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# An Application of Conflict Management Based on Buddhist Peaceful Means for the Mon Sangha Community, Myanmar

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## Abstract

This article examines conflict dynamics in the Mon Sangha community in Myanmar, with particular attention to tensions among the Rāmañña Nikāya, Shwegyin Nikāya, and Dhammayuttika Nikāya. Using a qualitative design that combined documentary analysis with in-depth interviews with 13 key informants, the study identifies three interrelated sources of conflict: (1) affective and psychological drivers (e.g., jealousy, envy, pride, and reactive anger); (2) differences in practice and institutional identity that reinforce inter-Nikāya boundaries; and (3) weak coordination mechanisms, including unclear roles and limited shared decision-making. Drawing on Theravāda Buddhist teachings, the article proposes a conflict-management process grounded in Buddhist peaceful means: cultivating mindfulness (*sati*) and loving-kindness meditation (*mettābhāvanā*) to regulate hostility, applying the seven *aparīhāniya-dhamma* as norms for collective deliberation and unity, and strengthening trust through cooperative service based on the *sangahavatthu*. The proposed model translates doctrinal principles into practical routines for dialogue, mutual support, and non-violent speech and conduct, offering a culturally legitimate pathway to Sangha concord and community well-being.

**Keywords:** Conflict Management; Buddhist Peaceful Means; Mon Sangha; Loving-kindness.

## **Introduction**

Conflict is a natural phenomenon of a human being and an occurrence within any society (Juengsatienap, 2550). Mostly the conflict takes different forms, between individuals, personal, school, monastery, monks, country, etc. The development of science is the ear of today. It is the era of industrial and material development. As such advances are made, so do greed, anger, ignorance, and pride in the human continuum. Scientific power, greed, anger, and ignorance; proud power; or physical power and spiritual power compete with each other. Advanced physical facilities cannot satisfy human needs. The world will crunch when thunderous noises and menacing voices prevail. The aspirants had to make sacrifices at the altar of grief and sorrow. Today is stained with human blood, sweat, and tears. It is very weak to use responsible methods to make the world, which is so dirty, clean, peaceful, and clear.

Conflict pervades the organization. Executives, managers, supervisors, and employees all confront conflict over issues ranging from company direction to the distribution of resources to how they relate to one another. Indeed, teamwork is incredibly useful in organizations in large part because it is a vehicle for promoting open discussion of diverse perspectives and integrating them into viable solutions (Tjosvold et al., 2014). The Rāmañña Nikāya, Shwegyin Nikāya, and Dhammayuttika Nikāya are three major sects within Theravada Buddhism, primarily practiced in Myanmar (formerly Burma). While they share common roots and doctrinal principles, conflicts within and between these sects can arise due to various factors: There are three Nikāya associated with the conflict within the Mon Sangha community: Rāmañña Nikāya, Shwegyin Nikāya, and Dhammayuttika Nikāya. Three Sangha communities in the Mon community conflict with one another. The cause of conflict in the Mon Sangha community is that the three Nikāya are not working together. In the Rāmañña Nikāya, Shwegyin Nikāya, and Dhammayuttika Nikāya, there exists strife. When the government prohibited the use of the Mon language, they were forced to take the Pāli exam in Burmese in Myanmar. Together, the three Nikāya of the Mon Sangha community form a single entity. When the government prohibited examinations in the Mon language, the Shwegyin Nikāya and the Dhammayuttika Nikāya held exams in Myanmar.

Anyhow, Buddhist teaching of conflict management is based on loving-kindness. Based on Buddhist notions, loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and contentment (Candy, 2008) are practical methods related to counteracting greed, hatred, and delusions. A positive mental state known as loving-kindness, in which Sangha communities demonstrate unwavering consideration and objective concern for others. It is a highly agapeic form of love that is not clingy. It is also completely objective and devoid of emotion. Even

enemies benefit from loving kindness. When Venerable Devadatta, his own cousin and fellow monk, attached to him, the Buddha responded with loving-kindness (*Mettā*). Being a doormat does come with exercising loving-kindness (*Mettā*): Only compassion can break the cycle of destruction and vengeance.

