



# Building Sustainable Peace as depicted in Kutadanta Sutta

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## Abstract

Human history has recorded the suffering of all sentient beings in wars. Therefore, Peace is the burning desire of mankind, the virtue of civilization. Buddhism is a religion of peace. In many Buddhist scriptures, the Buddha pointed the path that leads us to true Peace, true Happiness. In Kutadanta Sutta, The Buddha guided how to build sustainable peace, from inner peace to external peace, and finally absolute peace, Nibbana.

From Kutadanta Sutta, we can find ways to transform human suffering in the present world. People are in need of a spiritual path, that teaching nonviolence, satisfaction, compassion, generosity, and peace of mind.

This article suggests useful practical techniques to soothe anger, control desire and create a harmonious relationship. Buddhism teaches us to nurture peace in the heart and work to relieve the suffering of all people. Peace at the national as well as the global level is only possible if we apply Buddhism to everyday life.

**Keywords:** Sustainable Peace, External Peace, Absolute Peace, Nibbana, Kutadanta Sutta.

## Introduction

In the Kutadanta Sutta, the fifth Sutta in the Digha Nikaya , the Buddha taught a method of building a sustainable peace for self and for society. Through the question of the famous Brahmin Kutadanta about a sacrificial ceremony for peace, The Lord cleverly led the Brahmin to the path of ultimate peace. The Kutadanta Sutta describes the way to establish peace in the soul, establishing a peaceful and happy society. Besides, the Buddha also taught the noble virtues of the leader needed to bring peace to everyone in the community, in the world.

Sustainable peace is built by the method of practicing the three Dhammas: Dana (generosity) Sila (morality), and Bhavana (meditation).

From the study of the method of building sustainable peace according to the Kutadanta Sutta, the writer will present the specific meditation methods applied in daily life based on mindful meditation and the suggestion of a peaceful community model. With this model, we can apply it to other social organizations in order to create a sustainable peace for all.

## An overview of Kutadanta Sutta

During the Buddha time, many kinds of sacrifices were practiced by Brahmans who were the priests of the Vedic religion professed by the upper castes. The sacrifices caused intense suffering of the murdered, sacrificial animals, whose blood and tears flowed. Such sacrifices were a long tradition of Hindus, recorded in their scriptures, and made in the blind belief that offering such things to the gods would make them happy. The Buddha repeatedly preached that blood sacrifice is meaningless, fanatical. He opened the right view to transforming a social prejudice, an ancient and ruthless practice, to one of understanding and compassion. Kutadanta Sutta has the same context:

The Blessed One once, when going on a tour through Magadha, with a great multitude of the brethren, with about five hundred brethren, came to a Brahman village in Magadha called Khanumata. And there at Khanumata, he lodged in the Ambalaththika pleasaunce.

Now at that time, The Brahman Kutadanta was dwelling at Kanumata, a place teeming with life, with much grassland and woodland and water and corn, on a royal domain presented him by Seniya Bimbisara the king of Magadha, as a royal gift, with power over it as if he were the king. And just then a great sacrifice was being got ready on behalf of Kutadanta The Brahman. And seven hundred bulls, and seven hundred steers, and seven

hundred heifers, and seven hundred goats, and seven hundred rams had been brought to the post for the sacrifice.<sup>1</sup>

Kutadanta, a respected Brahman, heard that the Buddha was in Ambalathika's garden, and he wanted to visit the Buddha and asked for advice on "success in performing a sacrifice in its three modes and with its accessory articles of furniture of sixteen kinds"

The Buddha answered to tell him a wonderful legend of a King Wide-realm, and of the sacrifice, he offered - truly the most extraordinary sacrifice imaginable. All its marvelous details, each one settled, be it noted, on the advice of a Brahman, are described with a deliberate extravagance none the less delicious because of the evident earnestness of the moral to be inferred.

