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## **A Buddhist Solution for the Twenty-first Century**

**Address to the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago.**

This is the first time this century that an international religious assembly of such magnitude has been organized. During the interval of one hundred years since the last meeting of the Parliament, the world has undergone so many great changes. People say now we are already in the post-industrial Information Society, entering the Post-Cold War period.

### **The end of the Cold War**

With the end of the Cold War, the tension and fear resulting from the threat of confrontation between the two superpowers and a world divided into ideological camps seemed to dissolve along with it. This was around the end of the twentieth century. Many people felt that in the approaching twenty-first century, the human race would be blessed with a much more peaceful existence, that the world would live in peace.

But it soon became apparent that this was not to be. The threat of total annihilation through nuclear war seemed to have been averted, but although this posed a great danger to mankind, it was a danger that never actually came to a head. With the passing of this greater threat, it was replaced by one of lesser magnitude, but scattered over the planet in many areas. These were dangers which actually came to a head. The threat of the Cold War was a very definite, tangible one, a threat that could be focused on quite easily. Although it was a very dangerous situation, it was nevertheless one which was very unlikely to actually develop into a full scale war. The wars that have since sprung up all over the globe are much more difficult to control. Even the threat of nuclear war, which seemed to have passed, is not gone by any means. In fact it poses an even greater threat than before because it is now much harder to control, nuclear weapons being scattered over a large number of countries, with very different backgrounds.

### **Racial and religious confrontation**

Although the ideological wars seem to have passed on, we now have more wars arising from racial and religious confrontation, which are much more passionate and brutal. Civil wars and racial confrontation are becoming more and more common all over the globe. In addition, terrorism is becoming both more common and more violent. The fact that the world has been made smaller through the development of information technology not only facilitates travel and communication, it also facilitates the spread of terrorism. Terrorism rides the media of communications technology, making travel no safer than before, and increasing the likelihood of danger in all countries. Terrorist activities are much easier to carry out because of the development of communications and travel.

This leads to the problem of immigration and refugees. People in most countries are now more suspicious of outsiders. Nationalistic, racial and religious wars have led to increased numbers of refugees, among whom may be terrorists infiltrating into the host country to undertake terrorist activities.

Hatred, discrimination, and mutual distrust is intensified by the struggle for natural resources. The avaricious competition to amass natural resources not only leads to strife within human society. These resources must be found within the natural environment, which gives the problem a double edge. On one hand, there are problems with the environment, in the form of depletion of natural resources and destruction of the environment, which has been gradually intensifying through the increased competition for these resources, and on the other hand there is an intensification of mutual human destruction.

### **The environmental crisis**

The environmental crisis and the shortage of natural resources began to become really clear only towards the end of this twentieth century. These problems are going to have a big effect on the people of the twenty-first century which we are now approaching. Twenty-first century man will inherit the fruits of twentieth century man's destruction of the environment. The enormous amount of natural resources on this planet, amassed over a period of hundreds of millions of years, have mostly been consumed by humanity in a period of only one or two hundred years.

### **The problem of hatred**

All of these problems stem from the problem of hatred or violence perpetuated under the power of what we call in Buddhism *dosa*, or aversion, and *lobha*, desire or greed. These two forces, greed and hatred, are very important forces in the mind. With the development of technology, and in particular, so-called "high technology", which deals with information and communications, greed and hatred have acquired much more effective tools.

### **Technology**

Technology has become a tool of greed and hatred, and technological progress, in the form of industrial development, has been almost exclusively to their ends. Science, technology and the development of information and communications technology have been used to lull humanity into heedless consumption, dullness and intoxication in various forms, rather than for the development of the human being or quality of life. They have been used as tools for seeking objects with which to nourish greed, and in so doing, have fired hatred through the contention and dispute over material wealth. In the destruction which results from racial and religious antagonism, hatred is already in abundance. This is further intensified by the influence of greed and the struggle for material resources.

Even forms of technology which are created for our benefit become tools for destruction. It is much easier for human beings to inflict destruction on each other. Take, for example, electricity: in the past, if an enemy wanted to put out all the lights in a city, they would have to go throughout the city, putting out the lights in each house. Now, simply by destroying the central power supply, the whole city would be thrown into darkness and almost all activities paralysed.