## **Research Objectives**

1. To study the states of problems and the causes of conflicts in the Mon Sangha community, the concepts and theories of conflict management.
2. To study Buddhist peaceful means and the principle of loving-kindness in Theravāda Buddhism.
3. To present conflict management based on Buddhist peaceful means for the Mon Sangha community, Myanmar.

## **Literature Review**

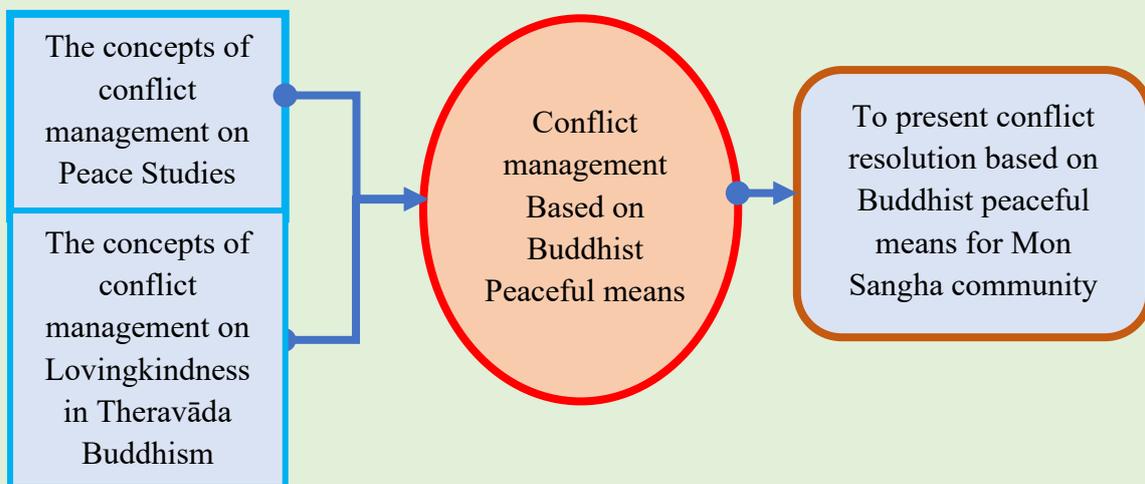
Research on conflict in Theravāda monastic communities suggests that disputes are not only interpersonal but also institutional, shaped by authority structures, legitimacy claims, and the interface between Vinaya norms and state regulation. In Myanmar, analyses of state-backed monastic courts and the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee document recurring tensions around jurisdiction, perceived impartiality, and sectarian boundary-making—dynamics that can erode trust and intensify factionalism (Linn, 2025; Wongyai, 2026). Comparative work in Sri Lanka likewise indicates that monastic disagreements often revolve around doctrinal interpretation, leadership succession, and resource management, and that “peaceful means” are most effective when they are embedded in shared procedures rather than ad hoc mediation (Neminda, 2019). Contemporary Buddhist ethics scholarship also emphasizes nonviolence and right speech as pragmatic disciplines for reducing harm and sustaining communal life (Garfield, 2025).

Within organizational scholarship, conflict can be constructive when parties pursue cooperative goals and use transparent communication and role clarity; such conditions support joint problem solving and durable agreements (Tjosvold, Wong, & Chen, 2014). Conversely, relationship conflict driven by negative affect and attributional bias tends to trigger avoidance, coalition-building, and escalation, especially in high-status communities where face and moral authority are salient.

Contemplative science provides converging evidence for Buddhist-derived practices that cultivate prosocial dispositions directly relevant to monastic harmony. Meta-analytic reviews show that mindfulness and meditation training are associated with increases in empathy, compassion, and prosocial behavior (Donald et al., 2019; Luberto et al., 2018). Loving-kindness (mettā) practice also demonstrates small-to-moderate gains in prosocial outcomes across experimental and field studies (Valor et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2022). Recent trials further report that brief loving-kindness meditation can strengthen interpersonal capacities, including communication and conflict-resolution skills (Liu et al., 2025). Overall, the literature supports an integrative approach in which Vinaya-consistent procedures and cooperative communication structures are paired with systematic cultivation of mindfulness and mettā, an alignment taken up in the discussion section.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual process of the research will be from input, process, and output as follows:



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

### **Research Methodology**

The researcher used a qualitative research methodology, documentary study, and in-depth interviews to conduct a study titled “An Application of Loving-Kindness to Conflict Management in the Mon Sangha Community, Myanmar.” Therefore, the researcher determined the research methodology as follows:

Documentary study: the study and collection of data were conducted in documentary form by studying primary and secondary sources from books, textbooks, articles, research reports, research documents, and information from various websites with content related to this research. Information from in-depth interviews with the target group includes key informants.

