Ethnic Conflict and *Haewon-sangsaeng*

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Abstract

This article begins with issues related to ethnic conflict in the contemporary world. It points out that ethnic conflict seems to be ineradicable in the modern nation-state when the majority overrides the minority. As the malady of modern civilization, ethnic conflict becomes a hard nut to crack. Political scientists and politicians are busy working out in theory and practice to understand and cope with this socio-political collective violence. However, ethnic identity is not born naturally. In forming ethnicity, the deliberate construction of a homogenous ethnic memory is indispensable. Thus, knots of enmity between different ethnic communities could be untangled and a reconciliation of conflicting groups is possible.

Samuel Huntington's thesis on the clash of civilizations offers a grim vision of geopolitics based on conflict. However, human society needs reconciliation rather than antagonism to ensure a flourishing future. In this regard, Mahatma Gandhi's non-violence (*ahiṃsā*) movement against the British Raj mounts a political revolution in human history. In the spirit of non-violence, the lofty ideals of Daesoon Jinrihoe's *Haewon-sangsaeng* (the Resolution of Grievances for Mutual Benficence) can be used as guidelines when dealing with ethnic conflict. As a peaceful and adequate foundation to unravel hostility among antagonistic ethnic groups, *Haewon-sangsaeng* would bring rapprochement without violence. If our civilization is to advance steadfastly, mechanisms which support diversified ethnic communities living together without grudges are warranted. To illustrate this point clearly, the ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka is used as an example. It is argued that majoritarianism must be renounced, and the fundamental human rights of minorities should be guaranteed in a democratic country to avert irreconcilable conflict. As a guiding principle, *Haewon-sangsaeng* can bring concord between conflicting ethnic groups when put into practice.

Keywords: ethnicity; nation-state; conflict; *Haewon-sangsaeng*; non-violence; Gandhi; Sri Lanka

Introduction

One of the most prevailing socio-political scenes in the contemporary world is the frequent occurrence of ethnic conflict in many parts of the globe. These conflicts are often accompanied by horrific collective violence and appalling interethnic bloodshed. The following can be taken as examples of this phenomenon. In Europe, the Yugoslav Wars took place in the Balkans from 1991 to 2001. A series of separate but related ethnic conflicts, wars of independence, and insurgencies intertwined to make these wars even deadlier. During the Rwandan Civil War between 7 April and 15 July 1994, the Rwandan genocide occurred. Members of the Tutsi minority ethnic group, as well as some moderate Hutu and Twa, were killed by armed Hutu militias within a hundred days. It is estimated that about 500,000 to 800,000 people were slaughtered in Rwanda by ethnic Hutu extremists in this very short period (McDoom 2020). In Sri Lanka, ethnic conflict after independence between Sinhala Buddhists and Tamil Hindus escalated into a civil war from 1983 to 2009. The UN estimated a total of 80,000–100,000 deaths during these 26 years of civil war.

Ethnic conflict seems to be the ticking time bomb of the present time. It has become a severe and lingering illness in today's civilization. Heinous crimes like ethnic cleansing, genocide, and bloody massacre are often committed in the name of communal or national interest. At present, the situation remains rather grim as conflicts are unremitted and widespread.

Antagonism, Ethnicity, Identity, and Nationalism

Following Donald L. Horowitz's arguments on attributive elements of ethnic identity such as race, language, religion, tribe, or caste as the base of conflict[1] (Horowitz 1985, 41–54), Stanley J.Varshney pointed out that ethnic conflict could range from the Protestant-Catholic conflict in Northern Ireland and Hindu-Muslim conflict in India to black-white conflict in the United States and South Africa, Tamil-Sinhala conflict in Sri Lanka, and Shia-Sunni sectarian violence in Pakistan (Varshney 2002, 4–5). It therefore includes a wide variety of collective violence that happens among different social, religious, and cultural communities.

Likewise, Stanley J.Tambiah mentioned that in our era ethnic violence has taken place not only in the third world but also in the industrialized and affluent countries. Among others, internal conflicts among ethnic nations in Eastern Europe after the demise of the Soviet Union are noteworthy. In short, ethnic conflict is a global phenomenon (Tambiah 1996, 4). He alluded to the universality of ethnic conflict at the end of the last century:

> Ethnic conflict is a major reality of our time. This is confirmed, not simply by its ubiquity alone, but also by the cumulative increase in the frequency and intensity of its occurrence. According to a recent enumeration, some forty-eight countries

(including the republics that have supplanted the USSR) are experiencing ethnonationalist conflicts of one kind or other. (Tambiah 1996, 4)

The existing scale of ethnic conflict all over the globe is daunting.[2] One may wonder if ethnic conflict reflects the reality of our modern nation-state civilizations. On the other hand, scholars like Samuel Huntington consider that in the post-Cold War world, ethnic conflict has intensified into a full-scale strife of civilization. In his thought-provoking book on civilizational clash (Huntington 1996), Huntington argued for the possible inter-civilization conflict on issues like nuclear proliferation, immigration, human rights, and democracy. For him, a clash of civilizations seems to be inevitable after the Cold War between what he called "the West and the rest." He said:

> In the emerging world, the relations between states and groups from different civilizations will not be close and will often be *antagonistic.* Yet some intercivilization relations are more *conflict-prone* than others. At the micro level, the most violent fault lines are between Islam and its Orthodox, Hindu, African, and Western Christian neighbors. At the macro level, the dominant division is between "the West and the rest," with the most intense conflicts occurring between Muslim and Asian societies on the one hand, and the West on the other. The dangerous clashes of the future are likely to arise from the interaction of *Western arrogance, Islamic intolerance, and Sinic assertiveness*. (Huntington 1996, 183; italics mine)

Although Huntington's pessimistic view on the clash of civilizations is based on realpolitik, he perceives global politics as the acute rivalry of different cultures or ethnic, religious, and civilizational conflicts[3] with the West in one corner and Islam and China in the other. His vision of geopolitics emphasizes antagonism rather than collaboration or reconciliation. However, the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 was probably not a clash of the West and the rest in the beginning, but a war within the Eastern Bloc itself although it quickly evolved into a major conflict between NATO and Russia. Moreover, this war is not on issues like nuclear proliferation, immigration, human rights, or democracy. Rather, it is a war on issues of territorial annexation and integrity. Still, patriotism in Ukraine would make Ukrainians feel rather different from Russians in terms of ethnic and national identity. Ukrainians would think that they are ethnically other than Russian and to be a Ukrainian is fundamentally incompatible with Russian in their national identity. Here, Ukrainians as people of a nation-state are irreconcilable with Russia from an ethnonationalist perspective.

However, what of ethnicity and its relationship to nationalism? Eric Hobsbawm said:

> In ordinary usage, this [ethnicity] is almost always connected in some unspecified way with common origin and descent, from which the common characteristics of the members of an ethnic group are allegedly derived. 'Kinship' and 'blood' have

obvious advantages in bonding together members of a group and excluding outsiders, and are therefore central to ethnic nationalism. (Hobsbawm 1992, 63)

In a modern state, starting from Europe, nationalism is often intricately linked with ethnicity. It is the emphasis on common origin and descent that gives rise to modern nationalism. However, modern territorial nation-states are "too heterogeneous to claim a common ethnicity." (Hobsbawm 1992, 63) Hobsbawm also showed that through immigration, depopulation, and resettlement, the mixture of ethnicity in many parts of Europe is diverse (Hobsbawm 1992, 63–64). In general, the matter of ethnicity is a vital concern in the modern nation-state where the division of language, culture, or religion creates variegated ethnic identities.

On the other hand, although ethnicity is a term frequently used in social sciences, identity is sometimes contentious and elusive. It could be fabricated by historians, and easily manipulated by politicians when necessary. Interestingly, when forming the majority of the population, ethnic identity could overlap with national identity in the contemporary nation-state. However, for the minority, ethical identity does not necessarily accord with national identity. Members of minority groups in a nation-state often articulate their ethnic differences distinctively and make an effort to protect their identity from cultural assimilation. When asserting one's ethnic identity becomes the chief concern of minorities, their position likely competes with national identity. This often leads to conflicts of identity in a nation-state. Yet, a sense of belonging to one ethnic group or another is not a collective consciousness born naturally. Tambiah also indicated an unusual twist of ethnic identity:

> Ethnicity embodies and combines two interwoven processes, which constitute its double helix. One is the substantialization and reification of qualities and attributes as enduring collective possessions, made realistic and imaginable by mytho-historical charters and the claims of blood, descent, and race. This results in what has aptly been called "pseudo-speciation"—that is, the collectivities in a certain sociopolitical space think of themselves as being of separate social kinds. Internal unity and homogeneity, and external difference and opposition, are integral to this condition. (Tambiah 1996, 21)

As a collective consciousness, ethnic identity emphasizes exclusiveness and dissimilarity. Homogeneity is proclaimed to exclude heterogeneity in terms of ethnic relations. Nonetheless, this could be arbitrary as ethnic identity often has its historical contingency and mythological edifice. Ethnic consanguinity could also be socio-politically constructed in the vicissitudes of time. Accordingly, ethnic consciousness is not permanently fixed. It may change in different contexts and historical periods. This discrepancy also indicates the variability and fluidity of ethnic identity. Thus, the development of ethnic identity could be a continuous process of modification. It is renewable and has new dimensions after a certain lapse of time.

Ethnicity could be, in a certain sense, compared to what Benedict Anderson termed nationalism as, an "imagined community" (Anderson 1991). The ethnic group is also an imagined community where ethnic affinity is underscored. This affinity could be shared cultural, religious, blood, or other related bonds. As it is a community imagined, members of the community believe that they have a shared past and common destiny in terms of ethnic ties (Chandra 2019, 35). Nonetheless, this could lead to popular demand for a fair distribution of material benefits and social welfare among different ethnic communities. Consequently, in a modern multiethnic nation-state, ethnic consciousness is constantly raised to call for social, political, and economic justice. If nationality is a modern invention of statehood, ethnicity has also become a highly politicized category in the modern state. Tambiah said:

> One setting for the politicization of ethnicity is the advent of "modern" states committed to welfare policies in the "developing" third world, which have become crucial and direct arbiters of economic well-being, as well as political status and the benefits that flow from that. Within democratic governmental systems, there are many occasions, such as elections at municipal, regional, and central levels, for like-minded members to mobilize and make claims on behalf of ethnic groups and successfully win concessions for them. (Tambiah 1996, 334–335)