### **Greed and hatred**

The influence of these two qualities, desire or contention for resources, and hatred or enmity, has caused many problems for human beings, both within themselves and within

the environment. In order to really address these problems, it is necessary to bring these two forces under control.

### **Views and beliefs**

Greed and hatred, which are natural conditions within the human mind, would be much easier to control, and would be much shorter lived, if it were not for the influence of a third condition, which in Buddhism we call 'ditthi', views and beliefs. Ideologies, religious beliefs and social values are all aspects of ditthi. Whenever greed, anger and hatred are reinforced with beliefs and social values, they acquire a clearer direction, an impetus which channels them into much more destructive activities. Greed and hatred are maintained and prolonged by the influence of ditthi, making them much harder to resolve.

Adherence to different ideologies and social values be it conscious or otherwise, becomes kamma on a social scale, which is of far-reaching effect, extending over long periods of time. Conversely, if there is right view, right belief, social values or ideologies which are right, greed and hatred will arise on a much lesser scale, and will be much easier to control, because they are not supported or encouraged.

In the present time we can see that greed and hatred are positively flourishing. They are supported or based on a powerful foundation of wrong views. In the preceding decades we experienced problems with ideologies. There were two major schools which had split the world into camps. Now the contention between these ideologies has petered out, but we have not resolved the problems of nationalism, racism and sectarianism. Ideology is in fact a kind of ditthi, and so we come back to the problem of ditthi or ideology to find a solution.

### **Three main perceptions**

Briefly speaking, the beliefs that have held control over modern human civilization can be grouped into three main perceptions:

1. The perception that mankind is separate from nature, that mankind must control, conquer or manipulate nature according to his desires.
2. The perception that fellow human beings are not "fellow human beings". Rather than perceiving the common situations or experiences shared among all people, human beings have tended to focus on the differences between themselves.
3. The perception that happiness is dependent on an abundance of material possessions, that human beings will only find happiness through a wealth of material possessions with which to feed their desires.

The first perception is an attitude towards nature; the second perception is an attitude towards fellow human beings; the third perception is an understanding of the objective of life.

These three beliefs or perceptions have determined the direction of human development and undertaking. It is not difficult to see the role of these three views in the present time; people in the present time are almost entirely dominated by these perceptions. Being held

under the power of these three perceptions, their resulting actions become kamma on the social level. That is, the development of human society is guided by the kamma, or actions, of human beings blinded by these three views or perceptions.

It must be stressed that when greed and hatred or anger are founded on or supported by views, be they religious, political or otherwise, they will be intensified and sustained, yielding a result that is far-reaching and long-lived. They will be very difficult to put right. If they are not addressed on the level of ditthi or view, it will be impossible to rectify hatred and greed.

Even the different sciences and branches of learning which have been responsible for the material progress of humanity in recent times, and on which modern civilization is founded, have unknowingly developed under the influence of these three perceptions or attitudes.

Broadly speaking, without going into a detailed analysis, we might say that the natural sciences have developed under the influence of people who had a tendency to aspire to conquering nature, who perceived human beings as separate from nature; the social sciences have developed under the influence of those who perceived not the similarities in human beings, but the differences, seeing human beings as divided into different groups, tending to look at society in terms of the struggle for power. Thirdly, the humanities have developed under the influence of those who see freedom, the goal of life, as an external condition, as the power to control other things, such as nature or fellow human beings. This kind of freedom seeks to have power over external conditions and as such influences the development of the natural and social sciences. When freedom is seen in this way, happiness is likewise perceived as being intimately related to the power to control external circumstances, which in turn can be used to satisfy personal human desires.

As I have already mentioned, as long as people are under the sway of these three beliefs or perceptions, there is no way that the problems in the world can be realistically solved.

In coming years the population of the world will continue to increase, the resources of the world will continue to dwindle, and the environment will continue to deteriorate. These three attitudes or beliefs will escalate these problems to more critical dimensions. While the population is increasing, and the natural resources of the world dwindling, human beings still perceive their happiness as dependent on sensual pleasures and material possessions. They still perceive freedom as the power to control external conditions, and fellow human beings as rivals and hostile groups. Human beings will be under more pressure to vie with each other for the possession of natural resources on a more violent scale. Under the misdirection of these three wrong views, human beings have also developed the lifestyles that lead to the widespread of such life and social ills as drug abuses, violence, stress, mental illness, suicides, and AIDS. This is why I say that the people of the twenty-first century are going to have to receive the fruits of our actions in the twentieth century.

