truth’ (Dhp.5). With the knowledge that revenge is potentially a continuous tragedy, that has anger or hatred as its cause, practical approaches may be established to temper its effects. While not necessarily commenting on the psychology that gives rise to cycles of violations, some of the rules of IHL reduce the risk that the parties to a conflict might commit tit-for-tat atrocities, particularly those aimed at the civilian population. For example, IHL prohibits military actions whose primary purpose is to induce terror in the population at large (Melzer 2016, 85) and attacks against civilians by way of reprisal (Melzer 2016, 86).

A closer exploration of the Buddhist understanding of anger, and *khanti* as its response, will be offered below, but it is enough at this stage to identify how the virtue closely aligns with IHL. If anger is allowed to persist, unlawful retributive actions may be carried out, prompting further unlawful retributive acts in return. To deal with vengeful responses requires cultivating patience, tolerance and fortitude. One also needs to develop a far-reaching perspective as one considers how anger will manifest further in the future as well as in the immediate present. This is the role that Buddhism envisages *khanti* as fulfilling.

A few words must be said here about the particular circumstances of establishing such patience in warfare. As suffering experienced in conflict becomes far more extreme than that in daily life, so too the nature of *khanti* must change to meet these heightened demands. One must ask to what extent it is appropriate to encourage parties in conflict (civilian or otherwise) to cultivate a forgiving attitude even as conflict continues, or whether it is a viable process when the dangers of a lack of safety or security still exist. It is therefore important to note that the fostering of the virtue should act independently from considerations of justice; ‘forgiveness’ as an aspect of *khanti* has little to say about the pardoning of crimes committed during wartime. Achieving justice, while often perceived as a retributive measure, must be seen as distinctly concerned with preventing similar crimes from happening again. Nor should the tolerance and patience of *khanti* be equated with reconciliation during war. Thānissaro Bhikkhu considers that reconciliation is instead ‘a return to amicability . . . requiring the re-establishment of trust’ (Thānissaro Bhikkhu 2011). The practice of *khanti* will often, and must, take place in circumstances where such reconciliation is not possible. Reconciliation should therefore not be a prerequisite for *khanti* to work, nor should it even be its primary concern. Moreover, reconciliation falls outside the remit of IHL, since it concerns the after-effects of armed conflict.

Equally, the practical application of *khanti* during war should also be made distinct from a concept of amnesty. Amnesties are legislative decisions where criminal prosecutions and their subsequent penalties are effectively cancelled

(ICRC 2017). There are various reasons why this would be an appropriate course of action to take, not least in achieving a swift resolution to hostilities (ICRC 2017). Once again, however, wartime amnesties should not function as 'proof' that forgiveness or patience has been reached, regardless of the motives behind their use. How *khanti* is understood in Buddhism is less to do with the pardoning or acceptance of crime and far more to do with limiting the potential dangers of the consequences of that crime for any or all involved.

Clearly the virtue of *khanti* overlaps in many respects with the humanitarian concerns of IHL. This can now be elaborated from a Buddhist perspective, as we consider how the virtue has traditionally functioned in Buddhist teaching and in practice.

The role of *khanti* in Buddhist thought

As with all Buddhist teachings, *khanti* is envisioned as a means to achieve an end to *dukkha*. More specifically, however, the most clearly elucidated role of *khanti* is as a response to the unwholesome qualities of anger and hate. A recurring idea in Buddhist literature is the danger in allowing the latter to fester. The Pali *Nikāyas* often emphasise the particularly damaging results that anger may bring and the necessity in eliminating it, as here in the *Samyutta Nikāya*:

Having slain anger, one sleeps soundly;
 Having slain anger, one does not sorrow;
 The killing of anger . . .
 With its poisoned root and honeyed tip;
 This is the killing the noble ones praise . . . (SN.11.21)

By positing the two as directly opposed, this not only emphasises the damage that anger (*kodha*) may cause, but in turn highlights the value of *khanti*, as a patient non-anger, in subduing it. It is worth considering here the wider moral framework within which *kodha* and *dosa* are understood in Buddhism.

