

Commemorative Address

When a tree falls, it makes a thunderous sound. But who listens to trees as they grow?

In the same way, we are bombarded by news of war, environmental destruction, market exploitation, income inequality, and most profoundly the recent earthquakes, tsunami, and ongoing nuclear disaster in Japan. When we hear news about actions for peace, freedom, and justice, we somehow feel threatened by it, as though our world is already the best of all possible worlds.

Notwithstanding our fear of change, peace movements continue to grow quietly, continuing the legacy of Gandhi's *satyagraha* (truth power) and *ahimsa* (nonviolence). The Sloth Club here in Japan is one example. They embrace the practice of Slow Is Beautiful in the spirit of E. F. Schumacher's *Small Is Beautiful—Buddhist Economics* "as if people matter." Schumacher brought forth his book forty years ago, yet mainstream economists still act as though unlimited growth is desirable and possible.

While engaging Buddhist principles, Mr. Nikkyo Niwano worked for world peace long before the era of Fritz Schumacher. Mr. Niwano manifested peace through both his words and his deeds, with the steadiness of a tree growing tall and strong. Rissho Kosei-Kai is an outstanding lay Buddhist organization, known throughout the world for uplifting individuals and societies. Mr. Niwano also helped create the World Conference on Religion and Peace and the Asian Conference on Religion and Peace, and both continue to play a vital role in promoting peace through interreligious cooperation and dialogue.

Mr. Inazo Nitobe is another leading Japanese man who dedicated his life to world peace confronting The Powers That Be. Although I never met him (he passed away the year I was born), I knew his disciple Mr. Shigeharu Matsumoto and his wife very well. Matsumoto-san established the International House of Japan to promote cultural exchange and intellectual cooperation between the peoples of Japan and those of other countries. As a socially engaged Buddhist and cofounder of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, I feel honored to stand in the shadow of these great figures. However, I feel that our movement should not be directly involved in politics, but should work on the spiritual level to benefit all members of the movement.

We need to be culturally sensitive, politically concerned, and socially committed and have the courage to tackle questions of the common good and to point out situations of abuse. To be able to see clearly, to be truly aware of the state of the world, we must begin by deprogramming ourselves and be free of prejudice toward those we criticize. Working together with others of good will, we can identify and confront abuses of power. It is critical for people of all faiths and ideologies, as well as atheists and agnostics, to listen to each other as we promote justice and balance through nonviolent means. And we must uphold equality in all situations. It helps to stay in touch with the poor and oppressed.

To continue the work, we need to inspire the younger generation. We must help them develop freedom, self-reliance, contentedness, compassion, and generosity, to learn to collaborate rather than compete and to appreciate quality rather than excess. And the younger generation needs accurate information, not just the propaganda of governments and media. The present financial crisis is an opening for us to encourage these essential values.

For our children to realize their potential and come forth as leaders of their generation, we ourselves must be good models. We must be *homo sapiens*, not *homo hipocriticus* or *homo oeconomicus*. We must see through neoliberal economics and free market fundamentalism. Today in Greece, austerity measures, which means privatizing the commons, are being implemented, not for the benefit of the people, but for the super rich to own even more. We must help the next generations develop the critical thinking we have lacked and the capacity for reflection taught by the Buddha to build a sustainable future. We must confront our own greed, hatred, and delusion and transform our societies into models of justice and peace.

Buddhist meditation teaches proper breathing as the most important element of life. When we learn to breathe in and out mindfully, greed hatred, and delusion naturally transform into generosity, compassion, and wisdom. We are all connected to one another and we can learn to breathe from that place.

Throughout the ages, nature has caused a lot of suffering, but today natural disasters are exacerbated by the arrogance of industrialists *and* scientists. We must respect nature and not regard other living beings as resources to be exploited. Technological developments are not always in our best interest, as seen so clearly with the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, and we must learn to discern what advances to accept and apply, and which ones to monitor closely or discard.

With humility and caring, not just for ourselves but for the next seven generations, we can bring about an era of *ahimsa* and *satyagraha*. We can learn from Gandhi, Prince Shotoku, and even Emperor Ashoka. Gross National Product was once the universal measurement of economic well being. Today, Gross National Happiness is gaining wider acceptance, with Bhutan, Ladakh, and Kerala leading the way.