I would like to stress once more that in order to solve the problems of greed, hatred, selfishness and mutual destruction; they must be addressed on the level of views or attitudes. Greed and anger must be allowed no footing or foundation on which to grow into uncontrollable proportions, giving results that are widespread and long-lived.

When we speak of views, we are coming into the domain of religion, because religion is view. For religion to be effective in addressing the problems of the world it must be based on good or right views, and must encourage the propagation of such views in the world. That is, religions should not encourage or teach in accordance with any of the three views or attitudes mentioned here.

In the present time, the developed countries are in agreement that the perceptions of mankind as separate from nature, and the desire to conquer nature, are not correct views. Those analysts who are examining environmental problems and looking for ways of achieving sustainable development stress that we must begin to look on human beings as part of nature, that human beings must learn to live peacefully with nature.

This is a very good sign, a sign that human beings are beginning to address the first of these three pernicious views, by learning to reconsider their relationship with nature. Although it is a beginning, it is not yet enough. The three views or attitudes I have mentioned are all interrelated, and all must be addressed in order to really solve the problem. It is not possible to really solve the problem by simply addressing one of these views. Such a solution would be insufficient; it would not be a complete solution.

One of the factors involved in the process of causing the problems we are presently experiencing is the way human beings look on each other. How do we look on other people? This is the second attitude which must be rectified.

### **Religions as causes of conflicts**

Today all our different religions are meeting together, seeking a way to enable human beings to live together in peace and harmony and to relieve the suffering in the world. This is a very fine undertaking, a very timely effort, perhaps even a little overdue. But among religious circles it must be conceded that religions have had a major role in the appearance of many of the problems I have been speaking about. In the past religion has been one of the major causes for disunion and discord, and even not a few cases of war and atrocities. In order to really address these problems we must be bold enough to speak up, to be honest and to look within ourselves before we can really teach or appeal to others. We must turn around and search within our religions to find out the cause, the reason that in the past people have killed each other and gone to war over religion. If we can find that point, then we can really address the problem.

### **How does our religion teach us to look on people of other faiths?**

Our meeting together today is a very auspicious sign. If we can look into these problems and see their causes, if we can together discuss them and see them within ourselves, this will be the beginning of a solution. The most important point for us to closely examine ourselves in, is how does our religion teach us to look on people of other faiths and different groups? Does it teach us to look on others with mutual respect, fraternity and concord, or does it teach us to look on others as inferior, as sinners or heathens, or even something which should be destroyed?

In the past, the larger proportion of religions has helped only select groups of people, fostering harmony and friendship within that group, but greeting others with hostility. This is

why religion has been such a divisive force in human history, a catalyst for war and destruction.

Many teachings which were suitable for small groups of people are no longer effective in today's 'Global Village'. They are not up to the current situation. In the present time, material development has led us to a world that is linked over the whole planet, but religious teachings are still addressing the human situation in terms of small groups. As a result human beings are not yet ready to live together on a global level.

So it seems that personal human development is not commensurate with the physical world situation. Religions are not yet attuned to addressing the needs of people on a global level. Instead of being a factor for mutual peace and harmony in the world, we find that religions are a cause of more and more contention and strife, wars and bloodshed.

In this case, religions must re-appraise their role, they must re-examine their basic views and attitudes. Before religions are able to play a constructive role in human development, the foundation of views upon which they are based must be sound. Human beings must be encouraged to look on others on an equal basis, they must be encouraged to respect and accept each other, seeing each other with an attitude that is harmonious.

If it is not yet possible to look at others in this positive way, then we must at least address the negative situation, by teaching that to kill other human beings is a sin or an unskilful act. That is, to kill a human being, of no matter what description, denomination, race or group, is always a sin. Let us have this as a basic foundation, as a beginning.

### **The concept of human rights**

It is very obvious in the present time that human beings are plagued with contention and conflict. Human life is characterized by competition and dissension. If we look into this deeply we will see that the reason that such values as human rights and religious tolerance are so important in this age is because we do live in such an age of contention, where our thinking is divisive and factional. While we acknowledge that the concepts of human rights and religious tolerance are very important in the present time, and are very noble qualities, we must also recognize that this is so because the world is still under the influence of divisive ways of thinking. Human thought is still largely rooted in dualism. Human rights are our guarantee that while human beings are still under the influence of this divisive kind of thinking, they will be able to live together without destroying or exploiting each other.