The Brahman of our Sutta wants to know the three modes in which the ritual is to be performed. The three 'modes' are declared in the legend to be simply three conditions of mind, or rather one condition of mind at three different times, the harboring of no regret, either before or during or after the sacrifice, at the expenditure involved. And the material accessories required, the altar-furniture, the priest's outfit, what is that? It is the hearty co-operation with the king of four divisions of his people, the nobles, the officials, The Brahmans, and the householders. That makes four articles of furniture. And eight personal qualifications of the king himself, which makes other eight. And four personal qualifications of his advising Brahman make up the total of the sixteen articles required. No living thing, either animal or vegetable, is injured. All the labor is voluntary. And all the world co-operates in adding its share to the largesse of food, on strict vegetarian principles, in which, alone, the sacrifice consists. It is offered on behalf, not only of the king himself, but of all the good. And the king desires to propitiate, not any god, but living men. And the muttering of mystic verses over each article used and over mangled and bleeding bodies of unhappy victims, verses on which all the magic efficacy of a sacrifice had been supposed to depend, is quietly ignored.<sup>2</sup>

With Kutadanta's intelligence, after hearing the Buddha describe the unthinkable sacrifice of his past life, Brahman felt this was too complex and wanted to find more accessible and effective sacrifices. The Awakened One put his sacrifice at the very bottom of a long list of sacrifices, each better than the other, and leading up to the highest of all, which is the attainment of Arahatship.

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<sup>1</sup> **D I 127**, T.W Rhys Davids (Tr.), **Dialogues of the Buddha**, Vol. I, (New Delhi: PTS, 2016), p. 173.

<sup>2</sup> T.M Ruys Davids, **Dialogues of the Buddha**, Vol. I, Introduction to Kutadanta Sutta Op.cit., p. 164.

## The meaning of Peace in the Kutadanta Sutta

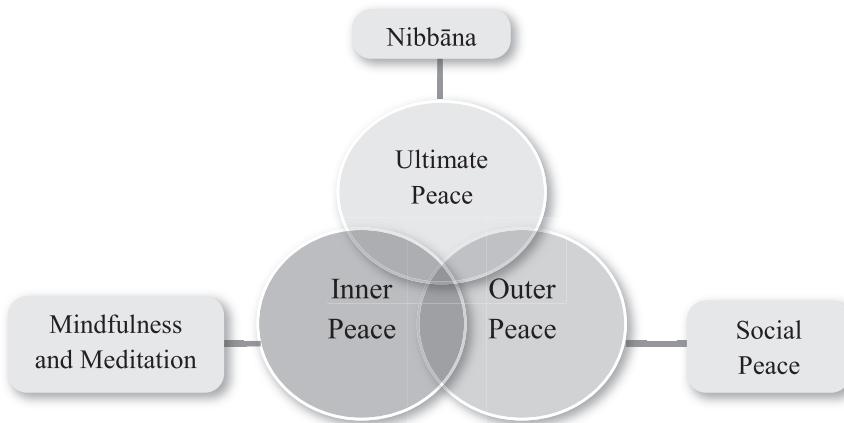
According to the Kutadanta, peace should not be sought through sacrifices. The sacrifices of blood and tears, injury of the innocent, polluting the environment, wasting a lot of money, to pray for peace is the wrong way. The Buddha rejected such sacrifices. Instead, He gave his advice for a peaceful, harmonious society to some of his followers who were kings and rulers at the time, in the form of guidance for governing which would bring about a peaceful society. The Buddha stated there is no happiness without peace. “In the Kutadanta Sutta, the Buddha suggested economic development instead of force to reduce crime. The government should use the country’s resources to improve the economic conditions of the country. It could embark on agricultural and rural development, provide financial support to entrepreneurs and business, and provide adequate wages for workers to maintain a decent life with human dignity.”<sup>3</sup>

The above path to peace is a path of non-violent social development, building an external peace. On the other hand, the Buddha advises obtaining inner peace through the practice of generosity, taking refuge in the Three Jewels, practicing five precepts and developing meditation. These pieces of training are targeted at developing compassion, love, patience, generosity, forgiveness; as well as more far-reaching goals, such as effortless, sustained, single-pointed concentration, single-pointed analysis, and an indestructible sense of well-being while engaging in any and all of life’s activities. And finally, in this way, one may attain Nibbāna, the state of ultimate peace.

