

LIVING BUDDHA DECHAN JUEREN SPEAKS AT THE  
UNITED NATIONS MILLENNIUM WORLD PEACE SUMMIT OF  
RELIGIOUS & SPIRITUAL LEADERS

AUGUST 2000

The Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders has far-reaching significance to discuss on the important subject of human harmony. This Summit has proven that people have found the inner force of the religious consciousness. It is a sensible and important undertaking to join the efforts of different religious groups for the development of world peace and the elimination of poverty. The full use of such efforts will play an important role in finding the solution to our goal.

Religion has less power than political authority. It makes no distinction of politics or regional boundaries, nor discriminates based on race or nationality. Religion is to purify the human heart, to guide people, to serve humanity and to contribute to society. In addition, it shall do so despite any reward. It is a kind of attitude on human life, where it considers sacrificing oneself for the betterment of others as an honor, luxury and wasting as a disgrace, and seeking charity and kindness for all as one's duty.

Religious teaching can change people's opinion. Such change can bring about the improvement of environment and conditions. A good interaction can really change the human consciousness, raise our level of understanding and bring us out of the vicious cycle into the good cycle.

The real transformation of consciousness enables us to realize that the human race itself created all the disputes, conflicts and wars among people, regions and nations. We are our own vice. We should re-examine our consciousness and understand that our vice is the main and deep-rooted cause of the disasters. We must, without rest, change and improve ourselves, get rid of the bad habits to end the harm we have done to others and to ourselves.

The world will enter harmony when we no longer harm each other. The world will become a jointly owned and mutually enjoyed ideal paradise when everyone respects one another, helps one another, respects the elders and loves the young ones. This is the simple, yet lofty ideal of the religious creed. The practical measure to attain the ideal is more important, which should be truly recognized, supported, cooperated and emphasized by every government, religion and person. We shall grasp the essence of the religious ideal instead of only looking at the superficial stuff and the negative phenomenon of religion. How are we to pass on the correct religious thinking and its essence without the limitation of adhering to the superficial and negative phenomenon?

Every religious group should be open-minded, have a consensus, learn from each other's virtue and strength and improve oneself. With government support inter-faith communication, cooperation and activities should be developed. Thus, we will form the same thought, which will have an influence on everyone to change for the better and benefit humanity.

People always long for peace and thirst for happiness eternal. By changing our habits, improving and overcoming ourselves, we are able to seriously re-examine ourselves to the depth of our heart, humbly accept other's criticism and teaching, and raise ourselves to a higher level. Then, we can enter a highly civilized society. We can only realize (at highly civilized society) with such profound soul purification and self-enhancement, and the world will become a highly civilized world of peace.

Look at the boundless universe. Why is there poverty? We ought to study it from the cause that leads to today's human civilization. In the beginning, the initial human thought, actions and motives are for instinctive survival. As people moved around to seek food for survival, they met other people with different habits and language. Then, the conflict or fight for food occurred. The regional conflict was formed due to lack of communication and the escalation of these fights. The purpose of such conflict was still for food and survival. The conquered were expelled or enslaved, and had to work hard and bitter for less food. The victor expanded his territory, enslaved the conquered and obtained more food.

Social classes were formed. Systems and laws were established to protect the benefits of the ruling class. Money was created for the exchange of goods. People are civilized. The traditional reality still is the same, for food. Social status was formed and reflected in the society. Different social treatment according to different social positions resulted in complicated social problems. The confrontation continued and intensified.

People had to consider taking advantage in many situations with any means for the protection of their interests. Pillaging of resources formed the idea of storing in quantity and quality. The more they own, the richer they feel. They would disregard the damage done to the environment although they had surplus (that) exceeded the real need for survival. To have self-enjoyment and self-satisfaction, they formed the bad habit of achieving their aim whether by cheating or by being a brute to others. Greed and selfishness guided them. People forgot to rethink that eating is just for living, moving around is just for surviving, and fighting is just for food. It is like this since ancient times.

For the enjoyment of the “haves,” the victors disregarded the pain of the “have-nots.” This attitude of the victors influenced their later generations. The rebellious psychology of the “have-nots,” or slaves, also influenced their later generations. The vicious cycle brought turmoil to human society. The Law of Retribution continues. People must find the cause of the vicious cycle, the method to change their bad habits, the way to overcome themselves and the solution to eliminate the vicious cause. Then, they will realize that all the waste, greed and the damage to the environment are the causes of poverty and conflict. This is the reason that Buddhism advocates for equal treatment, charity and love.

The bitter experience of the human race has proven that the teaching of the truth and faith in religion are very necessary for the human soul. Once we have purified our hearts, the ways to resolve conflict, to eliminate poverty, and the opportunity to promote peace will be maturing accordingly.

After this Summit, we hope every religious school and every government can work together hand in hand, make full use of the joint efforts, and have a real and far-reaching influence for the progress of world peace, the elimination of poverty, and the protection of the environment.