The concept of human rights arose from a historical background of division, segregation and competition. Human rights are a necessary protection from aggression from other parties, an answer to a negative situation: when humanity is plagued by aggression and contention, it is necessary to devise some protection from aggression. Human rights have led to the establishment of laws and regulations devised to try to maintain harmony within human society. Within developed countries these qualities are very effective and as such are very useful to the global situation.

While human rights are useful within the environment of dissension, they are not very far reaching. They are only a compromise. Compromise is not capable of leading human beings to true unity and harmony. Compromise is a situation in which each side agrees to give in a little to the other in order to attain some mutual benefit. A quality of force or mental resignation is involved.

As long as human beings do not outgrow their old ways of thinking, it will be impossible to bring about true peace in the world. The concept of human rights is useful in an age of fighting and contention, or when human thinking is divisive and separatist, but is not enough to lead humanity to true peace and harmony.

### **The concepts of human rights have three major flaws**

In essence, the concepts of human rights have three major flaws:

Firstly, the concepts themselves are flawed. They have resulted from a background and basic attitude of division and segregation, struggle and contention. This situation led to an attempt to assure self-preservation and protect mutual interests, which became human rights. Human rights must be obtained through demand.

Secondly, human rights are a convention, they are a purely human invention and do not exist as a natural condition. They are not "natural rights". Being a human invention, they do not have any firm and lasting foundation of truth. They must be supported by laws and they must be accepted by all parties in order to work. They are not lasting. If human rights are to be lasting and firm they must be connected to natural reality. In order for human rights to be founded on natural reality, human mentality must be developed to a stage where people are prepared to preserve human rights. Only in this way will human rights be sustainable.

This leads us to the third flaw of the concept of human rights, which is that it is a purely social convention, dealing with social behaviour. It does not consider the quality of mental motivation within the individual. Social behaviour must always be connected to mental motivation, which is both the instigator and the guiding influence of that behaviour. If the mental foundation is faulty, or there is not a good foundation within the mind, then instead of leading to a good result, the result will be more and more contention.

While we must acknowledge the needs of human rights activists, in order to understand the situation more clearly we must analyse the quality of mind within the activists themselves. When we look into the mental motivations behind many, or even most, of the demands for human rights, we will find that they are often based on or influenced by aversion or resentment. As long as this aversion is within the mind, it will be very difficult to obtain a truly efficacious result from human rights activities, because the basic feeling behind them is not truly harmonious. Aversion is the inspiration which decides the direction of this activity, making the resulting behaviour too aggressive to obtain the required result, instead escalating the problem.

### **The basic state of mind within each individual**

In order to really address this problem it is necessary to address the basic state of mind within each individual, which is a concern of human development.

From what I have said so far, it seems that it is necessary for us to proceed to a way of thinking, or a perception of human relations, which is more positive. That is, we must see human beings as neighbours, co-habitants of this world. We are all equal in the eyes of the natural laws, being equally subject to the laws of nature.

However, this in itself is not yet truly positive thinking. We must develop thinking which sees human beings as both equal and united. Why do I say both equal and united? There has been much talk of equality in recent times, but it tends to be a divisive or contentious kind of equality. This kind of perception of equality leads to the drive to compete for equal rights. It is an equality that is based on competition, suspicion and fear. In order to prevent the drive for equality from being divisive, there must be unity. Unity is the desire and inclination to live together. It is an attitude that leads to cohesion and alliance. Unity is not simply a compromise, it is not a compromise on competition, but is a development of cooperation into harmony. Competition must be balanced by cooperation. It must be supported by what we call in Buddhism metta, goodwill. This goodwill must be unlimited, unconditional, and unsectarian. People have problems with goodwill or love. There may be love, but it is divisive, it is conditional, it is exclusive and discriminative. There is love for one's own group, but not for others. Love or goodwill must be spread everywhere, regardless of boundaries, towards all lives that exist together within the domain of the natural universe.