Making use of ethnic identity for political gains thus frequently occurs in electoral democracy. Consequently, ethnicity often becomes a potentially disruptive issue in the modern state, and ethnic identity could be a very contentious matter as well. However, identity as a sense of belonging depends on variables changeable. It does not remain static but may change constantly. Also, identity could be multi-dimensional as it varies according to various contexts. Thus, the matter of identity could be an open-ended question. It is debatable, arguable, questionable, and pluralistic rather than monolithic. Amartya Sen argued:

> Belonging to each one of the membership groups can be quite important, depending on the particular context. When they compete for attention and priority over each other…the person has to decide on the relative importance to attach to the respective identities, which will, again, depend on the exact context. There are two distinct issues here. First, the recognition that identities are robustly plural, and the importance of one identity need not obliterate the importance of others. Second, a person has to make choices—explicitly or by implication—about what relative importance to attach, in a particular context, to the divergent loyalties and priorities that may compete for precedence. (Sen 2007, 19)

Here, Sen gives an interpretation of identity as a matter adjustable, flexible, and contextual. It also depends on the circumstances and personal choice. Ethnic identity is without exception. For example, forty years ago, the majority of people in Taiwan

considered themselves Chinese, but now most people think that they are Taiwanese. The process of change has been steady but irreversible and the lift of martial law in 1987 is crucial. However, the connotations of Taiwanese and Chinese are also transformed in this nonviolent, democratic, and debatable process. In Taiwan, ethnic identity could be used as political propaganda to consolidate power. Nonetheless, once democratization starts and the socio-political context is altered, an identity shift is also reflected in the course of modification. Admittedly, being Taiwanese or Chinese also carries grave political implications in contemporary Taiwan (Wachman 1994).

Non-violence as the Remedy of Violence: Mahatma Gandhi and *Ahiṃsā*

As ethnic conflict is rampant in the present era, what is a good remedy for this devastating disease? On a practical level, ethnic conflict management needs political and diplomatic expertise to tackle with. It is an intricate, sophisticated, demanding, and difficult task. Reaching peace may take a long and acrimonious negotiation but it is far better than resorting to violence.

As we live in a global village, peaceful coexistence rather than sharp antagonism is what humanity needs at the present critical juncture. Using violence to solve conflict will never end in a durable peace.[4] If the conflict continues, there is no chance for peace to prevail and human suffering would never come to an end. What is the possible resolution to untangle antagonistic conflict?

Violence easily begets more violence and to meet violence with violence will perpetrate violence. We need to look for an alternative to violence. Non-violence is assuredly a viable alternative. Indeed, non-violence is a powerful antidote against violence. To prevent further violence, the remedy of non-violence must be proposed. Assuredly, only non-violence can effectively unravel twisted knots of animosity. We have to take non-violence as a peaceful and adequate solution to violence seriously.

The modern thought of non-violence (*ahiṃsā*) started with Mahatma Gandhi. His ideals and practices of *ahiṃsā*—the philosophy of non-violence-have created far-reaching global influence in the modern world (Iyer, 1994) People like Martin Luther King or the Dalai Lama acknowledged their deep debt to Gandhi. One certainly would wonder how Gandhi started *ahiṃsā*. For Gandhi, it started with food. We know that Gandhi was a very strict vegetarian throughout his entire life. He said:

> I believe that there is no religion greater than *ahimsa*, and yet I cannot escape the himsa which is inevitably involved in the process of eating and drinking. The ideal of *ahimsa* is, however, ever before me; even in these processes, I do endeavor to restrain myself. I am striving every moment to reduce even those functions to a minimum. (Iyer 1986, 1, 322–323).

Gandhi's scrupulousness about food is assuredly religiously orientated. To be sure, if

all living beings are united in non-violence, i.e., no one inflicts mischief on other beings, then they will stay together in complete harmony. Consequently, non-violence is not confined to human relationships only. It is a virtue by which all sentient lives of the entire universe are connected. Non-violence is arguably the all-important ideal for which Gandhi is remembered by the world. He transformed a religious ideal into a political praxis with outstanding success. Non-violence is also the manifestation of Truth, which for Gandhi is also a manifestation of God. It is a universal truth.

It has to be pointed out that *ahiṃsā* as the highest virtue started with Śramaṇic traditions in India. Both Jainism and Buddhism espouse *ahiṃsā*. The Buddha praises the bloodless sacrifice and Gandhi also considers that *ahiṃsā* is an important message of the Buddha (Iyer 1986, 1, 507–9; 511–2). On the other hand, Jainism considers *ahiṃsā* the foremost moral precept. In an episode related to the birth of Mahāvīra, the Jain leader contemporary with the Buddha, the fetus Mahāvīra displayed a highly elaborate sense of *ahiṃsā*. He lay completely still, lest his kicks should cause his mother pain. Only perceiving with his supernatural knowledge that his mother feared death did he stir slightly to reassure her. It is said:

> Now, Śramaṇa Bhagavān Mahāvīra, out of compassion for his mother, did not move, nor stir, nor quiver, but remained contracted and motionless.[5] (*Kalpa Sūtra* 1:92)