Wholesome and unwholesome (*kusala/akusala*) behaviours

Dosa (*dveṣa* in Sanskrit), i.e. hatred or aversion, acts as one of the three unwholesome roots alongside delusion, *moha*; and greed, *lobha* (e.g. AN 3.69). They are considered to be the roots of all other defilements (*kilesa* in Pali; *kleśa* in Sanskrit) and thus an essential problem to be surmounted on the Buddhist path towards awakening. These roots form the bases of 'all the unskillful mental states which characterise the un-Awakened mind and bind the unenlightened person in the cycle of existence, and it is from the defilements that the Buddhist seeks liberation' (Crosby and Skilton 1998, xxxvii). An

action that is considered ‘unwholesome’ arises from one or more of the three roots, and leads to suffering for oneself and/or others, whether immediately or later in one’s karmic future (Harvey 2000, 48). This implies certain consequences for the practitioner within their Buddhist ethical framework. Christopher Gowans highlights that what is ‘fundamental to determining whether actions are good or bad’ is essentially the psychology of the agent, and particularly the intention behind said actions (Gowans 2013, 435). Establishing the distinction between wholesome and unwholesome at the level of the mental stages resulting in action, rather than at the level of the individual as a whole, means there cannot be any concept of a person as ‘truly evil’ in Buddhism; no person can ever be seen as inherently or irredeemably evil, but rather as acting because of one or more of the unwholesome roots. Indeed, a number of figures in the *Nikāyas* are described as committing crimes only to be later transformed through discovery of the Buddha and his teachings. The most famous of these is the serial killer *Aṅgulimāla*, who not only changes from a hardened criminal to a member of the Sangha, but is shown to progress all the way to enlightenment, becoming no longer subject to *saṃsāra*; this is possible through a radical improvement of mind and behaviour inspired by the Buddha (MN.86). It is not the man as such who is being judged here, but rather the consequences of his thoughts and actions, which are dictated by his defilements. Ultimately, this is where Buddhism will see the beginnings of such wrongdoing: unwholesome actions that are influenced by the three core roots of greed, hatred and delusion. The benefits of *khanti* are therefore made possible as one realises the roots may be weakened and then destroyed, thus opening the practitioner to the potential for sincere change in their actions.

Martin Southwold suggests that the difference between cultures with a concept of evil in the strongest sense, and those without, falls to the issue of forgiveness (Southwold 2003, 430). Establishing a difference between ‘the evil person’ and ‘the unwholesome act’ opens up a pragmatic structure for the virtue of *khanti* to work. Such patience is made possible by appealing to the cause of unwholesome behaviour as not an essential part of the one who commits it. *Aṅgulimāla* goes from among the worst of society to one of the very best, and it comes through the choice to change, to change actions from what is *akusala* to what is *kusala*. This attitude aligns the practice with IHL as it shares a well-conceived message of universality – the benefits of *khanti* are, and must be, available to all.

Khanti in response to anger

Khanti is often expounded, in both canonical and commentarial literature, as antithetical to anger or resentment. This role of *khanti* is therefore seen as a supremely advantageous quality:

Patience, endurance, is the highest asceticism. (Dhp.184)

Of goals that culminate in one's own good
None is found better than patience. (SN.11.4)

Contrasted with *dosa*, *khanti* is thereby described as a virtue ingrained in the path of practice. Yet one may argue here that exalting patience as an abstract and virtuous quality does little to support a practical value in complementing the work of IHL. Warfare would surely test the patience, forbearance and forgiveness of its parties to the extreme. However, the value of *khanti* in such violent situations has, in fact, been explored throughout the literature.

In the *Khantivādī Jātaka* (no. 313), the tale of the 'one professing forbearance', the Buddha in a previous life (the Bodhisatta) is described as a sage who encounters the rage of the king of Kāsi (Horner 1957, 43–49). When the king falls asleep in the park where the sage is staying, the royal harem takes the opportunity to approach the sage and ask him to give a talk on *Dhamma*, to which they listen with rapt attention. On waking, the king is angered that the Bodhisatta has stolen his entertainers away from him, and asks him what the doctrine he has been teaching is: 'I teach the doctrine of forbearance [*khanti*]' which is '... not being angry with others who are abusive, violent and slanderous' (Shaw 2006, 110). Exemplifying anger in contrast, the enraged king proceeds to order his executioner to progressively injure the Bodhisatta: scourging him with thorns, cutting off his hands and feet, and mutilating his face. After each injury, the king spitefully asks again the doctrine that the Bodhisatta teaches, to which the reply is always the doctrine of *khanti*, which is not skin-deep, but 'established deep in the recesses of my heart' (Shaw 2006, 111).