This does not mean that human beings can no longer preserve their unique traditions and cultures. Preservation of traditions and ethnic cultures can continue, based on the fact that people do have different backgrounds, different birthplaces. Adapting and fitting in to their native environments leads to harmony and well-being within that particular environment. Ethnic cultures can and should be preserved, being intermediate unitary stages toward the consummate global unity. Thus we have diversity within unity. Preservation of traditions must be done with wisdom and understanding, not with delusion or ignorance, through simply clinging to them.

If we practise correctly in regard to human development, the population will grow from small groups into a more global community, one which is harmonious both on the communal and global levels.

### **Freedom from possessiveness**

Well-developed human beings will be free of the quality we call in Buddhism macchhariya, covetousness or possessiveness, on five counts.

The five kinds of possessiveness are:

1. Possessiveness or avarice of locality and country.
2. Possessiveness or avarice of group or family, including ethnic and religious groups.
3. Possessiveness or avarice of material wealth.
4. Possessiveness or avarice of class or caste, including social standing, skin colour and so on.

5. Possessiveness or avarice of knowledge and learning, including intellectual achievements and attainments.

True human development is characterized by an absence of these five kinds of avarice, culminating in their complete abandoning. When gauging human development, the presence or absence of these five kinds of avarice should be taken into account.

The time has come for us to urgently do away with these five kinds of avarice in order to save the world from the threat of war and destruction. However, in the present time it seems that the opposite is the case. This is at odds with technological development, which has been for increased communication and interdependence. The basic mental attitude of people in the present time is one of aggressive competition, self-preservation and personal prosperity at the expense of others. As a result, human rights have become a tool for protecting personal interests and self-preservation. They serve to hold the world together while it lives under the domination of divisive thinking.

### **Human beings must learn to live harmoniously**

I have spoken about two important attitudes or views which have influenced human action in the present age! The antagonistic-type attitudes or perceptions that view life as a struggle against both fellow human beings and the natural world. The basic human attitude is one that seeks to conquer, both the natural world and fellow human beings. This kind of attitude is no longer viable. Human beings must learn to live harmoniously, both with each other and with the natural environment, with their fellow human beings and their fellow environment. We have these two "friends", the human friend and the environmental friend. They are not rivals or enemies which must be conquered, but friends with whom we should learn to live in harmony.

In order to really address these two views or attitudes, we must delve into the third basic attitude that has coloured human perception. If we cannot solve this third view, we will not be able to successfully deal with the first two. This third attitude is a perception of life on the personal level, the understanding of the basic meaning or objective of life.

### **Freedom has many different meanings**

Human beings aspire to freedom, but freedom has many different meanings. As I have already mentioned, the perception of freedom prevalent in modern civilization is of freedom from external limitations and restrictions, including the ability to control other people and the natural world. Seeing freedom in this way conditions the way we see other qualities in life, such as happiness. If we see freedom as the ability to control or manipulate other things, such as by amassing a wealth of material possessions or controlling nature, then we will feel that the more material possessions we have, the more happiness we will have.

This kind of perception has bogged down in the present time with the deterioration of the environment, and we find that the natural resources are no longer able to support the increasing population. It has led to a situation where we are forced to compromise. In much the same way as we are forced to compromise with each other, we are forced to compromise with nature. If humanity were to consume or seek happiness to the fullest extent, we would manipulate nature without restraint. But if we did so, the situation would be dangerous to

us. As world resources are depleted and the environment is damaged, we ourselves are threatened, and so we must compromise. In order to allow nature to continue and allow ourselves to survive, we agree to forego some of our personal pleasures. This kind of compromise is done out of necessity, we are not truly happy with it. It is a sacrifice made in order to survive. The reason we have reached this situation is because of our wrong attitude.

### **Freedom on three levels**

Simply speaking, for human beings to live happily there must be freedom on three levels.

The first freedom is the freedom to live with nature and the environment. We could call this physical freedom. This is freedom from want and deprivation, an adequate supply of the four basic necessities of life — food, clothing, shelter and medicine. This includes freedom from natural dangers, and the ability to deal with such problems when they do arise.

Secondly, in our relationship with fellow humans, we must have social freedom. That is, to be able to live safely together without being exploited by others.