In this research, the researcher studied the population data of the main informants who were the majority of the Mon Sangha community resident's In-depth interviews were conducted with 13 Three groups of key informants will be interviewed.

Data collection is this to conduct the process of informal interviews with the Mon Sangha community to answer all questions, give out techniques, propose, and conflict management from the Mon Sangha community, including participant observation of all information that will be collected. To collect data for this research study. Research uses two methods called primary data and secondary data as follows:

Primary data is directly collecting information from the target group of research which consists of 13 in the Mon Sangha community by answering face-to-face and online interviews.

Secondary data is collected from documentaries such as thesis books, academic books, academic articles, newspapers, journals, and websites. These things are used to support information and study.

## **Research Results**

**Objective 1.** In the Mon Sangha community, there are three groups, or Nikāya: Rāmañña Nikāya, Dhammayuttika Nikāya, and Shewgyin Nikāya. Based on in-depth interviews, the problems and causes of conflict in Mon Sangha communities are related to conflicts within those communities. Because there are different communities, views, practices, and pride, envy begins the problems that lead to conflict among them. The research explains the causes of conflict from Western and Buddhist perspectives: relationship conflicts, interest conflicts, structural conflicts, and value conflicts. The causes of conflicts in the Buddhist perspective are greed, hatred, delusion, and craving. The concepts and theory of conflict management in Buddhism emphasize peaceful methods. The researcher finds the internal and external factors for conflict management in the Mon Sangha community. Unity is a true source of happiness. When there is unity among the Sangha, there is peace. On the other hand, it arises from greed, anger, delusion, and pride. Only when they are free from these defilements, greed, anger, and

delusion, can they hope to reduce conflict. It is through collective mindfulness and discipline that we can overcome these challenges and restore harmony within the Mon Sangha community.

**Objective 2.** Based on in-depth interviews and documentary research, the researcher's findings examine the conflict management of Buddhist peace, with a particular focus on Buddhist peace means and the principle of loving-kindness. According to the non-violence (Ahimsa), patience (Khanti), and the four principles of service (Sangahavatthu), scriptural Buddhist peaceful means are applied to conflict management leading to peace. It examines how loving-kindness serves as a core moral and spiritual practice that promotes non-violence, harmony, inner peace, and happiness. The significance of loving-kindness in Theravada Buddhism is that it fosters communal relationships and peace and happiness.

The third objective of this research concerns the present conflict management using Buddhist peaceful means for the Mon Sangha community. The approach is structured around three key stages designed to promote harmony, mutual respect, and effective collaboration among the Mon Sangha community. The first step emphasizes the importance of individual development and community, specifically encouraging each Mon Sangha to cultivate mindfulness (sati) and loving-kindness meditation (mettābhāvanā), laying the groundwork for greater self-awareness, emotional regulation, and compassion in interpersonal interactions. By practicing mindfulness, Mon Sangha can become more attentive to their own thoughts and reactions, while loving-kindness meditation nurtures goodwill towards others. Together, these practices help to establish a foundation of inner and empathy, which is essential for resolving disputes and managing conflict constructively.

The second step involves creating a community for structured dialogue among the various Nikāya, or communities, that exist within the larger community. These discussions are to be conducted under the guidance of the Aparihāniya Dhamma, a set of principles aimed at promoting unity and preventing decline within the Mon Sangha community. By adhering to these guidelines, the dialogue process becomes more inclusive, respectful, and solution-oriented. Regular engagement in open and honest communication enables Mon Sangha to address disagreements, clarify misunderstandings, and

seek common ground, thereby reducing the likelihood that conflicts will escalate or persist over time.