It is compassion (Prakrit *aṇukaṃpaṇa*, Sanskrit *anupampana*) that connects all sentient beings. Unable to bear the sufferings of others, the fetus Mahāvīra practiced the virtue of *ahiṃsā* to get rid of the anxieties of her mother. Her mother then was in high spirits again:

> Feeling her child in the womb quivering, trembling, moving and stirring, kṣatriyāṇī Triśalā became happy, pleased, and joyful, highly delighted in her mind, her heart was throbbing with ghee.[6] (*Kalpa Sūtra* 1:93)

In one of the Jaina texts, we find the following words of Mahāvīra:

> No being in the world is to be harmed by a spiritually inclined person, whether knowing or unknowingly, for all beings desire to live and no being wishes to die. A true Jaina therefore, consciously refrains from harming any being, however small.[7] (*Daśavaikālika-sutra*, iv # 11)

Refraining from harming any being (Prakrit *prāṇāivāyāo veramaṇaṇ*, Sanskrit *prāṇātipātādviramaṇaṃ*) is the ideal relationship among different modalities of sentient beings. The practice of non-harming is what we need in dealing with others. Mindful of the vital importance of *ahiṃsā* is a duty incumbent upon all of us in their daily lives. Gandhi grew up in Gujarat, where Jainism had been a stronghold and he also

acknowledged Jaina influence on his life. His meticulous attitude toward food also reminds us of Jain mendicants.

To be sure, Gandhi had made himself a fearless bodhisattva in his insistence on pursuing *ahiṃsā*. The power of *ahiṃsā* is truly immeasurable as Gandhi understands it:

> In its positive form, *ahimsa* means the largest love, the greatest charity. If I am a follower of *ahimsa*, I must love my enemy. I must apply the same rule to the wrong-doer who is my enemy or a stranger to me, as I would to my wrong-doing father or son. The active *ahimsa* necessarily includes truth and fearlessness. A man cannot deceive the loved ones; he does not fear or frighten him or her. The gift of life is the greatest of all gifts. A man who gives it in reality disarms all hostility. He has paved the way for an honorable understanding. And none who is himself subject to fear can bestow that gift. He must therefore be himself fearless. A man cannot then practice *ahimsa* and be a coward at the same time. The practice of *ahimsa* calls forth the greatest courage. (Iyer 1986, 2, 212–213)

For Gandhi, *ahiṃsā* means the highest human virtue and the practice of *ahiṃsā* is not confined to vegetarianism or meticulous religious observance. He has made *ahiṃsā* a positive ideal to embrace the whole living universe. He gave many talks on *ahiṃsā* and wrote numerous essays on *ahiṃsā* to explore his ideals of new *ahiṃsā*. As we have seen, Gandhi has made *ahiṃsā* a powerful political persuasion as *hiṃsā* is most visible in the realm of political struggle against the British Raj. Gandhi imparted a new and important dimension to the meaning of *ahiṃsā*. This Indian Śramanic ideal has been magically transformed into people power unrivaled in modern political practices.

Haewon-sangsaeng as a Non-violent Resolution of Conflict

On the other hand, the idea of *Haewon-sangsaeng* (解冤相生, the resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence) in Daesoon Jinrihoe offers a non-violent resolution of conflict. The noble ideal of *Haewon-sangsaeng* embodies the spirit of non-violence propounded by Gandhi as it can constructively unravel the knot of hatred and animosity. It is a pacific means to end ethnic enmity between antagonistic groups. As a wholesome prescription, *Haewon-sangsaeng* could provide a remedy for treating collective violence.

Haewon-sangsaeng has East Asian origins. There is an important perspective in terms of the mode of relation among cosmic and human affairs in Chinese thought. In traditional Chinese cosmology, there are five elements in the universe: water, fire, metal, wood, and earth as vital forces. Relations among them could be reciprocally restricting or mutually supportive, that is to say, either antagonism (相克) or coexistence (相生) in Chinese terms. As a binary, antagonism (or restriction) and coexistence (or harmony) take turns in cosmic and human realms. Ideally, antagonism and coexistence rotate to keep the entire universe moving forward.

Furthermore, the rotation of antagonism and coexistence can be applied to political history. There is a correlation between different dynasties and the five elements of the universe and the ascendancy of one natural force will produce the domination of the correlative dynasty.[8] However, Throughout Chinese history; however, antagonism rather than coexistence has prevailed as each former dynasty was replaced by the next dynasty. In dynastic China, the overwhelming prevalence of mutual contention is the major theme constantly appearing in the name of revolution. It becomes a vicious cycle where humankind is trapped in an unending ruthless succession of dynasties. Indeed, violent revolutions were a chronic illness in traditional Chinese political history. There is no solution to this recurring crisis within the traditional framework of Chinese political theology.