### **Inner freedom**

However, these first two kinds of freedom will not be truly effective if they are not connected to the third kind of freedom, which is inner freedom, freedom on the personal level. Human development on the personal level is the most important kind of development, that which leads to inner freedom. What is inner freedom? Having physical and social freedom, people must learn how to live independently, to be happy and contented within themselves.

This is a happiness that is more independent of externals, no longer dependent on having to exploit nature or our fellow beings. We become more and more capable of finding contentment within our own minds and through our own wisdom. This ability to be contented without having to exploit nature or our fellow humans can be also called the ability to be contented independently of natural and social conditions. With a more independent kind of happiness, social and physical freedom will be preserved and strengthened. Human beings will then have the best possible relationship with both the natural environment and human society. We will no longer feel the need to have to exploit our environment or our fellow human beings.

Internal freedom is the foundation or the guarantee on which social and physical freedom can be grounded. Conversely, without inner freedom, human happiness must be dependent on manipulation of the external environment and social exploitation. Physical and social freedom will not be feasible realities as long as there is such exploitation. At best, there must be compromise, a situation where people are forced to do something in order to preserve the state of the environment. If, however, there is inner freedom, it is very possible that a harmonious attitude to the external environment will be developed, and humanity will attain to true happiness, a happiness that is possessed of both harmony and balance.

Human beings possess a potential for a very high level of freedom, but because of the wrong view that happiness lies in material possessions and consumption of sense experiences, human happiness is very much tied to material objects. People these days find it impossible

to experience contentment within themselves, forcing them to exploit both nature and their fellow man in order to find the happiness they hope for from outside. The more they do this the more problems arise. Not only do we not have any true freedom and happiness within our own lives, we lose our freedom on the physical and social levels. And so it turns out that the more material progress there is, the more do human beings lose their ability to experience happiness within themselves. When people have a correct understanding of the meaning and objective of life and the nature of freedom and happiness, they will relate to the physical environment in a harmonious way. Any material possessions accruing to them will be an augmentation, rather than the crucial factor, of their happiness.

Ultimately, human development leads to freedom from the internal enemies, to minds that are completely freed of the oppressive influence of greed, hatred and delusion. When our minds are completely freed of mental defilements, we will also be freed of mental suffering, which is the main cause of human problems with the physical and social environment. When there is internal freedom, it is no longer necessary for us to exploit the external environment, we can instead live in a way that is truly beneficial to both the physical and social environments.

### **Our relationship with the natural environment**

Our relationship with the natural environment should be a balanced one, one that avoids extremes. One extreme is to concentrate wholly on manipulating the external environment. The other extreme is to completely disregard the external environment.

It is worth noting that those who aspire to conquer nature and manipulate it to their needs tend to see nature as an entirely external object. When confronted with problems pertaining to internal human nature, such as when asked why they do not do something about selfishness and hatred, they tend to counter that these things are natural conditions for human beings. They feel that the internal nature should be left to operate unrestrained. Their perception of nature is incomplete and inconsistent. Aspiring to conquer only external nature, they do not consider that internal nature is also a natural condition which can be conquered.

On the other hand, to simply leave nature to wander as it will is also not right. The work of addressing environmental problems, seeing to the body's basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and medicine, are necessary duties.

For a correct relationship with nature, we must see our situation in a more profound way, seeing ourselves as part of the whole interrelated natural world, not as separate entities or owners or controllers of nature. If we see ourselves as part of nature, and see that changes in nature must also have an effect on us, this insight will have a constraining effect on our actions, giving the scope of our actions a clear definition, and preventing them from becoming too extreme one way or another. Whenever we are to interact with the natural environment, we will take into account the widest range of factors possible, enabling our actions to be most beneficial for all concerned, including the natural environment. A balance will be achieved. As long as we see ourselves within the overall natural process, we will be able to successfully act as a factor within that process. Our actions will be guided by wisdom and right view.

In the present time people are talking about sustainable development. It is said that the economy must be geared to the ecology. For the economy to be healthy, nature must also be healthy. This is recognition of the necessity for compromise, as I have mentioned earlier. True success in this regard lies with people's ability to change their basic views on the objective of life and their concepts of happiness and freedom.