In this *Jātaka*, the connotations of *khanti* as both patience and endurance are drawn out in the face of incredible pain and suffering, albeit with a specific purpose. Andrew Skilton notes: 'The lengthy mutilation scene is ... utilised skilfully to allow the Bodhisatta to assert that his teaching is deep seated, not superficial or insincere – not located in his hands and feet or ears and nose, but in his heart' (Skilton 2002, 121).

The violent imagery is necessary here to emphasise *khanti* as deeply embedded and, importantly, far-sighted; it is understood that true patience endures, and is not easily destroyed in those who have eliminated anger successfully. The Bodhisatta does not give in to anger with the king, the text considering that hatred and anger are what motivated the king to act wrongly in the first place. The real challenge is therefore not towards the abuser, but towards the anger that prompted their action.

The author Śāntideva expresses this same point in his *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, by considering the capacity of *khanti* (here, *kṣānti*) for tolerance in enduring suffering, and particularly suffering as a result of the actions of others

(Edelglass 2009, 390). Here it is examined by use of an analysis in which the person on the receiving end separates the abuser, or their action, from the anger that compels them: 'If, disregarding the principle cause, such as a stick or other weapon, I become angry with the person who impels it, he too is impelled by hatred. It is better that I hate that hatred' (Bca.VI.41).

Accordingly, animosity should not be directed towards the person; they are acting merely as vehicles for their defilements. Śāntideva draws attention to the root cause of the hatred within both the abuser and the abused, identifying the common enemy that they share even while in conflict with one another. Furthermore, the author touches here on his understanding of causality. It remains short-sighted to consider the act of aggression (here, being hit with a stick) as independent of other conditions that prompt the abuser. Śāntideva expresses this point clearly:

A person does not get angry at will, having decided 'I shall get angry', nor does anger well up after deciding 'I shall well up'.

Whatever transgressions and evil deeds of various kinds there are, all arise through the power of conditioning factors, while there is nothing that arises independently. (Bca.VI.24–25)

The understanding of causal conditioning therefore becomes how one can separate a person's anger from the person themselves. Consequently, the patience and forgiving qualities of *khanti* become easier to cultivate. It will be seen below how these are necessary for a successful incorporation of the virtue within IHL.

Returning to the *Khantivādī Jātaka*, we also see highlighted the power of forbearance as resilience, as the purity of mind of the Bodhisatta is contrasted with that of the king. This expression of resilience in the face of *dukkha* is attested to elsewhere in the canonical literature; in the *Kakacūpama Sutta*, the Buddha states, 'Bhikkhus, even if bandits were to sever you savagely limb by limb with a two-handed saw, he who gave rise to a mind of hate towards them would not be carrying out my teaching'. (MN.I.129). Here powerful imagery is used to reinforce the practice of *khanti* as enduring and unshakable. It is valuable to note here, in relation to its applicability to IHL, the firm Buddhist belief that this state of mind is possible even in such severe occurrences, attesting to the long-lasting value that the virtue may bring for the practitioner. Once again, it should be noted that this is separate from legal justice for such crimes. Rather, *khanti* acts as a psychological method for alleviating suffering and preventing the creation of further suffering. The suffering that may be caused by allowing the prevalence of anger and hatred is greater than that which may be physically overwhelming in the present moment. In this manner, *khanti* is understood as a powerful practice that maintains the strength of the mind and holds back *dukkha* even in the most painful of circumstances.

Non-self (*anattā*)

The concept of non-self (*anattā* in Pali; *anātman* in Sanskrit) – that it is inappropriate to take anything as a permanent, essential self or its possession – also provides context for understanding how Buddhism can use *khanti* for practical purposes. Non-self suggests that, beyond a ‘conventional validity’, there is nothing that can constitute a permanent, unchanging self or personhood (Bodhi and Nāṇamoli 1995, 28). What may be conventionally described as a person is, in fact, a composite of aggregates – bundles of mental and physical processes – that together create the picture of a ‘self’; yet the aggregates provide no inherent justification for the impression of a self that exists either within or independently of them.