In *The Canonical Scripture* of Daesoon Jinrihoe, *Haewon-sangsaeng* is considered one of the core concepts. Related to this concept is a new cosmology of Daesoon. According to this cosmology, the Former World (先天) and the Later World (後天) are two contrasting eons in human history. Whereas conflicts dominate in the Former World, reconciliation prevails in the Later World. As an eon of mutual contention, the Former World has to be transformed so that the universe can be spiritually renewed. Sangje said in *The Canonical Scripture* :

> The world has been filled with grievances and grudges because mutual contention has prevailed over human affairs in the Former World. Accordingly, the Three Realms of Heaven, Earth, and Humankind have been obstructed from contacting one another, which has led this world to wretched calamities. This is the reason for the lack of renewal of the Three Realms. (*Prophetic Elucidations*, 1:8)

The Former World and the Later World are central yet opposing epochs of the human condition in *The Canonical Scripture* . They point to two diametrically different human existential concerns and could be seen as two modes of human destiny. While the Former World is an era of human conflict and suffering, people in the Later World live together under immense blessing. It is the millennium of peace and harmony. Here, one finds an East Asian type of millenarianism in Daesoon Jinrihoe as it is proclaimed in the following passage:

> The Reordering Work of the Three Realms refers to the Great Opening (Gaebyeok) of Heaven, Earth, and Humankind. This Great Opening means not to imitate what others have already made but the creation of something perfectly new. It has never existed in the past or the present, and is not inherited from others nor do these works belong to destiny. They could only have been created by Sangje, Himself. (*Prophetic Elucidations* 5)[9]

Sangje, therefore, put forth his ideal of resolution of grievance for mutual beneficence to renew the three realms. This renewal of the universe opens up the millennium for

human destiny. It is also said in *The Canonical Scripture*:

> Sangje intended to resolve all the grievances derived from the mutual contention of the Former World and save myriads of people by the Dao of mutual beneficence through rectifying the Degree Number of the Former World and opening the path to the Later World's paradisiacal land of immortals. His will has already been confidentially revealed in the world. (*Prophetic Elucidations* 6)

To contrast two disparate eras is to expose the stern reality of the world in constant conflict which has to be replaced by a high vision of reciprocal benevolence. The resolution of grievance for mutual beneficence is a pacific solution to terminate the mutual contention of human relations around the globe. It is an antidote to resolve all the grievances derived from mutual conflict. Indeed, political and social conflicts should be resolved non-violently so that human suffering can be relieved. In my essay on *Haewon-sangsaeng* as a religio-ethical metaphor, I concluded:

> *Haewon-sangsaeng* is arguably the most important and noble ideal in Daesoon Jinrihoe…It is a fully embodied religio-ethical ideal with a profound concern for the spiritual welfare of humanity. In its essence, *Haewon-sangsaeng* can be divided into two parts: *haewon* and *sangsaeng*. *Haewon* conveys an important message of reconciliation for the future of humanity. *Sangsaeng* expresses an earnest hope for the sustainability and beneficence of humanity. It is through the practice of *haewon* that lofty ideals *of sangsaeng* can be realized. (Huang 2021, 119)

Haewon-sangsaeng as a sensible approach to conflict first concerns itself with untying the knots of enmity. Only in the situation of non-enmity can the antagonistic parties sit down and be reconciled with each other. An amicable settlement can be reached only if hostility is put on hold. To live together concordantly is to discard hatred and grudge readily. It is also said in *The Canonical Scripture*:

> There is a saying 'mu-cheok jal sanda (one lives very well),' which can also be interpreted as people can live happily only without cheok (grudge). Do not provoke grievances from others, or those grievances will turn into a cheok that will come back to you. Furthermore, do not hate others. Even if that hatred is not consciously known, their spirits will notice it first and return it back upon you as a cheok. (*Dharma* 2: 44)[10]

Grievance needs to be redressed. If not, the cycle of hatred will constantly bring grievance to each other. To break this cycle is to let go of hatred first. It is important to remove a grievance between two parties to dissolve bitter enmity between them. *Haewon-sangsaeng* which gives conflicting ethnic groups the prospect of accepting one another as family members should. Only harmonious coexistence rather than violent

antagonism can bring mutual beneficence of all life in a country to resolve grievances. Finding common ground and reaching a consensus for the benefit of all is the best tactic to resolve the resentment and suffering of the people involved. *Haewon-sangsaeng* has become a categorical imperative in this age of conflict.

Nonviolence as the Proper Way to Ethnic Rapprochement: Weaponized Buddhism and Victimized Minorities in Sri Lanka

Violence will emerge when potential conflict cannot be dealt with adequately. Likewise, if conflicting parties only resort to violence to assault the other side, peace will never be attained. A political reconciliation must be taken to ensure that the voices of the suffering are truly heard, and possible solutions are seriously pondered. Here, Sri Lanka will be used as an example to explicate the possible solution to ethnic violence.

The communal violence between Sinhala-Buddhists and Tamil-Hindus in Sri Lanka turned into civil war after 1983.[11] Hundreds and thousands of people died for it. Anthropologist Tambiah wrote three consecutive monographs updating the communal violence in South Asia: the first two books are devoted entirely to Sri Lanka(Tambiah 1986; 1992; 1996). Although the civil war ended in May 2009, the creation of a federation in which different ethnic groups can live in concord remains a daunting challenge for the government to take up.

One cannot help but ask the following questions: How can an "other-worldly" universal religion, like Buddhism eventually become a "this-worldly" and parochial social-political ideology? How can a religion of non-violence become deeply involved in violent, mundane struggle? How can a universal religion subject to ethnical consciousness, become the emblem of nationalistic politics? How can a religion of equality become politically hegemonic, discriminating against minorities?