### **The dominant role of the mass media**

Here, we cannot overlook the dominant role of the mass media in inducing and influencing social values and the views of the general public. The media and all kinds of information technology can be of great help to humanity in the solution of the current global problems and the development of human beings if their potential is directed toward encouraging the three fundamental skilful views along with their compatible social values, instead of their currently predominant expertise in inducing and intensifying greed, hatred, delusion and all manner of undesirable social values under the direction of the three ruinous views.

### **Education**

More fundamentally, although of less prominent influence than the mass media, education should not mean merely a preparation for jobs to serve the competitive system along the old ways of divisive thinking. Emphasis must be placed on its most important role of human development in which the encouragement of the three skilful attitudes or views serves as the guiding post. Through such education, right view can be established in society.

### **Democracy**

In the field of politics, democracy now rides triumphant. In reality, however, its merit is not yet beyond question and its saving power still doubtful. We can say in passing that so long as democracy is dominated by the three wrong views, it will not lead mankind to real peace and security. Its ideological foundation must be rectified before democracy can realize its ideal.

Today, there seems to be an attempt to pair or even identify democracy with capitalism, as in "democracy and free market economy" and "free market democracy." It is doubtful whether democracy can be ultimately paired or identified with capitalism, or whether democracy paired or identified with capitalism is really good democracy. Capitalism and socialism, ostensibly two different and opposing systems, are both, in reality, united under materialism and are both founded on the three types of aggressive and divisive thinking. The collapse of communist socialism does not spell the soundness of capitalism. On the contrary, it implies that, of the two predominant forms of materialism, as the failure of one has been witnessed, that of the other can be expected. Too obvious now are cries and complaints about the detrimental effects, social and environmental, of economic growth along the lines of industrial development under the capitalist economy. In order for democracy to be sound, it has to clear itself of such harmful elements and establish itself on a sound ideological foundation. Economics needs not only reformation or transformation, but a conversion in its theoretical foundation.

### **Economic development**

Generally speaking, it is necessary to pursue economic development concurrently with human development. Economic development must be balanced by human development; otherwise economic growth can be an illusion. In many cases economic growth is at the expense of nature, sometimes it is at the expense of one's neighbours, while sometimes it is at the expense of humanity, or human dignity. A simple example of this is in the profession of prostitution, where a human being agrees, or is forced, to sacrifice self-esteem for purely financial considerations. Economic growth is also illusory in that some countries with high economic growth have very low economic security. In this case, it might be better to have no economic growth in return for economic security.

The situation now is that in order to provide happiness for a small group of people, the larger group of people and the natural environment at large must suffer. Even if the whole of nature were destroyed in the process of seeking happiness, human beings would not find happiness. The Buddha once said that even a whole mountain of gold would not be enough to render a human being truly satisfied. Even if people were to fight each other until the whole of society disintegrates, they would find no happiness. Everybody would be searching and struggling for happiness, but no-one would find it.

### **A new way of thinking**

In this new age, where we share one global community, the old way of thinking, with its sectarianism and rival factions, is no longer suitable, no longer viable. It is not sufficient to enable the world to live in peace. Ethical systems in the modern world, such as restraint toward nature, religious tolerance and human rights, are reduced to an attempt to preserve or sustain the world, but they are merely a corn-promise. These must be supported by more positive ethical standards and a new way of thinking.

Buddhism teaches that:

1. Human beings are one element within the whole natural system of cause and effect, in which all elements play a part. All actions within it should therefore be harmonious and beneficial to that system.
2. All beings, both human and animal, are co-dwellers within this system of natural laws. All living beings desire happiness and shun suffering, and all are afraid to die. They are all the same in this, equal and sharing, there being no distinction or segregation before the natural laws. It is not good to destroy living beings of any description. Buddhism encourages universal love, harmony, mutual help and unity.
3. The finest and noblest kind of life is that which is endowed with freedom, and this is true happiness. Over and above external freedom, which is related to the natural environment and the four necessities of life, and freedom from social harassment, the highest level of freedom is the inner level, which results from inner development, mental and intellectual maturity. This leads to more and more independent happiness and contentment, which in turn enables us to relate to our external environment and social situation in a much more constructive way.

Here I would like to stress once more that initially we must depend on our natural and social environment, so that the first two kinds of freedom are very necessary as the favourable conditions on which to develop inner freedom. Inner freedom, in turn, is the foundation on which physical and social freedoms are based, and it is their guarantee. If human beings develop themselves and achieve more of this inner freedom, it will no longer be necessary for them to demand freedom from the external environment. Instead, positive ethical values will be developed. Without having to compromise, there will be harmony.