Becoming too far trapped by notions of an essential ‘self’ is related to an even deeper vague sense of ‘I am’: self-centredness, an ego that serves to separate oneself from others, or to see others on varying levels of importance. The Buddha instead explicitly says that happiness is consistently achieved only after the aggregates constituting the conventional self are properly regarded as being ‘not yours’ (MN.I.140–141). The doctrine of non-self eliminates an ‘us and them’ mentality, and instead proposes a means to examine the universality apparent across humankind. Important groundwork is provided here for a Buddhist notion of forgiveness, as the place that it comes from – a refusal to see fundamental differences between oneself and others – can be the method for how it is achieved.

In the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, the issue of non-self is used to support Śāntideva’s discussion of the perfection of *khanti/ksānti* in a similar manner. We have seen the author separate the person from their anger, but he goes even further by analysing away what we mistakenly think is the essence of the person whom we consider to be the root cause of our anger. Śāntideva explains: ‘I feel no anger towards bile and the like, even though they cause intense suffering. Why am I angry with the sentient? They too have their reasons for anger’ (Bca.VI.22).

This mirrors an attitude found in the fifth-century Pali treatise the *Visuddhimagga* of Buddhaghosa, where he suggests approaching anger through ‘resolution into elements’, asking the practitioner to try and locate the object of anger in another person: ‘When you are angry with him, what is it you are angry with? Is it head hairs you are angry with? Or body hairs? . . . For when he tries the resolution into elements, his anger finds no foothold . . .’ (Vism.IX.38).

With this understanding, one realises the hard-to-grasp nature of anger, as one tries and fails to find the precise object of hatred in another. The reasoning, based on the Buddhist teaching of lack of a self-essence, allows one to consider the emptiness of the object of one’s anger and thereby of anger itself. Śāntideva elaborates on this point by bringing forbearance back to the

defilements, as the reasons for unwholesome actions, and so suggesting the virtue of *khanti/kṣānti* as the way to sympathise with their agent, rather than to become angry with them in return. Crosby and Skilton (1998, 46) summarise this in the following manner:

'If the actions of people and objects are determined by a network of other conditions, how can any individual person or object be held to blame for the consequence, and, in that light, how can anger be justified?'

By separating the question of person from the suffering they bring, *khanti/kṣānti* becomes a far more realistic proposal. In fact, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* offers a more direct example where this may be beneficial in the context of war:

'The person who realises that hatred is an enemy, since it creates such sufferings as these, and who persistently strikes it down, is happy in this world and the next' (Bca.VI.6).

By this reasoning, one is reminded of soldiers who are encouraged to see the opposing side as 'the enemy', yet the verse here suggests that in order to placate arising hatred, one instead should recognise hatred itself as the true enemy. The manner to achieve this is the patient, enduring and forgiving nature of *khanti*; all of these come into play in establishing how the cultivation of the virtue may reduce the suffering of those caught in conflict, and begin to encourage the spirit of non-retaliation.

Incorporating *khanti* within IHL

IHL provides a legal framework for the prevention and punishment of IHL violations, especially war crimes (ICRC 2002). Nevertheless, there will remain instances when legal justice, even if achieved, will remain unsatisfactory. Justice in legal terms rarely supersedes the pain and suffering caused by actions in conflict. Psychologically, it can only go so far to mend broken families and the trauma that has been prevalent, especially when considering that warfare may be ongoing in many of these instances.

Khanti alleviates psychological suffering in the present moment, with a view to avoiding its manifestation in the future. As we have seen through its inherent opposition to the manifestation of anger, and its probing analysis of the agent/object of that anger, *khanti* can complement IHL, discouraging unlawful retaliatory violence by emphasising the interdependence or common humanity of parties to armed conflict. Once again, the Pali *Nikāyas* often themselves place this quality of patience in a wartime context. Returning to the *Samyutta Nikāya*, we hear of Sakka, lord of the *devas*, who has won his battle against the *asuras*, and captured their leader, Vepacitti (SN.11.4). The

prisoner, despite being at the mercy of the victors, angrily slanders them, which Sakka patiently endures without response. When pressed, he offers this reason for his practice of *khanti*:

One who repays an angry man with anger
 Thereby makes things worse for himself.
 Not repaying an angry man with anger,
 One wins a battle hard to win.