Although Buddhism teaches non-violence, resorting to violence has become a daily occurrence in the political scene of Sri Lanka by Sinhalese Buddhists. They weaponize Buddhism to threaten the minorities. Thus, political violence in Sri Lanka has nothing to do with Buddhism as a tolerant and pacifist religion. It is the politicization of Buddhism as the national emblem and Sinhalese identity which antagonizes the minorities. Hindus, Christians, and Muslims are made the scapegoats for Sinhalese Buddhist chauvinism. Since its independence in 1948, Sri Lanka has been hopelessly stuck in ethnic conflict. However, this conflict is not nursed by a deep-seated animosity between different ethnic groups through generations. Rather, hatred is incited by politicians and Sinhalese Buddhists (monks included) in the name of safeguarding Buddhism (*sāsana*) for political gains and communalistic interests. It is an adverse political environment that nurtures terrorism and fratricide. In Sri Lanka, ethnic conflict takes a terrible toll of human lives and the haunting fear of continuing civil wars grips the minority's hearts.

In discussing the scene of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, Tambiah pointed out the fundamental problem of Sri Lankan politics and Sinhalese society. It is the practice of

violence to solve dispute that leads Sinhalese Buddhists to victimize the minorities:

> On their part, large segments of the Sinhalese population have engaged in a shameful violation of the basic tenets of a religion on nonviolence, noninjury, compassion, and detachment. The new face of political Buddhism is ugly. The ethnic riots have shown a fairly high propensity to violence in Sinhalese society at many levels, and the government in power has grossly violated basic human rights. The danger in Sinhalese belligerence is that the Sinhalese may be tempted to resort to violence in a situation of increasing entropy in order to settle all contentious political issues. Moreover, if today it is Sinhalese Buddhist versus Tamil, tomorrow the victims may be the Muslims, and the day after the Christians. (Tambiah 1986, 122)

Unfortunately, the situation in Sri Lanka has been in disarray even after the termination of the civil war as predicted by Tambiah. Although the civil war of Sri Lanka between the government and rebel Tamils was bloodily ended in 2009, another ethnic conflict ensuued. Militant Sinhalese Buddhists found Muslims as another scapegoat for their targeted ethnic enemy.[12] On 21 April 2019, Easter Sunday, three Catholic churches and three luxury hotels in the Colombo area were targeted in a series of Muslim terrorist suicide bombings. Two smaller explosions ensued later that day. 269 people were killed, including at least 45 foreigners. Christians became victims of new conflict. The country suffered another serious setback and ethnic tension lingered. Eventually, in July 2022, under the devastation of the pandemic, Sri Lanka's economy went bankrupt. It will take time and effort for Sri Lanka to return to economic, social, and political normalcy.

Ethnic strife has become an incurable disease in Sri Lanka. To put an end to ethnic conflict is a political imperative. However, the ethnic conflict seems to be eternally doomed in Sri Lanka. To be sure, critical problems related to ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka cannot be resolved by mindless violence. They can only be solved by peaceful and skillful means. Sri Lankan people have to approach this problem in a new way. Tambiah already gave a prescription for the future of Sri Lanka at the beginning of the civil war. His remedy, although rudimentary for a democratic society, is an appropriate medicine for chronic illness of ethnic violence in Sri Lanka. His proposal includes:

1. The country should restore the rule of law, recognize the necessity to normalize its politics, and designate citizenship without religious or ethnic tinge.
2. The nation should be a plural society and recognize pluralism as a fact of life. Conclusive quotas as a division of spoils on behalf of any particular group should not be legislated.
3. Tamils must relinquish not only terrorism but also separatism, i.e., the idea of a sovereign state of Eelam.
4. A devolution of power as envisioned in a district-council plan.

5. The government should admit that many monuments, archeological sites, and literary and cultural assets are neither Sinhalese nor Buddhist. The "Buddhist Sinhalese" should not disregard the legacies of many different peoples living on the island for centuries. (Tambiah 1986, 123–126)

This scenario put forth by Tambiah for the future of Sri Lanka makes sense in terms of prospects for reconciliation. His suggestions are pertinent and beneficial for solving entangled problems caused by ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. Indeed, pluralistic culture has to be implemented and chauvinism should be condemned and discarded in a democratic state. Moreover, history should not be monopolized to extol the glory of certain people. Intolerance and uncurbed political domination easily lead to unpredictable violence and war.

Sadly, ethnic conflict, civil war, and terrorism have dominated the political scene in Sri Lanka since its independence in 1948. The tension between Sinhalese and other ethnic communities has not been alleviated. Minorities are highly apprehensive of their uncertain future. Long-time ethnic violence also brings ignominy to Sri Lankan democracy. There is bound to be another calamity if a desirable solution to this unresolved problem is not found.

In retrospect, the feeling of helpless desperation of the minority sooner or later leads to violence. This is what has been happening in Sri Lanka for the past decades. Years of bitter antagonism after independence finally erupted into violent conflict. Hatred and resentment between irreconcilable communities fatefully escalated into an atrocious civil war. Moreover, hostile antagonism thwarts all possibility of benevolent relations among different ethnic groups. In this regard, federalism as the devolution of power should be honored so that the political rights and human dignity of minorities can be safeguarded. Minorites should be protected from a tyranny of the majority. However, the prospect of power-sharing is thwarted by the Sinhalese monopoly of real power. As the majority, they have a minority complex. This is the real problem.