The last step of the model focuses on the Mon Sangha community bonds through collective action. This aspect is achieved through the Mon Sangha community and by participating in joint community service initiatives known as *atthacariya*. These collaborative projects give Mon Sangha members from different backgrounds the opportunity to work side by side toward shared objectives, such as charitable activities and environmental work. Through joint service, participants can develop a deeper sense of solidarity and trust, as well as a shared commitment to the Mon Sangha community's well-being. These experiences not only help to break down barriers but also reinforce a culture of cooperation and mutual support.

Therefore, this research's summary comprises three parts. The first objective is to understand the nature of the problems and the causes of conflict within the Mon Sangha community in Myanmar. The second objective conflict management of Buddhist peaceful means and the principle of loving-kindness related to the Mon Sangha community. The third objective concerns Buddhist peaceful means, which offer not merely techniques for managing conflict but a complete paradigm for creating and maintaining harmony within the Mon Sangha community. In any kind of conflict management or creating peace and harmony, loving-kindness is well known not only for this. But the four principles of service (*sangahavatthu*), non-violence, patience, the seven *Aparihāya dhamma*, the four *Brahma Vihāra*, loving-kindness meditation, and mindfulness as well.

## **Discussions**

This research is based on in-depth interviews conducted with the Mon Sangha community, the *Rāmañña Nikāya*, the *Dhammayuttika Nikāya*, and the *Shwegyin Nikāya* in Myanmar. reveals that most of the Mon Sangha communities related conflicts from issues such as pride, differences in views, and divergent interests. Disagreements and conflicts naturally arise within any group, including religious communities like the Mon Sangha in Myanmar. Nonetheless, Buddhist teachings, which focus on loving-kindness, non-violence, and living in harmony, provide effective tools for addressing and resolving such conflicts peacefully. By practically applying these Buddhist values, the Mon Sangha can strengthen unity within their community and foster positive interactions with the wider society.

Buddhist peaceful means, especially loving-kindness, are pivotal in establishing harmony and managing conflict within the Mon Sangha communities. Loving-kindness involves genuinely wishing for the well-being and happiness of every living being (Chanmyay Myaing Sayadaw, 2008). This quality benefits all. The nature of loving-kindness is often likened to the deep, unconditional love a mother has for her child (Ácariya Buddharakkhita, 2013). In Abhidhamma studies, as noted by Bhikkhu Bodhi (2006), loving-kindness (*mettā*) is described as *adosa*, which means non-hatred. This quality is presented as the direct opposite of anger or ill-will (*dosa*). Loving-kindness is considered the foremost of the four “sublime abidings” or *brahmavihāras* in Buddhist teachings. The other three qualities that accompany *mettā* in this group are compassion (*karunā*), which involves empathy for others’ suffering; appreciative joy (*muditā*), which is delight in others’ happiness; and equanimity (*upekkhā*), which embodies a balanced and impartial state of mind.