In the Kutadanta, the Buddha clearly pointed the way to building sustainable peace, including internal, external, and ultimate peace.

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<sup>3</sup>Dr.K. Sri. Dhammanada, **What Buddhists believe**, Op.Cit., p. 315.



**Diagram 1: The meaning of Peace in the Kutadanta Sutta**

### **The Buddhist Revolution to Non-violence - from Blood to Bloodless Sacrifice**

The Buddha is the revolutionary of all times. He refuses unnecessary sacrifice, not the right time, While there are those who are suffering and need money for their livelihood, it is not the right time for others to waste money on sacrifices.

Instead of spending on peaceful sacrifices, they should use that money to help people invest in economic and social development, which are essential elements in bringing peace and happiness to society.

### **The benefit of Buddhist Sacrifice**

After hearing the Buddha explain a sacrifice with its three modes and accessories of sixteen kinds, several Brahmins present gave praise: "How glorious the sacrifice, how pure its accomplishment!". But Kutadanta sat there in silence. He knew that a pure sacrifice was complex. In his wisdom, he deeply understood the teachings of the Buddha, but he wanted to understand more about the sacrifices of Buddhism.

Buddha emphasized that practicing generosity, observing the five precepts, practicing meditation, brings more joy and benefit than any sacrifice. These are Buddhist sacrifices.

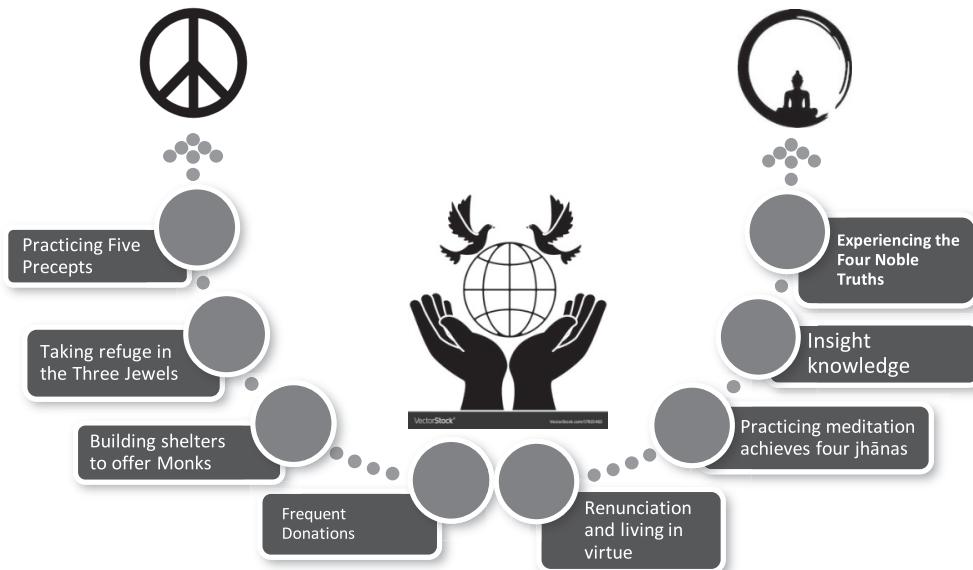
1. Frequent Donations
2. Building Shelters to Offer Monks
3. Taking Refuge in the Triple Gem
4. Practicing Five Precepts

The first four practices that the Buddha taught Kutadanta, to frequently donate, to build shelters to offer monks, to take refuge in Three Jewels, practice the Five Precepts, to create happiness for the lay-person, and to build a harmonious family. From this foundation, a peaceful and prosperous nation can be established. This is the way to build mundane, sustainable peace.

