Article

Buddhist Ahimsa and Modern Peace Theory: A Comparative and Critical Analysis

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Abstract: *This study examines the conceptual similarities, philosophical differences, and current applicability of Buddhist ahimsa and contemporary peace theory through a comparative and critical analysis. Through ideas like negative and positive peace, structural violence, and conflict transformation, modern peace theory has greatly broadened the analytical scope of peace, yet it frequently stays rooted in institutional and systemic frameworks, as I contend in this paper. By focusing on intentionality, compassion (karuṇā), interdependence (pratītyasamutpāda), and the elimination of greed, anger, and illusion as the causes of violence, Buddhist ahimsa, on the other hand, places peace within the ethical reform of the individual. This paper shows that while both traditions diverge in their ontological underpinnings and normative priorities, they converge in their multifaceted understanding of peace as more than the mere absence of war through a critical engagement with important peace theorists and Buddhist philosophical sources. I argue that by bringing structural reform and moral and psychological change together, an integrative discussion between these viewpoints enhances peace studies. This synthesis provides a comprehensive paradigm of peace that is morally sound, socially transformative, and globally applicable in tackling today's global issues, such as armed conflict, ecological crises, inequality, and ideological polarization. In the end, by positioning Buddhist non-violence as a significant and important participant in contemporary peace discourse, this work helps to broaden the theoretical bounds of peace research.*

Keywords: *Ahimsa, Structural Violence, Interdependence, Compassion, Conflict Peace Studies*

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1 | INTRODUCTION

In doing this study, I argue that Buddhist ahimsa; the nonviolent ideal derived from early Buddhist ethics—offers a significant philosophical challenge to contemporary peace theory in addition to a historical ethical prescription. Systemic frameworks like democratic peace, institutional governance, and conflict resolution techniques that center on political institutions and deterrence are often emphasized in classical peace theory as it is developed in Western study (Steinmetz, 2025, p. 105). However, there are differences and similarities that necessitate careful comparison with Buddhist ahimsa, which centers peacebuilding on the transformation of individual awareness and ethical intentionality. Buddhist ahimsa derives from the Buddha's central teachings on compassion and moral restraint, and its theological stance is preserved in canonical texts like the Dhammapada. By declaring, "That one I call a brahmin who has put aside weapons and renounced violence towards all creatures," the Buddha himself emphasizes the moral necessity of non-harm. One such person does not commit murder or assist others in doing so (quoted in Buddha Weekly, 2025, p. 1). This remark encapsulates a fundamental idea that non-violence is essential to moral personality and spiritual advancement, rather than just a moral mandate. Such a precept presents non-violence as a transforming ethos, going beyond the pragmatic pacifism sometimes seen in Western peace frameworks.

Buddhist ahimsa's transforming nature appeals to modern academics who contend that peace cannot be boiled down to solely formal agreements. According to Steinmetz (2025), non-Western traditions such as Buddhist peace theory "prioritize relational, spiritual, and communal dimensions of peace," whereas Western peace theories frequently "address macro-level stability through institutional mechanisms" (p. 108). Accordingly, Buddhist non-violence opposes the idea that peace is solely the product of geopolitical negotiations and instead views it as a living ethical practice that starts with introspection and spreads to social interaction.

Furthermore, Buddhism's ethical framework, which is based on compassion (*karuṇā*), loving-kindness (*mettā*), and mindfulness (sati), informs practical peace initiatives in contemporary contexts in addition as serving as doctrinal idealism. According to Gurung (2023), Buddhist teachings on conflict place a strong emphasis on putting an end to the Three Poisons—hatred, greed, and delusion—and portray them as the main causes of violence inside and between civilizations (pp. 65–66). This emphasis on internal causes of conflict highlights a significant departure from orthodox peace theory, which usually gives more weight to external issues like institutional design or resource distribution than to psychological and moral reasons of conflict.

Furthermore, modern-day implementations of Buddhist ethical concepts demonstrate how ahimsa influences current peace initiatives that go beyond contemplative living to include international peacebuilding. The enduring importance of these age-old teachings in resolving current international conflict is demonstrated by Sharma (2025), who emphasizes how Buddhist concepts have inspired grassroots interfaith dialogue, nonviolent resistance, and even policy breakthroughs in peace education (pp. 19–21).

