

**PACIFISM 3.** When pacifism is criticised it is generally in view of a conflict that is at the stage of a shooting war. The argument invariably is: 'Pacifism is treason - we must support our soldiers, we must defend our nation and our freedom, our way of life.' \* However, this line of reasoning is flawed - instead of being against pacifism, it is an argument against past, wrong policies and choices. It is the decision to go to war that imperils our soldiers, nation, freedom, way of life - once the shooting starts, all are in strife. Let me use an analogy: In the distance there is a fierce wildfire. The wind changes, the blaze comes your way. All the firefighters can do is contain the fire and protect the neighbouring houses; your own house - encroached on by dried shrubs - is destroyed. One minute you are at peace - next all is lost. Clearly, once the fire was at your house, little could be done. Any protective measures (clearing of dry shrubs) only had a chance of preventing your loss, had they been implemented well before the fire reached you. It is the same with war and pacifism: Once we are at war, the damage is done. Pacifism is an investment in our future: To affect a present war, pacifism had to have been applied in the past - but applied now, pacifism will prevent future wars.

*The principle with fires and wars is the same:  
They are best prevented - not contained.*

*What does it mean to apply pacifism now? We must alleviate poverty around the world, all people must be given equal opportunities, democracy must be encouraged - importantly, using peaceful means, rather than force - freedom and autonomy must be granted to all ethnic groups. This largely is the reason we have terrorism and wars: Countries with superior economies and firepower suppress others. Their post-colonial policies reflect their leaders' capacity for denial when it comes to making themselves aware of the Confucian rule of Mutual Reciprocal Respect:*

*'If you want freedom and prosperity for your people, give other people freedom and prosperity' - i.e. politicians ignore the Golden Rule: 'Do to others as you want done to yourself.' Furthermore, policy-makers do not comprehend or admit that it is not only their counterparts who make mistakes - they deny their own propensity for wrong decisions that need reviewing. Pacifism will prevent wars and bring about peace by providing equality, prosperity and self-determination to all the world's people - once the mind-set of leaders is imbued with compassion and understanding.*

*see also CONFUCIANISM  
and THE RUSSELL / EINSTEIN PEACE MANIFESTO*

*\* Sam Harris says in his book The End of Faith in the chapter The False Choice of Pacifism, "pacifism is generally considered a morally unassailable position with respect to violence. The worst that is said of it, generally, is that it is a difficult position to maintain in practice. It is almost never branded as flagrantly immoral, which I believe it is ... it should be enough to note that a single sociopath could exterminate a city full of pacifists."*

*How bleak a view, and what nonsense; but his argument is akin to the above notion that pacifism is treason, a cop-out and cowardice. In the sample he cites he has the choice to help a woman about to be raped by interfering bravely - and taking the chance to be beaten up and injured - or using his (cowardly) wits to divert the attackers and save the woman that way. His is a profound misreading of the principles of pacifism, as I present them in these pages.*

*see also PACIFISTS*