The Buddha then showed Kutadanta how to build a supramundane peace through a monastic and virtuous life with four steps:

1. Renunciation and Living in Virtue
2. Practicing meditation achieves four jhānas
3. Insight-knowledge
4. Experiencing the Four Noble Truths (Supernormal Knowledge)

In this sutta, the Buddha guided the methods of establishing inner peace step by step. This is the path to ultimate peace.



**Diagram 6: The ways leading to mundane and supramundane Peace**

## Building Sustainable Peace in Modern Society Based on the **Kutadanta Sutta**

### *a. Dana (Frequent Donations)*

The “*Paramattha Dīpanī*”, or the Commentary to the “Basket of Conduct” (*Cariyāpiṭaka*, of the *Kuddhaka Nikāya*), explains the three kinds of dāna as being generosity in the giving of material things (*āmisadāna*), the giving of fearlessness (*abhayadāna*), and the giving of Dhamma (*dhammadāna*) . These play an important part in our daily social roles. Giving materially and giving of Dhamma are essential nowadays because they provide immeasurable benefits (*apparinana*) for society.

### *b. Sila (Observing Five Precepts)*

In society, sila can also play an important role. Abstaining from deeds that harm others, as well as giving protection from danger, contributes to harmonious and peaceful coexistence among community members and consequently helps to promote social growth and development. In a society where morality prevails and members are conscious of their roles, there will be general security, mutual trust, and close cooperation, which in turn lead to greater progress and prosperity. Without morality, there will be corruption and disturbance, and all members of societies are adversely affected. Most of the problems that society experiences today are connected either directly or indirectly with a lack of morality.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, five precepts (five mindfulness training) are the principle ethics in building sustainable peace for individuals and for society.

### *c. Bhavana (Mental Development) - Mindfulness Meditation*

In Buddhism, there is not only one goal. Besides the goal of happiness and welfare, there is also the goal of freedom. If one wants to attain the goal of freedom, the only way that can be achieved is through wisdom. And in order to achieve wisdom, one has to purify the mind, develop the mind through meditation. Even for the practice of good conduct, for the observance of moral rules, mental development is necessary. Why? Because it is relatively easy to follow the rules of good conduct when things are going well. If we have a good job, if we live in a stable society, if we earn sufficiently to support ourselves and our families, it is relatively easy to observe the precepts. But when we find ourselves in circumstances of stress, of instability, as for instance when we lose our job, when we find ourselves in a situation where lawlessness prevails, this is the point at which the observance of good conduct comes

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<sup>4</sup>Nina van Gorkom, **The Perfections Leading to Enlightenment**, (London: 2007), p. 15.

under attack. In this kind of circumstance, the only thing that can safeguard our practice of good conduct is mental development, strengthening of the mind, and attaining control over the mind. In that way, mental development, on the one hand, serves as a safeguard of our practice and on the other hand, it serves to prepare the mind to see things as they really are, to prepare the mind to attain wisdom which will open the door to freedom, to enlightenment. Mental development, therefore, has an extremely important role in the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path.<sup>5</sup> The method of mental development is the four foundations of mindfulness (*Satipatthana Sutta*).<sup>6</sup> The Buddha offers four objects for our mindfulness practice: our body, our feelings, our mind, and the objects of our mind:

- 1) *The first foundation is “mindfulness of the body in the body”.*
- 2) *The second foundation is “mindfulness of the feelings in the feelings”.*
- 3) *The third foundation is mindfulness of the mind (citta) in the mind.*
- 4) *The fourth foundation is mindfulness of phenomena (dhammas) in phenomena (dhammas).*

## Building Peaceful Communities

### *a. Building Sustainable Peace in Sangha*

A sangha is a community of people - monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen - who walk together on a spiritual path. A Sangha has a great deal of strength; its members are able to protect each other, to help each other in every aspect of the practice, and to build the strength of the Sangha. We can take refuge in the Sangha in order to succeed in our practice.<sup>7</sup>

To build a Sangha, we need to have the skill and know the art of Sangha building. We have to experience life in the Sangha, which means interacting with members of the Sangha whether that interaction is pleasant or unpleasant. This will give us enough understanding of how members of the Sangha can live together in harmony. In the Sangha, we live with people who can be very kind, peaceful, and joyful. At the same time, we might also live

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<sup>5</sup>Buddhanet, **Mental Development**, retrieved on 18 December 2018 <http://www.buddhanet.net/fundbud7.htm>.