Despite these strong connections, I acknowledge the criticism that Buddhist nonviolence may struggle with the contradictions of justified defense and realpolitik if it is construed in an absolutist manner. According to Jenkins (2018), p. 112, scholars have pointed out that the Buddha himself did not promote a utopian pacifism that disregards the complexity of political strife. This critical viewpoint calls for a contextualized understanding of ahimsa that balances moral nonviolence with pragmatic concerns for upholding justice and life. The ultimate goal of this project is to broaden the theoretical scope of peace studies by integrating Buddhist ahimsa with contemporary peace theory. According to my understanding, ahimsa is a dynamic ethical commitment with intellectual depth and societal implications rather than just a passive refraining from violence. This study challenges prevailing paradigms and

promotes a more comprehensive understanding of peace that incorporates structural peace processes with internal transformation through a comparative and critical lens.

2 | PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF BUDDHIST AHIMSA:

When I consider the intellectual underpinnings of Buddhist ahimsa, I see that its ethical depth emerges as a logically founded ethical commitment that is fundamental to the central metaphysical and moral vision of Buddhism rather than just as a theological mandate. The core of Buddhist non-violence is the interdependence doctrine (*pratītyasamutpāda*), which holds that all creatures are conditioned co-arising phenomena rather than having a fixed, separate self. This philosophical perspective reorients us morally to perceive harm to others as ultimately harm to oneself since it suggests that there is no strict ontological distinction between self and other. Ahimsa is conceptually underpinned by interdependence, according to contemporary scholarship, even though early canonical Buddhist texts do not systematize this in Western philosophical terms. This is because "harm done to any sentient being disrupts the intricate web of causes and conditions that sustain life," which is against the core Buddhist understanding of shared existential co-creation. Bronwyn Finnigan's work on Buddhism and animal ethics, which reconstructs Buddhist thinking in terms that reflect normative ethical inquiry, is a foundational contribution to understanding the philosophical foundations of ahimsa. Buddhist arguments for extending non-violence to all beings are rationally based, according to Finnigan (2017), who cites Buddhist ideas of no-self and karma as well as the virtue of compassion and the capacity for suffering (p. e12424). In this context, Buddhist ahimsa is situated inside an ethical theory: non-violence is theoretically justified rather than just advised, and sentience and the avoidance of suffering become morally significant.

Buddhist ethics stands out from the standpoint of moral philosophy because it bases moral value not just on observable deeds but also on intention (*cetana*). The five precepts (*pañca-sīla*) reflect this, with abstinence from killing emerging as a commitment shaped by mental volitions toward compassion rather than external consequences. "Mind precedes all mental states," as the Buddha famously noted. They are all mind-made, and the mind is their chief (Dhammapada, trans. referenced in Buddha Weekly, 2025, p. 1). Ahimsa is positioned as an ethical principle that extends beyond simple physical non-violence to encompass speech and thought, making non-harm an internal moral discipline, thanks to the traditional emphasis on intention as the moral locus.

The philosophical coherence of Buddhist ahimsa is deepened by its linkage with the doctrine of karma. According to Buddhist doctrine, morally dubious deliberate deeds have karmic repercussions that influence suffering and future living circumstances. Finnigan's reconstruction demonstrates how Buddhist ideas use karmic causality to support non-violence for both humans and animals: deeds that inflict pain prolong the cycle of reincarnation and enslavement to dukkha (struggle), whereas non-harm is consistent with freedom. Ahimsa is positioned by this causally based ethical framework as a principle grounded in a metaphysics that intertwines intentionality, consequence, and freedom, rather than as an arbitrary norm.

Furthermore, ahimsa is framed as an active moral engagement rather than a silent retreat from damage by the philosophical significance of compassion (*karuṇā*) in conjunction with non-violence. This is summed up by Buddhist philosophers like Śāntideva in the Bodhicaryāvatāra, where compassion serves as the driving force that transforms selfish impulses into selfless commitments (as described in broader Buddhist ethics literature). The focus on compassion demonstrates that ahimsa is not a passive prescription but rather represents a philosophical understanding of the ethical self that goes beyond egoistic considerations to embrace the well-being of all beings as being inextricably linked to one's own emancipation and flourishing.

However, we are reminded by scholarly critical voices that there is philosophical tension in Buddhist ahimsa. A stringent non-harm principle, according to some contemporary ethicists, must take into account situational ethical complexity, such as circumstances involving defense or inevitable injury. By challenging absolutism and emphasizing the value of contextual discernment, these critiques advance the philosophical investigation of Buddhist ethics (e.g., Jenkins, 2018, p. 112). The philosophical underpinnings of Buddhist ahimsa are based on a strong ontological and ethical framework that skillfully combines consequential understanding (karma), moral psychology (intention and compassion), and metaphysics (interdependence and no-self) into a cogent ethical vision. Therefore, ahimsa is more than just a prohibition against violence; it is a philosophically expressed method of living based on an awareness of the essence of life and the moral connections that make up a morally upright and peaceful human society.