Today, the tyranny of the majority is still prevalent in the Sri Lankan political scene. Majoritarian politics dominates and pluralism is eliminated.[13] It is majoritarianism rather than respect for the law that is in power. To prevent the deplorable situation from worsening, Sri Lankans must make every effort to save their country from another disaster.

Has there been a long history of deep-seated and communal hatred among ethnic communities in Sri Lanka? Surprisingly, the ethnic relations in Sri Lanka before the independence were relatively peaceful except for the eruption of the Buddhist-Muslim riots in 1915 (Tambiah 1996, 36–81). It was not the conflict between Sinhalese Buddhists and Tamil Hindus. Thus, the antagonism between these two ethnic groups is not deep-seated and irreconcilable. However, the surge of Sinhala chauvinism and the monks' involvement in politics after independence has made the knots of ethnic tension complicated to untangle. The minorities have become targeted victims of Sinhala majoritarian politics one after another. This is a dead-end situation. For a hopeful future

in Sri Lanka, the Buddhist majority in Sri Lanka must learn how to live tolerantly with people of different faiths and ethnicities in a democratic yet multiethnic society. Forsaking violence as a means of settling conflict is the basic premise. Reconciliation has to take the place of antagonism and a healthy democracy has to be restored. To be sure, only non-violence can guarantee Sri Lankan people against unrestrained violence. It is the prescription of *Haewon-sangsaeng* that will bring about encouraging prospects of mutual understanding and respect among different ethnic groups in Sri Lanka.

Conclusion

Ethnic conflict is a serious complication of modern civilization especially in a nation-state. It is the assertion of distinct identity and the competition of interests—economic, political, and so forth—that cause tension between different ethnic groups in a multi-ethnic country. The majority often resorts to brutal force to monopolize interests and disregard the principle of fair sharing that the minority deserves. Conflict could lead to violence if a political reconciliation is not brought about. Across the globe, ethnic conflict presents a daunting challenge to leading politicians who face this pressing problem day-to-day.

Admittedly, the non-violence (*ahiṃsā*) advocated by Gandhi should be taken seriously as the basic guideline when dealing with issues related to violence. *Ahiṃsā* has a long history in Indian religious traditions and Gandhi ingeniously changed it into a political persuasion. His intellectual endeavor offers a new insight into political struggle. It is a peaceful yet powerful means to untangle conflict and violence. *Haewon-sangsaeng* as a religio-ethical ideal with the spirit of non-violence surely can be applied to the socio-political realm to resolve conflicts for the welfare of humanity. Ethnic antagonism is one of them. Antagonism creates mutual distrust and hostility and leads to total disruption of society if not carefully curbed and well managed. *Haewon-sangsaeng* calls for reconciliation between the two conflicting ethnic groups so that they can live together without grievance.

Unfortunately, in a modern populist state, hatred is often deliberately incited for political gains. Ethnic identity can be manipulated easily and lead to mobocracy if unchecked. Sri Lanka is a conspicuous example. It is a country that was torn apart by endless ethnic conflict and brutal violence. *Haewon-sangsaeng* is most needed to reconcile each other so that human sufferings can be alleviated. Also, in fighting ethnic politics, the rule of law constitutes a safeguard against government abuse and majoritarian violence. For long-term communitarian well-being, hatred politics has to be discarded and fraternal love should be nurtured in Sri Lanka. The government should make every effort to be conciliatory so that amicable ethnic relations can be cultivated. Otherwise, the conflict will continue and peace will never be achieved and the ethnic minorities will fall into a bottomless abyss of despair. In this regard, ethnic conflict needs the remedy of *Haewon-sangsaeng* not only to heal painful wounds but also to open up

a hopeful future.

Conflict of Interest

Huang Pochi has been on the Editorial Board of *JDTREA* since July 2021 but had no role in the decision to publish this article. No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

Notes

[1] Horowitz (Horowitz, 1985) gives us a comprehensive overview of global ethnic conflicts. Among many informative books on ethnic conflict, *Ethnic Conflict, Critical Concepts in Political Science* (4 vols) as a collection of essays on themes related to ethnic conflict, extensively covers topics like ethnicity, nationalism, self-determination, theory of ethnic conflict, and ethnic conflict management.

[2] For a summary of global ethnic conflict among nation-states after World War II (called by Tambiah and some others as ethnonationalist conflict), cf. Tambiah (2016, 3–19). For a valuable anthropological study of some known cases of global ethnic conflict, see Eller(1999).