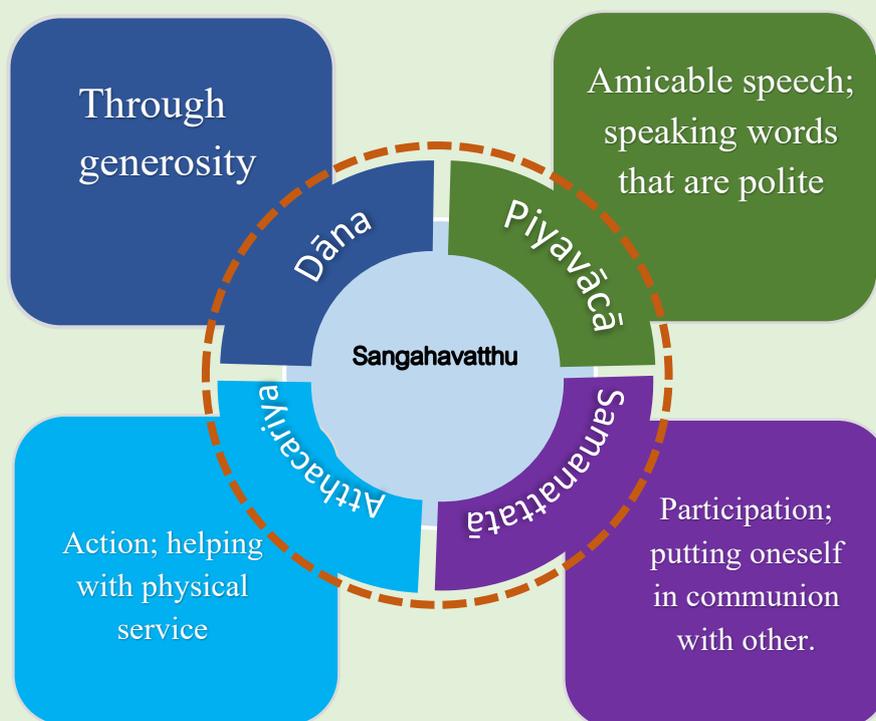
The study of conflict management by Buddhist peaceful means for the Mon Sangha community. Non-violence means more than just refraining from physical force; it also involves rejecting all forms of harm, including verbal, mental, and emotional violence (Suman Barua, 2023). In the Buddha's teaching, the Pāli Canon, non-violence, or *Ahimsa*, is the first precept: to undertake the precept to abstain from killing and harming living beings. Non-violence also extends to speech and thought, building the best way of living that avoids anger, hatred, and divisive language. Therefore, non-violence is powerful in conflict management and the resolution of conflicts among the Mon Sangha community. Non-violence in Buddhist teachings is not just the absence of harm, but the active development of compassion, understanding, and peace, which the Buddha's teachings encourage people to live morally and mindfully, abstaining from hurting others through their words, deeds, and thoughts.

In summary, this study enhances our understanding of conflict management by blending Buddhist teachings with modern approaches. This integration provides a strong foundation for promoting loving-kindness and addressing today’s social challenges. By advocating for conflict management grounded in Buddhist principles of peace, the research contributes to the building of resilient, harmonious communities inspired by Buddhist wisdom.

## Knowledge from Research

The researcher has presented a conflict management approach based on Buddhist Peaceful Means for the Mon Sangha community in Myanmar. The process of creating conflict management involves realizing peace, practicing threefold: bodily loving-kindness through the body, loving-kindness through the speech, and loving-kindness through the mind, and applying essential Buddhist principles such as non-violence, tolerance, loving-kindness meditation, and mindfulness as well. Moreover, Buddhist teachings promote peace by cultivating loving-kindness (metta), compassion (karuna), sympathetic joy (mudita), and equanimity (upekkha).

As a result, the four principles of service (sanghavatthu) serve as the foundation of conflict management for Mon Sangha community integrating Dāna through generosity, Piyavācā amicable speech; speaking words that are polite, pleasant to the ear, and helpful, that point the way to benefit, Atthacariya: helpful action; helping with physical service, making an effort to lend a hand to others in their activities, and Samanattatā: participation; putting oneself in communion with other.



**Figure.3:** The four principles of service (sanghavatthu)

## **Conclusion**

This qualitative study combined documentary analysis with in-depth interviews with 13 key informants (monastics and lay supporters) to examine the causes of conflict within the Mon Sangha community in Myanmar and to develop a conflict-management approach grounded in Buddhist peaceful means. The findings indicate that jealousy, envy, pride, and reactive anger—together with institutional boundaries among the Rāmañña, Shwegyin, and Dhammayuttika Nikāya and limited shared coordination—contribute to mistrust and recurring tensions. To address these dynamics, the study proposes an applied model centered on mindfulness (sati) and loving-kindness meditation (mettābhāvanā), non-violent speech and conduct, and cooperative service structured by the seven aparihāniya-dhamma and the sangahavatthu. Embedding these practices in inter-Nikāya routines offers a practical pathway to strengthen Sangha concord and support social harmony in the wider Mon community.

## **Suggestions**

Future research and development work could extend this study in at least three directions:

- 1) Compare mettā-based conflict management with selected non-Buddhist theories and practices of conflict resolution in comparable communal settings.
- 2) Design and evaluate practical communication and dialogue interventions rooted in Buddhist teachings (e.g., right speech and shared deliberation norms) to strengthen cooperation among the Mon Nikāya.
- 3) Develop and assess peacebuilding programs that link Sangha unity with broader community well-being and social cohesion among Mon communities.

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