3 | MODERN PEACE THEORY: KEY CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENTS

When placing my work in the context of contemporary peace theory, I acknowledge that the field has experienced significant conceptual change over the previous 60 years, not just broadening the definition of "peace," but also changing the ontology and epistemology of conflict and violence. Johan Galtung's groundbreaking involvement in peace studies lies at the center of this change. Galtung reframed peace as a complex, multifaceted state of social interactions and institutions rather than just the absence of conflict in his seminal work Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. According to Galtung (1969), p. 167, "Peace cannot be fully captured by simply stopping violent acts; rather, it must include the removal of deeper forms of violence that frequently remain invisible yet pervasive in society." A key component of contemporary peace theory is Galtung's unique contribution, which articulates positive and negative peace. According to Gallung (1969, p. 167), negative peace is commonly defined as "the absence of organized violence" or direct physical combat, a situation in which war has ended and overt violence is non-existent. Even though this idea is essential, it falls short of providing a thorough picture of peace because it ignores the structural barriers and underlying societal injustices that perpetuate harm even when there are no overt hostilities.

Positive peace, which Galtung defined as the absence of structural violence—which "is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations" (Galtung, 1969, p. 168)—was introduced to address that shortcoming. Peace became both a state and a process—the elimination of direct and indirect mechanisms of harm that routinely deny people access to opportunities and basic needs—as a result of this modest but profound reinterpretation, which expanded the discipline. Thus, instead of counting battles, modern peace research now examines injustice, inequality, and social repression as barriers to peace.

Recognizing cultural violence, which was later introduced to characterize normative frameworks that justify and sustain both direct and structural forms of violence, was another aspect of extending Galtung's conceptual lens (Galtung, 1990). This new perspective in peace theory reframes peace as an analytical concept that necessitates critical engagement with cultural narratives, ideas, and symbols that sustain harm, as well as a normative objective. In this way, contemporary peace theory critically examines the social circumstances that first render both peace and violence understandable rather than merely portraying an idealistic balance. Since Galtung's original conceptualization, multidisciplinary interactions with political science, philosophy, and security studies have led to a diversification of contemporary peace theory. Democratic peace theory, which holds that liberal democratic states are statistically less prone to wage war on one another, is one of the most persistent schools of thought. Based on moral and structural reasoning, this thesis contends that institutional restrictions, public accountability, and democratic government all work together to foster peaceful interstate interactions (Democratic Peace Theory, 2024). This conclusion has influenced how peace is understood in connection to political institutions, despite ongoing dispute regarding causality and empirical robustness.

The human security paradigm is another significant advancement that reinterprets peace as the defense of people against widespread dangers to their well-being, health, and dignity rather than as state security. This change, albeit not reducible to a single definition, is indicative of a larger movement in peace theory toward people-centered approaches that acknowledge the importance of social, environmental, and economic factors in achieving peace. Refer to the 2016 integrated approaches to peace and security. Importantly, contemporary peace theory also reflects philosophical advances that challenge the traditional dichotomies of violence and non-violence and peace and war. More and more academics contend that peace must be viewed in terms of justice, equity, and transformation; not just the absence of conflict but also the existence of circumstances that enable people to reach their full potential. In this sense, democracy, economic justice, social inclusion, and respect for human rights are all closely linked to peace, which becomes a dynamic ideal. Therefore, from a static state of non-conflict to an expanding, critical framework that emphasizes structural transformation, cultural critique, and human flourishing, the fundamental conceptual developments of contemporary peace theory show a progressive enrichment of how peace is perceived. We can place Buddhist ahimsa—with its emphasis on compassion, interconnectedness, and ethical transformation—not as a stand-alone ethical practice but rather as a significant contribution to the continuing development of peace theory thanks to this rich theoretical environment.