[3] Sen's critique of Huntington's clash of civilization is worth quoting: 'There are…distinct difficulties with the theory of civilizational clash. The first, which is perhaps more fundamental, relates to the viability and significance of classifying people according to the civilizations to which they allegedly "belong." This question arises well before problems with the view that people thus classified into cartons of civilizations must be somehow *antagonistic*—the civilizations to which they belong are *hostile* to each other. The relations between different persons in the world can be seen, in this reductionist approach, as relations between the respective civilizations to which they allegedly belong.' (Sen 2007, 40-41, italics mine.) He also points out problems connected with the term "civilization" used by Huntington: 'It is obvious that Huntington's characterization of India as a "Hindu civilization" has many descriptive difficulties. It is also politically combustible. It tends to add some highly deceptive credibility to the extraordinary distortion of history and manipulation of the present realities that Hindu sectarian politicians have tried to champion in trying to promote a "Hindu civilization" view of India. Huntington is indeed frequently quoted by many leaders of the politically active "Hindutva" movement, and this is hardly surprising given the similarity between his seeing India as a "Hindu civilization" and the promotion of a "Hindu view" of India that is so dear to the political gurus of Hindutva.' (Sen 2007, 48)

[4] Peace is very different from a ceasefire or truce in a state of belligerency. It is not a deal of temporality prepared for future conflict. It means the very end of the war. Most importantly, hostilities must be terminated for true peace. In his enlightening and stimulating essay on perpetual peace(*Zum ewigen Frieden*) , Kant sketched out a jurisprudential basis of peace-safeguarding for the international community. He drew up some preliminary articles on peace between states. First of all:

'No conclusion of peace shall be considered valid if it was made with a secret reservation of the material for a future war.'

For if this were the case, it would be a mere truce, a suspension of hostilities, not a *peace.* Peace means an end to all hostilities, and to attach the adjective 'perpetual' to it is already suspiciously close to pleonasm. A conclusion of peace nullifies all existing reasons for a future war, even if these are not yet known to the contracting parties, and no matter how acutely and carefully they may later be pieced together out of old documents. (Kant, 1970: 93–94)

It is well known that Kant's essay greatly influenced modern international law and organizations like the League of Nations or the United Nations. It provides a framework for working out an international forum so that the prospect of lasting world peace can be orchestrated and eventually brought about. Here, securing the peace of nations is the highest priority. Ideally, ending hostilities-either deep-seated animosity or armed conflict-should be the desired goal of a lasting peace.

[5] *tae ṇaṃ samaṇe bhagavaṃ mahāvīre māu-aṇukampaṇāṭṭhāe ṇiccale ṇipphaṃde ṇireyaṇe allīṇa-pllīṇa-gutte yāvi hoṭṭhā.*

[6] *tae ṇaṃ sā tisalā khattiyāṇī taṃ gabbhaṃ eyamāṇaṃ vevamāṇaṃ calamāṇaṃ phaṃdamāṇaṃ jāṇittā haṭṭhu- haṭṭhu jāva hiyayā.*

[7] *tasya bhaṃte paḍikkamāmi niṇdāmi garihāmi appāṇaṃ vosirāmi/ paṭhame bhaṃte mahavvae uvṭṭhiomi savvāo pāṇāivāyāo veramaṇaṃ.*

[8] For an elucidation of correlative cosmology, see Schwartz (1985, 350–382).

[9] The idea of The Great Opening (Gaebyeok) is an intellectual legacy of Donghak (Eastern Learning). However, Kang Jeungsan made important innovations in the idea of the Later World where peace and harmony prevail. For Donghak, Lallander said: 'In trying to make sense of the country's tumultuous situation between the 1870s and 1890, Ch'oe Sihyŏng [the second Donghak leader] embraced the term "creation" (kaebyŏk—gaebyeok)…Like the founder, Ch'oe Sihyŏng also employed the term to describe the beginning of the universe, but he broke from Ch'oe Cheu by expanding the coverage of the term to the present affairs: "This world's fate is the fate of creation [*kaebyŏk*]. Heaven and earth are not at ease. The mountains, streams, flowers, grass, and trees are not at ease…The birds of the air and the beasts of the fields are not at ease. So do only people who wear warm clothes and eat their fill seek the Way with ease? The fate of former creation [*sŏn'gaebyŏk*] and later creation [*hugaebyŏk*] interact and replace each other; therefore, everything fights…'(Kallander 2013, 106) Clearly, the proclamation of the sharp contrast between former creation and later creation by Donghak begins a new era in modern Korean religious history.

[10] For the meanings of cheok, it is explained: "During the Joseon Dynasty, a defendant in civil suits was called 'cheok. (隻)' If party A filed a suit against party B, party B would incur the enmity of the cheok. In this regard, cheok became a term for grudges. In Daesoon Thought, cheok (隻) is written as cheok (慼), which refers to a situation wherein a devotee is aware that someone bears a grievance or grudge against them. 'Cheok (隻)' refers to 'the aggrieved party' in such a situation and the character 'cheok (慼)' originally meant 'sadness.'" (*The Canonical Scripture,* 347) The grudge-harboring spirits (慼神, cheok-shin) as the embodiment of grudge show the correlative response of wronged grievance from heaven.

[11] To be more precise, violence related to ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka should be termed "ethnoreligious violence", as ethnic identity is often intertwined with religious persuasion. Thus, we have Sinhala-Buddhist vis-à-vis Tamil-Hindu.

[12] "Between 2012 and 2015, hundreds of incidents were documented in which Muslims, their homes and their places of worship and business were attacked by Sinhala Buddhists who had mounted a public campaign envisaged as a defense of their country and religious culture." (Holt 2016,1).

[13] DeVotta (2017) gives a very useful account of Majoritarianism in Sri Lankan politics.

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