He practises for the welfare of both,
 His own and the other's,
 When, knowing that his foe is angry,
 He mindfully maintains his peace. (SN.11.4)

By this logic, *khanti* is understood to possess far-reaching benefits to all parties in conflict. This also draws out the quality of *khanti* as forgiveness; here, we may understand forgiveness to be a conscious letting go of one's negative emotions towards another person. Even if one is the victim of wrongdoing, one may still avoid a clouded mind. This aspect of *khanti* removes the harbouring of pain and humiliation, and the elimination of anger removes the temptation, or possibility, to seek a corrupted form of justice through acts of revenge, whether in a military or a civilian context. *Khanti* may support the upholding of IHL through practical methods (see below) by which this quality of forgiveness is encouraged, even in the face of violations by the opposing party in conflict. The breaking of humanitarian law by one side does not release the other side from their own obligations (Melzer 2016, 17). Equally, as noted by Śāntideva, *khanti* provides a means by which anger is separated from the individual, lessening the impetus for retaliatory actions targeting perceived victimisers.

Vengeance is understood to be a natural outcome of allowing *dosa* and *kodha* to take hold, when forgiveness is not encouraged. Warnings against its consequences are attested throughout canonical literature. In the *Vinaya's Mahāvagga*, one finds the story of Prince Dīghāvu, who witnesses the death of his parents at the hands of rival king Brahmadatta (Mv 10.2.3–20, Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu 2013). Despite initially setting out to avenge this crime, the moral of the tale is captured by the king's final words to his son, to remember that 'vengeance is not settled through vengeance. Vengeance is settled through non-vengeance'. The tale of Prince Dīghāvu exemplifies how revenge can be avoided by tempering the anger that causes it. Recollecting his father's praise for patience, the young prince is encouraged to eliminate his anger and avoid his desire for revenge, and is therefore spared from committing an act with terrible karmic consequences. In this manner, the story makes clear the iterative and cumulative nature of acts of anger, as only through shedding this anger can the series be stopped. A willingness to put

an end to the cycle of violence is of benefit to all involved. This can only be achieved through a practice of *khanti*, maintaining patience, forbearance and ultimately forgiveness.

The virtue clearly has benefits within such violent contexts. How patience may be encouraged under such conditions is another matter. Here, one may look to meditation on the qualities known as the *brahmavihārās* to provide a practical means for the cultivation of *khanti*.

The *brahmavihārās*

The *brahmavihārās* comprise loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karunā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*). The term ‘*brahmavihārā*’ literally means ‘divine abiding’ or ‘behaving or living like a brahmā deity’, which underlines the heavenly states of mind that they are associated with. In the *Visuddhimagga*, Buddhaghosa begins his chapter on the *brahmavihārās* with a collection of sayings from the *Nikāyas* extolling the benefits of patience in response to the dangers of hatred (*dosa*) (Vism.IX.2ff). Consequently, while the individual practices may be seen as antidotes to specific unwholesome states of mind, the implication here is that they feed into a greater framework of *khanti*, which is again being described in direct opposition to *dosa*.

The foundational practice is that of *mettā*. The connotations of ‘loving-kindness’ in English do not reach the weight of the Pali word, which includes friendliness, deep goodwill and caring concern. *Mettā* is a powerful practice that can substantially alter a person’s state of mind towards themselves and towards others. It will ultimately be the primary vehicle to cultivate *khanti*, as *mettā* forms a relationship with others that is not based on anger. Edelglass points out that as meditation, *mettā* is used particularly to alleviate the defilement of anger (Edelglass 2009, 391), thereby becoming a meditative tool for the development of patience.

Karunā will serve to strengthen the basis provided by loving-kindness. In fact, this *brahmavihārā* may be seen as an even more radical proposition, as Buddhaghosa describes how compassion should be aroused for a person who has committed wrongdoing even if they remain happy, or free from repercussions: ‘he deserves the meditator’s compassion; and so he does too in any case, even with no such ruin, thus “In reality he is unhappy”, because he is not exempt from the suffering of the round [of becoming]’ (Vism.IX.81).

These words underline that despite no immediate repercussions, the wrongdoer may in fact face suffering in the future (almost certainly, according to the Buddhist perspective, due to the karma of his wrongdoing). From this perspective, *karunā* also exemplifies an investment in our shared humanity; everyone in the world will face suffering, and they deserve compassion in response. As Buddhaghosa notes, like everyone else the wrongdoer is not exempt from *dukkha*, as he continues to live with rebirth as a fundamental

truth. In such a manner, compassion for all living beings is natural when one considers that the great majority of them are not freed from the rounds of rebirth.