4 | POINTS OF CONVERGENCE

The influential work of Johan Galtung, whose reinterpretation of peace as consisting of both positive and negative dimensions highlights this broader meaning, is a foundational touchstone in contemporary peace theory. While positive peace signifies the presence of social harmony, equity, and justice, negative peace refers to the absence of direct violence (Galtung, 1969). Galtung's view is highly compatible with Buddhist ethics, where compassion (*karuṇā*) and non-violence (ahimsa) are guiding principles for moral behaviour that alter social interactions and individual attitudes rather than only being remedies for bodily injury. Peace must concurrently address systemic injustices and innate tendencies that sustain harm, as Galtung's work illustrates. This is exactly the multifaceted emphasis present in Buddhist moral philosophy. Peace scholars who specifically name ahimsa as a timeless moral principle with current applicability further support this convergence. Non-Western traditions, such as Buddhist peace thinking, "prioritize relational, spiritual, and communal dimensions of peace, focusing on interconnectedness, nonviolence, ethical harmony, and restorative dialogue" in addition to Western structural concerns, according to Steinmetz's (2025) comparison of Western and non-Western peace theories. This encapsulates a key area of agreement: both models acknowledge that achieving peace necessitates moral change on both an individual and a group level.

Buddhist philosophy's central idea of interdependence is also consistent with peace research's emphasis on structural factors as causes of violence. Buddhist ethics raise awareness of how individual acts affect larger systems of harm and harmony by placing suffering and conflict within a web of interconnected causes and conditions. Through the lens of structural violence, peace research also asserts that social, political, and economic systems influence the circumstances in which violence either continues or is reduced, necessitating systemic change. Therefore, both viewpoints agree that peace is not a static state but rather a dynamic process of changing patterns of interaction. Conflict transformation is a practical area where this convergence occurs. Peace theorists stress non-violent means of transforming society, such as dialogue, reconciliation, and restorative justice, while Buddhist scholars promote mindful non-violence as a practice based on profound ethical introspection and compassion. The overlap can be seen in works of literature that present nonviolence as a purposeful approach to structural transformation rather than as a passive act of surrender. According to Tanabe (2016), who examines Buddhist contributions to peace, Buddhist peace principles "unfold internal and external dimensions of peace" by addressing the social and psychological causes of violence, much like contemporary conflict transformation theory.

The normative necessity of creating a "culture of peace" is another area of agreement. Scholars and practitioners such as David W. Chappell have highlighted that Buddhist ideas serve as the foundation for initiatives to create cultures of peace that combine moral self-cultivation with group social action. In his work on Buddhist peace work, Chappell makes the case that inner peace should not only be contemplative but also apparent socially, ecologically, and materially. This idea is heavily echoed in current peace advocacy, which calls for integrated, holistic methods to conflict resolution. This illustrates how contemporary peace theory and Buddhist ethics integrate the ethical, ecological, and social aspects of peace while rejecting simplistic notions of it. Finally, the convergence is practical and used in peacebuilding activities in addition to being theoretical. From engaged Buddhism's mediation of local tensions to international humanitarian endeavours motivated by Buddhist moral precepts, Buddhist practitioners and peace activists have employed non-violent ways to confront conflict and injustice across cultures and historical situations. Such involvement is similar to peace research's focus on discourse and transformational action as ways to establish lasting peace as opposed to merely putting an end to violent symptoms. Modern peace theory and Buddhist ahimsa both acknowledge that achieving peace is a multifaceted, moral, and transformational endeavour, albeit coming from different philosophical backgrounds. A common cognitive and normative framework that enhances our comprehension of peace beyond traditional definitional limits is revealed by both traditions' emphasis on interconnection, non-violence as active involvement, and the need for internal and structural transformation.

5 | POINTS OF DIVERGENCE

By critically contrasting contemporary peace theory with Buddhist ahimsa, I declare that, despite conceptual similarities, the two frameworks differ in their ontological underpinnings, normative priorities, and practical applications. These contrasts reflect fundamentally different ideas about ethical agency, the nature of violence, and the goals of peace itself. They are not just differences in emphasis. The philosophical and ontological foundation of non-violence is one of the main areas of disagreement. Buddhist ahimsa emerges from a metaphysical framework of ethical intentionality (*cetana*) and dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), wherein non-violence is both a means and an expression of profound insight into the nature of reality – the liberation of the mind from ignorance and the interdependence of all beings. The outward, structural focus of much contemporary peace theory stands in stark contrast to this internal transformation, which is at the heart of Buddhist ethics. Johan Galtung and other peace theorists emphasize the circumstances that prevent violence rather than the internal states that produce it, framing peace mainly in relation to direct, structural, and cultural forms of violence in social systems. According to Galtung (1969, p. 168), structural violence occurs when "human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations." Systemic change is frequently given precedence over personal moral development in contemporary peace studies.