Although the economic theory of unlimited growth and nonstop accumulation of capital continues to dominate the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization, and nearly every government, in recent years, there have been high-profile defections. Amartya Sen, Joseph Stiglitz, Jeffery Sachs, and others have expressed their recognition that mainstream economics, if left unchecked, will destroy the world and its peoples. Last year the organizers of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, invited Matthieu Ricard, a French Buddhist monk, to deliver a keynote address on Gross National Happiness. Let us hope this was more than a public relations stunt by the rich and powerful. A think tank at Schumacher College has joined with the New Economic Foundation in London to propagate the idea that Buddhist economics be taught at the university level. The University of Pennsylvania is considering including Gross National Happiness in its masters' curriculum.

The Powers That Be will not give up their privileges voluntarily. They will defend them to the bitter end. Violent structures will not crumble by themselves. They need to be pushed—nonviolently. The way forward requires refraining from violence, even as a means to an end. The U.S. in its perpetration of violence in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and elsewhere; China in Tibet and Xinjiang; the military dictatorship in Burma; and other perpetrators of violence are on the wrong side of history. Like Aceh, the three southernmost provinces of the Thai kingdom must be granted a greater degree of self-rule. There is no other way to bring this about except through nonviolence.

Mahatma Gandhi employed *satyagraha* to expose the lies of the British empire. China and many other countries still deceive their people, but the deceitfulness of the ruling classes cannot last forever. Although the mass media as a whole brainwashes us to be addicted to capitalism and consumerism, new technologies offer opportunities for new sources of information, and a world beyond capitalism is possible.

Although he came to power through armed struggle, Fidel Castro now condemns mindless violence and has stated that he prefers nonviolence. Despite decades of American terrorism against Cuba, Castro still sees the American people as friends of Cuba and sees young Americans' tilt toward nonviolence as a move in the right direction.

Former president José Ramos-Horta of Timor Leste also upholds the virtue of nonviolence and forgiveness. He is willing to forgive and even cooperate with Indonesia despite the latter's bloody invasion and occupation of his country. He is inspired by Nelson Mandela, who was ready to forgive the crimes of apartheid. Former president of Indonesia Abdurrahman Wahid declared that Gandhi was his role model.

The politics in Cambodia, as in many other countries, are full of violence and deceitfulness. But the Dhammayatra movement, founded by the late Maha Ghosananda, a Cambodian Buddhist monk and Niwano Peace Prize laureate, is a vital and influential force in his country. We can also refer to the Saffron Revolution in Burma when Buddhist monks struggled for democracy and responded to the military dictatorship's counter-revolutionary brutality with deep meditation and prayers. Likewise in Tibet, monks have nonviolently resisted the Chinese occupation for more than five decades, and the Dalai Lama recently embarked on a path to democratize Tibet nonviolently.

In the academic world, many books have followed along the trail blazed by Schumacher's Buddhist economics, such as Glenn Paige's *Nonkilling Global Political Science* and David Loy's *A Buddhist History of the West: Studies in Lack*—not to mention the works of the Mind and Life Institute under the guidance of the Dalai Lama to shed light on the common insights of science and spirituality.

Globalization, the latest phase of capitalism, is a facade of neo-imperialism. More than ever we need self-rule—beginning with personal transformation—and the creation of a new collective subject. To bring this about requires, first of all, internal spiritual change. If we are able to transform greed into generosity, hatred into loving kindness, and delusion into wisdom, we have

self-rule. Peace in the world requires the cultivation of seeds of peace within. As the Dalai Lama points out, this is difficult but it is the only way to achieve world peace.

I would like to end my commemorative address with a quote from the Dalai Lama's *Toward Compassion and Equality*:

Peace and survival of life on earth as we know it are threatened by human activities that lack a commitment to humanitarian values. Destruction of nature and natural resources results from ignorance, greed and lack of respect for the earth's living things. This lack of respect extends even to the earth's human descendants, the future generations who will inherit a vastly degraded planet if world peace doesn't become a reality and if destruction of the natural environment continues at the present rate.

Our ancestors viewed the earth as rich and bountiful, which it is. Many people in the past also saw nature as inexhaustibly sustainable, which we now know is the case only if we care for it. It is not difficult to forgive destruction in the past that resulted from ignorance. Today, however, we have access to more information. It is essential that we re-examine ethically what we have inherited, what we are responsible for, and what we will pass on to coming generations.

Clearly this is a pivotal generation. Global communication is possible, yet confrontations take place more often than meaningful dialogues for peace. Our marvels of science and technology are matched, if not outweighed, by many current tragedies, including human starvation in some parts of the world and extinction of other life forms. Exploration of outer space takes place at the same time the earth's own oceans, seas and freshwater areas grow increasingly polluted, and their life forms are still largely unknown or misunderstood. Many of the earth's habitats, animals, plants, insects and even microorganisms that we know as rare may not be known at all by future generations. We have the capability and the responsibility. We must act before it is too late.