Sympathetic joy (*muditā*) is closely tied with compassion, as compassionate sympathy gives way to happiness at the thriving of others. When one can take pleasure in the achievements and happiness of others, envy or resentment (leading to anger) are kept in check. Śāntideva suggests that the latter are traits that deceive and disturb the practitioner from 'the feeling of sympathetic joy', which must not be derailed 'even at the arrival of something extremely unwelcome' (Bca.VI.9). Allowing *muditā* to persist, even in the face of what is unwholesome, keeps a positive mind towards others regardless of their wrongdoing towards you. One should note that, as with all the *brahmavihārās*, a distinctive sense of strength is implied for the practitioner, a resilience that can be maintained through these meditative practices.

Upekkhā will elaborate and consolidate the value of *mettā* with particular reference to this universality. Nyanaponika Thera clarifies:

Equanimity rooted in insight is the guiding and restraining power for the other three sublime states. It points out to them the direction they have to take, and sees to it that this direction is followed . . . it endows it [loving-kindness] with the great virtue of patience. (Nyanaponika Thera 1998, 23)

Upekkhā is, in fact, a logical conclusion when considering that anger does not originate with the wrongdoer, who is more a vehicle for the action rather than its prime cause. Equanimity considers all of us players in a complex causality, the heart of Buddhist metaphysics. As such, there is no use in attaching one's ideas of anger to another person, as humanity is bound together in this web of causality. More than just a comment on humanity's interpersonal relations, it provides striking insight into the common causal conditioning behind unwholesome states such as anger. We return here to the interrelationships commented upon by the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. Śāntideva considers: 'Everything is dependent upon something else. Even that thing upon which each is dependent is not independent. Since, like a magical display, phenomena do not initiate activity, at what does one get angry . . . ?' (Bca.IV.31). As such, the virtue of *khanti* may be directly linked with the *brahmavihārās*, as they – beginning with loving-kindness – become meditative practices to encourage the fulfilment of patience in response to anger.

Mettā in IHL

The effective dissemination of IHL rests on educational programmes that inform people the world over as to its rules and purpose. This sound knowledge of IHL remains a 'condition of respect [for IHL]' (ICRC 2003). These programmes often work to incorporate the study of the law into the training

of the armed forces, who ultimately will have the main responsibility for adhering to it. Yet public authorities among states must also work to make knowledge of humanitarian law well understood by the civilian population, including the specific laws of IHL. Familiarising both civilian and military populations with IHL contributes to a broad understanding and respect for the law. In situations where combatants are inevitably recruited as ordinary citizens, this has direct consequences on increasing awareness of IHL among active participants in the conflict. A practice of forgiveness and non-retaliation as expressed through *khanti* and facilitated by *mettā* may be integrated into such programmes, opening its benefits to secular and non-secular persons of all spiritual traditions. During conflict, it becomes even more imperative to step up the understanding of IHL, and the methods it may take to reduce *dukkha* become even more pertinent. As such, proposing the reasons for a doctrine of forbearance as practised through loving-kindness meditation, demonstrating how and why it works, can serve to aid IHL in reducing the potential for misery in war.

As custodians of IHL, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) works to promote knowledge and implementation of IHL alongside providing aid to the victims of conflict (ICRC 2009, 6). Four approaches are taken in its work, namely the protection approach (to protect both the dignity and lives of those suffering under armed conflict), the assistance approach (assisting victims through addressing the consequences of armed conflict), the cooperation approach (coordinating relief efforts during armed conflict) and the prevention approach (the attempt to prevent suffering through the promotion of IHL and other humanitarian principles) (ICRC 2009, 14–16). A prevention approach works to ‘foster an environment that is conducive to respect for the lives and dignity of those who may be adversely affected by armed conflict’ (ICRC 2009, 16). This will involve communication and promotion of IHL by influencing parties who may have a direct impact on the fate of those living under conflict. To incorporate here a practice of loving-kindness through meditation and the kind of unpacking of causality involved in the development of *khanti* may encourage a similar respect for the values of tolerance and forgiveness. Often it is the emotional weight of victimisation that inspires claimed justifications for further violations of humanitarian law (Muñoz-Rojas and Frésard 2004, 8–10). *Mettā* addresses the vengeful impulse, guiding the practitioner to see unchecked anger for what it is, reemphasising the message of IHL that there are no justifications for retributive acts that violate international law. By reducing suffering in the present through *mettā* and *khanti*, the future manifestation of suffering is avoided. This may easily form part of a multi-disciplinary approach in promoting a culture of forgiveness across various situations of conflict.