Deeper normative priorities are reflected in this discrepancy. Modern peace theory frequently places peace in macro-level political and institutional frameworks, but Buddhist ahimsa places ethical intentionality–the development of compassion (*karuṇā*) and loving-kindness (*mettā*)–as the locus of non-violence. According to Steinmetz (2025), Eastern peace philosophies, such as ahimsa, place more emphasis on the "relational, spiritual, and communal dimensions of peace," while Western peace models emphasize "structural, state-centric mechanisms, including democratic governance, international organizations, and institutional justice" (Steinmetz, 2025, p. 105). Buddhist ahimsa is virtue-centric and inwardly transformational, whereas contemporary peace theory is structure-centric and systemic. This basic disparity in normative emphasis is shown. Furthermore, the two traditions' conceptions of non-violence differ in terms of their reach and applicability. Non-violence is frequently operationalized in peace theory as a means of resolving disputes and as a tool for social or political change (e.g., through institutional reform, diplomacy, and civil resistance). Its pragmatic focus is on how societies may manage disputes, lessen war, and create long-lasting institutions that diminish structural violence and war.

Buddhist philosophy views non-violence as an ethical way of being that penetrates both the agent's inner life and social activities, rather than just a tactic. The development of non-harmful intention at all times is emphasized by Buddhist writings and academics as a means of achieving emancipation rather than as a reliant tactic for political success. For example, as part of the aspirant's spiritual journey, the Buddha's prohibition against killing is intrinsically holistic, extending moral concern to all sentient creatures.

Political agency and violence are yet another important area of difference. Modern peace theory recognizes circumstances in which the limited use of force may be institutionalized or regulated, even as it promotes non-violent resolution within the frames of state power, international law, and just war discussions. On the other hand, there is uncertainty about pacifism as a rigid political prescription in the Buddhist canon and academic interpretations. Although non-violence is emphasized as a personal ethical practice in Buddhism's moral teachings, they do not offer a clear framework for statecraft or geopolitics. According to Chiu's analysis, Buddhist teachings on non-violence are intricate and contextually mediated; historical texts demonstrate nuanced allowances in particular sociopolitical roles of adherents, and the precept to refrain from killing does not directly translate into complete pacifism in political practice (Chiu, 2020).

Lastly, I notice a difference in methodology. The social science perspectives that use comparative frameworks, empirical analysis, and institutional criteria to assess peace outcomes are the context for contemporary peace research. Its strength is found in quantifiable indicators that enable cross-national comparison and policy recommendations, such as conflict levels, human development, and governance quality. In contrast, Buddhist ahimsa is based on qualitative, introspective practice modalities that are difficult to measure; rather than using standardized measures, the effectiveness of inner transformation is evaluated using moral insight, story, and long-term ethical habituation. Even if these differences are significant, they enhance the comparative process. My analysis provides a nuanced map of theoretical disjuncture by identifying the unique commitments of Buddhist ahimsa, such as its emphasis on inner liberation, ethical intentionality, and universal compassion, and contrasting them with the structural, systemic, and pragmatic commitments of contemporary peace theory. This difference is a good starting point for a more thorough discussion that can broaden the scope of peace theory beyond its existing frameworks and incorporate moral considerations that ground peace in both the political and the personal.

6 | RELEVANCE TO CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL CHALLENGES

I contend that the age-old ethical precept of non-violence provides both moral insight and practical usefulness in resolving international conflicts, environmental catastrophes, and structural injustices when considering how Buddhist ahimsa interacts with urgent modern global issues. The philosophical depth and ethical orientation of Buddhist ahimsa offer a complementary and, in many ways, foundational lens through which these challenges can be re-conceptualized and more successfully engaged, even though modern peace theory has made a significant contribution to understanding the structural determinants of peace and conflict.

Global conflict resolution and peacebuilding are two of the most immediate areas where ahimsa is still relevant. Buddhist philosophy, with its foundations in compassion (*karuṇā*), mindfulness (sati), and ethical conduct (*sīla*), shapes conflict resolution approaches that prioritize comprehending the underlying causes of violence, such as greed, hatred, and ignorance, rather than just managing its outward manifestations, as Dr. Vivek Sharma's research demonstrates (Sharma, 2025, p. 18). This moral perspective is consistent with modern frameworks for peacebuilding that go beyond ceasefires to transformative peace and are based on actors' respect for one another and communication. In fact, the Sustaining Peace Agenda of the United Nations itself promotes inclusive, preventive approaches to peace that take into account structural injustices and the socioeconomic causes of conflict (UN

Sustaining Peace Agenda, 2016). Ahimsa gives these efforts an ethical foundation by refocusing attention on the innate human impulses and relational dynamics, even though the UN's framework functions at the level of international government.