<sup>6</sup>**M I 56ff**, Bhikkhu Bodhi and Bhikkhu Nanamoli (Tr.), **The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha**, (Sri Lanka : Wisdom Publications, 1995, p. 145.

<sup>7</sup>Thich Nhat Hanh, **Joyfully Together, the Art of Building a Harmonious Community**, Op.cit, p. 7.

with people who have difficulties that make them harsh and inclined to discriminate and judge. We should recognize that it is not only others who have this kind of unwholesome habit energy. We too have these seeds. If we do not practice mindfulness, then we cannot transform our habit energies to help build a happy Sangha. When we make our brothers and sisters happy, then we are nourishing our own capacity to build the Sangha.<sup>8</sup>

### **The levels of peace in a Sangha**

Building Sangha is also based on three principles: Dana- Sila- Bhavana. These three levels correspond to different levels of peace.

For monks, Dana is mainly: giving dharma, guiding and encouraging people to practice good ways. They contribute their strength and talent to serve Sangha. There are many people living in the Sangha at Dana level. They still create peace, but this peace is limited. This is a typical model whereby temples lean towards social work and supporting charitable organizations. Most of the time is invested in social service. If a Sangha stops at this level, peace is not sustainable.

The second level is Sila, when a Sangha practices these precepts seriously, the level of peace is raised higher.

The third level is Bhavana, samadhi meditation, and vipassana meditation. At this level, the spiritual life is enhanced, and the members of Sangha will have inner peace and be happy. However, the number of people who have experienced this meditation is very small. So in a peaceful Sangha, there are always three levels, those who want to practice Dana, that help their practice to bring compassion and wisdom. Those who practice the Sila and meditation should create the conditions that allow them to share their practical experience, so they can practice giving of Dhamma.

A peaceful Sangha must practice mindfulness. When we have mindfulness, we know what level we are at, and what we should do and should not do, always balancing the three levels of the Sangha. Mindfulness is the foundation of happiness and peace.

### **A United Sangha for World Peace**

Today we live in a globalized world; we are global citizens and we have to learn to live peacefully, in harmony with different cultures. Age-old trends have opened a new

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid, p.11.

vision for Buddhism. 2,600 years ago, Buddhism developed and integrated with cultures around the world to create a Buddhist tree with three main branches: Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. Each tradition has its differences, but the essence of the Dhamma is no different. In this era of globalization, Buddhism is no longer small, isolated Sangha models. Buddhist traditions -Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana- come together, share and listen to each other for a common voice. Therefore, a United Buddhist Sangha must be born to match the development of the times.

**A United Sangha will have missions:**

- Unite the community of Buddhist monks and nuns from different Buddhist traditions, so that together we create the strong spiritual synergy needed to bring World Peace.
- Encourage all people to cultivate compassion and wisdom by engaging in activities beneficial to the community and the cultivation of inner peace.

***b. Building Peace in the Family***

Buddhism recognizes the family as a unit of society and nation. Thus to the ordinary house-holder, whose highest aim consists in gaining material satisfaction here and going to heaven hereafter, Buddhism provides a simple code of morality- as contained in the Sigalovada Sutta<sup>9</sup>- the practice of which will strengthen the solidarity of a community. It maintains the right relations between its family members, employers, and employees.

**Mindful Breathing: the Breathing Room**

Every family should have a peaceful space or breathing room, where any member can take refuge. A breathing room does not need to be large. It can even be part of another room. It can be a closet that you have emptied and cleaned and that has room to sit comfortably and breathe. We simply need a place to go when we do not feel solid and peaceful. In this room, you might have flowers, a few cushions, and a small bell. Invite your children to help set up the room, and show them how to use it. When you or your partner is angry or unstable, the room is there for you; you can go there right away to restore yourself. When someone takes refuge in this room, everyone else should respect his or her need for peace and quiet.

