

## **Title**

Reflections on Human Rights and Buddhism: when an allegory becomes an oxymoron. Inattentional Blindness or Misrepresentation?

## **Abstract**

In this lecture I will propose possible connections between the modern concept of Human Rights and the idea of justice and social harmony as they appear in specific suttas of the Pali canon.

I will not only carefully examine the secondary source on this subject, but I will mainly analyze the ideas expressed in few selected discourses of the Buddha, which are largely dealing with social issues, and then I will try to understand if some of these concepts could be helpful in understanding the modern idea of “human dignity”, as it is expressed not only in Western societies but also in several South and Southeast Asian official documents and constitutions.

Concerning the meaning of the word “dignity” as used in the official documents I analysed, there are objective difficulties to clearly define it. This led me to analyse the explanation of this term offered by survivors of genocides, concentration camps, and so on. One of the best depiction of the methods and the aims of the “dehumanization” that was carried on in those anguishing places is contained in the cogent writings of Primo Levi. I will be focusing on his vivid description of the concept of “human dignity” and I will compare it with some passages of the Pali canon.