Crucially, ahimsa also speaks to the pressing issues of climatic instability and environmental degradation, which are major concerns on a worldwide scale. The connectivity that modern research now recognizes as essential for resilient peace in the face of ecological problems is reflected in the interdependence that is emphasized in Buddhist discourse. For instance, researchers that examine the relationship between peace and environmental sustainability show that peace is inextricably linked to fair access to environmental resources like safe sanitation and clean water, which in turn affect social stability more broadly (A worldwide analysis…, 2022, p. 5). In this sense, ahimsa provides a strong moral foundation for environmental stewardship when combined with its emphasis on compassion for all life—an approach that cuts over political divides and directly addresses the welfare of the earth. With researchers like H. Buhaug highlighting how climate change increases the likelihood of conflict through socio-political channels, this ethical connection is especially pertinent in light of the growing recognition of climate-related hazards as challenges to peace and security (Buhaug, 2023, p. 103). Therefore, the ahimsak ethic of non-harm can guide ecologically based peace methods that balance human activities with the thriving environments that all life depends on, in addition to advocating against interpersonal violence.

Furthermore, the development of mindful awareness and Buddhist concepts like Dependent Origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) offer important tools for tackling the normative aspects of social injustice and inequality, which are major causes of conflict in the modern world. According to Buddhist teachings, the main causes of suffering are ignorance and attachment, and attempts to lessen social injustice necessitate a shift in human consciousness (Yeh, 2006, p. 93). Ahimsa provides conceptual depth to the moral requirements for structural reform when combined with peace research's emphasis on positive peace, which entails the absence of structural violence as well as the presence of justice and equity. The focus on internal change raises the possibility that structural changes by themselves might not be enough to bring about lasting peace if the emotional and psychological causes of discrimination, avarice, and exclusion are not addressed. Apart from these aspects, the globalization of ahimsa has been noted in a number of interfaith discussions, grassroots peace organizations, and trauma recovery programs. Buddhist teachings of non-violence and active compassion have been shown by leaders such as Thich Nhat Hanh and the Dalai Lama to promote intercultural understanding and resilience in divided societies (Sharma, 2025, p. 21). These efforts show that ahimsa is a practice that can be operationalized in a variety of cultural and political contexts to lessen polarization and encourage collaborative responses to hardship and conflict, rather than an abstract moral ideal.

All things considered, the holistic ethical orientation of Buddhist ahimsa—which encourages compassion as an active force for relational and structural peace, demands inner transformation, and welcomes interconnectedness; makes it relevant in the face of today's global difficulties. Ahimsa adds a moral compass that places peacebuilding within the framework of ethical intentionality and shared humanity, even though contemporary peace theory already heavily influences institutional responses and empirical examination of conflict. This convergent engagement between ancient wisdom and modern peace study gives hope for a more compassionate global future as well as diagnostic clarity in a world beset by ongoing conflicts, environmental disasters, and rising inequality.

7 | CONCLUSION

As I wrap up this critical and comparative analysis of Buddhist ahimsa and contemporary peace theory, I see that the discussion between these two schools of thought exposes both significant overlaps and beneficial conflicts that enhance the conversation about peace today. Buddhist ahimsa reorients the language of peace toward moral development, inner transformation, and global compassion. It is based

on the metaphysics of interconnectedness and the ethical primacy of intention. Contrarily, contemporary peace theory offers rigorous analytical frameworks that shed light on the institutional, cultural, and structural aspects of violence, providing tangible avenues for policy intervention and systemic change. I contend in this paper that neither framework is adequate on its own. While an entirely inward moral approach might not have the institutional tools required to confront widespread inequities and geopolitical realities, a simply structural vision of peace runs the risk of ignoring the psychological and ethical causes of warfare. The comparative engagement shows that peace needs to be viewed as both a shifting of conditions and a shifting of consciousness. The integration of Buddhist ahimsa and contemporary peace theory offers a more comprehensive paradigm; one that incorporates ethical intentionality with structural justice; in a time characterized by ongoing military conflicts, ecological disasters, economic disparity, and ideological division. I come to the conclusion that this kind of integrative paradigm broadens the normative scope of peace studies and offers a theoretically sound but practically applicable basis for enduring world peace.

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