You can make the breathing room part of your daily life, not just a place of refuge during an emotional storm. Each morning, before leaving home, all of the members in your

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<sup>9</sup>**D III 180**, Bhikkhu Bodhi (Tr.), Op.Cit., p. 460.

family can share a few minutes of mindful breathing. You can make it a habit: instead of just wishing each other a good day, you actually make it so, by starting your day this way. Walk quietly together into the room, sound the bell three times, and come back to yourselves. With this practice, the day always begins well.

### **Deep Listening and Loving Speech in the Family**

We all have wounds inside our hearts, and we all need someone who can listen mindfully to understand our suffering. Children especially need to be listened to and understood. You have to inquire into both their well-being and their difficulties. Respect their hurt and vulnerabilities. As a parent, you are the first teacher and doctor for your child, always seeking to alleviate their suffering. You do not have to be a Buddhist to practice this way. Everyone can practice being present and listening deeply.

When you practice listening, you can sit with each other and speak from your experience. Share with your family how deep listening and loving speech have helped you in your daily life and how the Five Mindfulness Trainings helps you. We can also learn a lot from thoughtful exchanges with other families and friends: how to prevent violence from entering our minds and hearts, how to keep it from taking root and growing, how to transform arrows into flowers. Learning from others' experience spreads the influence of nonviolence.<sup>10</sup>

### **Family Meals in Mindfulness**

One of the best practices for creating peace in the family is sharing a meal together mindfully. Eating a meal together, we cultivate more harmony and love as a family. Someone in the family can recite the contemplations before eating. We use our talent and our creativity to make it pleasant for everyone. Practice silent meditation, breathing in and out three times. Look at one another, recognize each other's presence, and eat silently for the first two minutes.

### ***c. Building Peace in School***

A good educational environment is an essential condition for building sustainable peace. The school is not only a place to receive knowledge but also a place to learn ethical conduct, life skills, and fully develop the intellect and character of the students. Therefore, the application of mindfulness into schools brings practical benefits

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<sup>10</sup>Thich Nhat Hanh, **Creating True Peace**, Op.Cit., pp. 149-150.

Mindfulness helps students to recognize worry, manage difficulties and cope with exams, whilst developing a more mindful awareness also helps children and young people to appreciate what is going well and to flourish. It trains us to understand and direct our attention with greater awareness and skill. This may improve the capacity of children to concentrate and be less distracted, as well as improving their working memory and ability to plan.

### **Belly Breathing**

When a feeling of sadness, despair, or anger arises, we should stop what we are doing in order to take care of that feeling. You may like to sit or lie down and begin to practice mindful breathing. The daily practice of breathing can be very helpful. Strong emotion is like a storm and when a storm is about to arrive, we should prepare so that we can cope with it. We should not dwell on the level of our thinking but bring all our attention down to the level of our abdomen. We may practice mindful breathing and become aware of the rise and fall of our abdomen. Breathing in, rising; breathing out, falling. Rising, falling. We stop all thinking because it can make the emotion stronger.

### **The Classroom as a Family**

In the classroom, there should be time for the teacher to listen to the suffering and difficulties of the students. That will bring them relief, allowing them to be able to learn and receive what we want to transmit. Students should also have the opportunity to learn about the suffering and difficulties of the teacher. Teachers can share their suffering, their deep aspirations. A teacher or a senior student can play the role of a coordinator in order for dialogue and sharing to be possible. In that way, we transform the classroom into a kind of sangha, a community, a family. The teacher and students may organize sessions where they can play together, enjoy music, walk and breathe together, or eat together. In this way, we become a family<sup>11</sup>.

### **Waterfall Relaxation Meditation<sup>12</sup>**

You can read the following text slowly to help children learn to relax before meditation:

A beautiful waterfall of white light is flowing down on you. It flows down on your head, helping your head to relax. You feel your head relaxing. The waterfall of light moves

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<sup>11</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, **Planting seeds – Practicing Mindfulness with Children**, Op.Cit, p. 185.