In such a situation, economic growth will be balanced by human development, which is in accordance with the objective of our meeting together as the Parliament of World Religions, with its purpose of supporting 'future collaboration and action together for peace, the relief of suffering, and the preservation of the planet'.

If we adhere to our old views and perceptions, our striving for happiness will be of the kind that ruins these three noble objectives. On the other hand, if we turn to the skilful harmonious views and encourage the development of happiness within, this inner happiness will help to successfully bring about our three objectives: living together in peace, the relief of human suffering, and the preservation of the planet. These are all directly related to personal human development and the achievement of true inner freedom. I would accordingly like to suggest here that the objectives of real freedom and happiness of the individual be specified as themes of such meeting as this one. In Buddhism we say that a human being who has reached the highest level of development will have completely destroyed inner greed, hatred and delusion. However, human beings must be trained in stages. For people in general, the quality which is the surest gauge of development is the absence of wrong view, which is of utmost importance in the initial stages of human development. If wrong view can be given up and right view developed, then even though greed and hatred still exist, even though there is still some selfishness, they will, as I mentioned at the beginning of this talk, be on a much weaker scale, arising only momentarily. They will not persist on into long-term and widespread scales, because they are not supported by or founded on *ditthi*, views. Conversely, if greed and hatred find a support in views, they will have much more intense and far reaching effects. This is why the Buddhist system of human development stresses the elimination of wrong view.

### **Human relations in regard to religions**

I would like to insert an observation here regarding human relations in regard to religions. Having many religions together on one planet, it is necessary for our relations to be guided by goodwill and understanding, to be able to talk together with reason. Through this mutual respect and understanding, the different religions can live together. However, in our relationship to the truth, or reality, it is not possible for human beings to negotiate with nature, to bring it over to their side. We must clearly distinguish these two different kinds of relationship. Among ourselves, human beings can relate with goodwill and dialogue, but in our relationship with nature or reality, we must work through wisdom, we must adhere to the truth. It is the use of wisdom which leads to freedom. We should not make compromises with reality, but should instead really try to understand it. In order to understand reality there should be unrestricted opportunity to investigate it with reason.

If we understand this matter there will be no problem. Problems are arising in religious circles in the present time because of confusion on this matter. For example, one group or faith goes to one extreme; they try to force their view of reality onto the rest of humanity, and they are not happy until they have converted everyone else to their view. Others, in an effort to create more harmony, say that reality is the same in all religions, that all religions teach the same truth. They turn reality into a quality that human beings can negotiate, which is impossible. The proper attitude here is for human beings to relate to each other with goodwill, and to relate to reality with wisdom.

### **Importance of right view**

When right view is incorporated, even into sciences and branches of learning, all those branches of learning will be well-based. For example, the physical sciences, applied science and technology would have a relationship with nature that is characterized by a pure desire for knowledge, rather than a desire to exploit nature. This attitude will in itself help to achieve freedom.

Secondly, the social sciences will not look at mankind, with a specialist reductionistic view of human society disconnected from nature, as a collection of scattered factions caught up in a struggle for power, but will instead see them as friends or fellow citizens of the natural world.

Thirdly, the humanities will concern themselves with the human effort to realize the highest quality possible for a human being, which is inner freedom. This will in turn become a foundation for the proper development of the natural and social sciences.

Human beings in the twentieth century have created much bad kamma, which is going to exert an influence on humanity of the twenty-first century. The citizens of the twenty-first century are going to have to deal with problems which are the legacy of the twentieth century. In order to help solve these problems and ensure that the twenty-first century will be a safe one, we must discuss ways of addressing the problems right now. We must adapt our own actions and behaviour. If we can adapt our views as I have mentioned here, there is a possibility that we will be able to solve these problems successfully.

The three views I have offered here are particularly relevant to our time and age, when the natural environment is in such a state of deterioration and the natural resources depleted. The human social world is getting smaller and smaller, now becoming a global community. The time has come to learn to live together, and this will only be possible when human beings are able to develop the freedom that is not dependent on the external environment, and instead learn to help and support the external environment. In this way human beings will be able to experience the taste of true freedom and true happiness.