War is both traumatic and devastating, yet Buddhism does not question that the cultivation of forbearance is possible even in the most egregious of circumstances. As in the *Kakacūpama Sutta*, *khanti* is understood as unshakable and having far-reaching benefits. It is not to be pushed aside in war; rather, the canonical literature uses war as among the most pertinent examples of when the value of patience is necessary. Its consequences for the present moment, achieved through meditation, carry across time in eliminating lasting anger and breaking the cycle of continuing conflict. The integration of *mettā* with the instructional programmes of IHL therefore offers a potential application for both present crises and long-term planning. Appleby (2012, 354) observes: 'Peacebuilding, which encompasses conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post-violence social reconstruction, operates according to a long-term horizon. Religions, accustomed to thinking and enacting missions in larger blocs of time, bring distinctive and essential resources to this sustained activity'.

Here we see the potential for Buddhist teachings and practices to influence and aid the work of IHL practitioners, not only in an ongoing conflict but past the point of its ending. These ideas are not just abstractions, but highly practical methods created for the alleviation of suffering. Buddhism recognises that changing the present will change the future. To incorporate a practice of *khanti* into the application of IHL, through *mettā*, may radically decrease the prevalence of suffering during conflict.

Conclusion

It is true to say that Buddhism, as a religion and ethical system, does not see any virtue in violence. However, the popular perception of Buddhism as therefore immutably opposed to warfare often shuts down any productive conversation regarding its value during such circumstances. Yet conversations about this possibility are necessary if we are to establish that Buddhist ethics can, and will, help complement humanitarian systems in wartime.

Buddhist teaching reveals a mutual compatibility with the aims and principles of IHL in lessening the impact of suffering during wartime. The virtue of *khanti* has often been emphasised by canonical and commentarial literature as advantageous precisely in the face of extreme adversity, and reveals Buddhist authors grappling with the realities of conflict. The establishing of *khanti*, a *patient, forgiving forbearance*, is explicitly contrasted with the unwholesome qualities of anger. To deal with the consequences of anger, the virtue is supported by the Buddhist non-acceptance of an essential self, an unpacking of causality, as well as the greater ethical framework of establishing what actions are wholesome or otherwise. *Khanti* therefore may

complement the work of IHL in encouraging an environment of non-retaliation, where unlawful retributive acts are tempered by addressing the underlying anger.

Considering the Buddhist proposal of *mettā* as an antidote to hatred and anger, this paper has proposed that the capacity for *khanti* may be developed through loving-kindness meditation, supported by the other *brahmavihārās*. To date, the practice of mindfulness has been found advantageous in secular contexts such as schools and universities across the world; in recent years, its benefits have been extended to military and humanitarian institutions to lessen the impact of conflict. *Mettā*, however, is still underdeveloped as a potential tool in these environments. What some have called ‘kindfulness’ (Brahm 2016) is a good complement to mindfulness. Its cultivation of patience in subduing anger is just one advantage it may have for wartime. Further research in this area may prove useful in establishing its practical value to the work of IHL.

Abbreviations

AN	<i>Aṅguttara Nikāya</i> , Bodhi (2012) translation, cited by <i>nipāta</i> and <i>sutta</i> .
Bca	<i>Bodhicaryāvatāra</i> , Crosby and Skilton (1998) translation, cited by chapter and verse number.
Dhp	<i>Dhammapada</i> , Roebuck (2010) translation, cited by verse number.
MN	<i>Majjhima Nikāya</i> , Bodhi and Ñāṇamoli (1995) translation, cited by <i>sutta</i> number or volume and page number of Pali Text Society Pali edition.
SN	<i>Samyutta Nikāya</i> , Bodhi (2000) translation, cited by <i>samyutta</i> and <i>sutta</i> number.
Vism	<i>Visuddhimagga</i> , Ñāṇamoli (1991) translation, cited by chapter and section number.

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