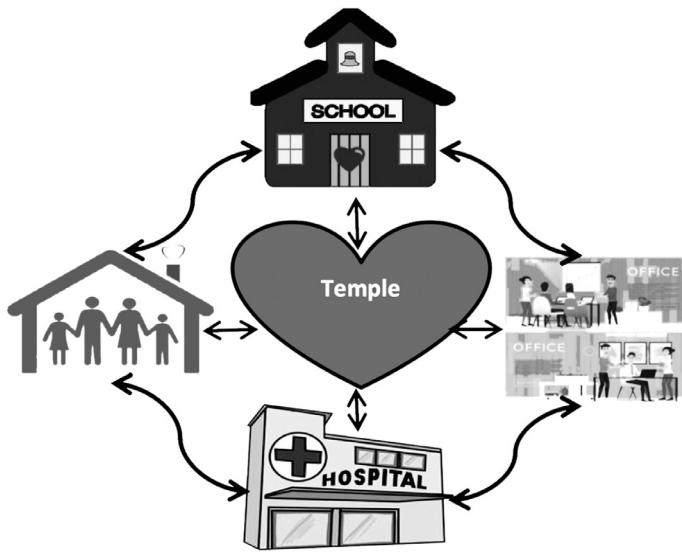
<sup>12</sup> Buddhist Studies, **Water Meditation**, retrieved on 5 January 2019, <https://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhism/meditate/water.htm>.

down over your neck and shoulders. Your neck and shoulders are relaxing and letting go of all the tension and stress they carry. Now it flows down over your arms. You feel your arms releasing, there is nothing for your arms to do. It flows down your back. Your back is letting go and relaxing. It flows over your chest and stomach, helping your chest and stomach release. You can feel your chest and stomach relax, letting go of anger, hurt and sadness. It moves down over your legs and feet. You feel your legs and feet letting go and resting. The beautiful waterfall of white light is flowing over your whole body. You are very peaceful and rested. Just stay in the waterfall of light for a few moments, and feel how it relaxes and heals your body.

#### *d. A Model of a Sustainable Peaceful Village.*

In order to create a sustainable peaceful life, we need to build a good, healthy environment for everyone in it to live happily. Peace must start from the mind of every human being, from which we will create peaceful and happy homes. It is not enough to build sustainable peace at the family level, so we must establish a peaceful environment for those families to nurture and develop good seeds in them, such as compassion, tolerance, understanding, loving-kindness. Therefore, building a happy village is a necessary condition:

- *Stable economy:* There are business establishments built on SEP, economic development that not destroy nature, minimizing environmental pollution, establishing a green, clean and beautiful environment.
- *Good education:* There are schools that teach both social knowledge and guide applied ethics (mindful schools) for children to become good citizens.
- *Good health:* There are hospitals and clinics to take care of the health of villagers.
- *Developing a spiritual life:* There is a meditation center to guide and nurture Dana-Sila-Bhavana for everyone. A place to recreate mindfulness energy for all members of the village and for every family, and for all economic, educational and health organizations. It is the heart, the soul of the village, that pumps mindful energy to every cell, every organ, in order to feed a sustainable peace.



**Diagram 4: A Model of Sustainable Peaceful Village**

## Conclusion

According to the Kutadanta Sutta, a peaceful society must develop both in terms of material development and spiritual development. Regarding material development, apply the Dharma to the fields of economy, politic, and society. Regarding spiritual development, base it on three basic principles: Dana-Sila-Bhavana, that are drawn from the teachings of the Buddha, especially Kutadanta Sutta.

From that general orientation, the researcher has provided specific application exercises to build sustainable peace for monastic Sangha, family, and school. Finally, connect these social factors together into a sustainable peaceful village model.

A sustainable peaceful society must start from within every person, every family, every village. The specific culture of the village is Mindfulness culture. If the model of the sustainable peace village develops widely in different localities, the country becomes happy and prosperous, and the world will be peaceful.

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