

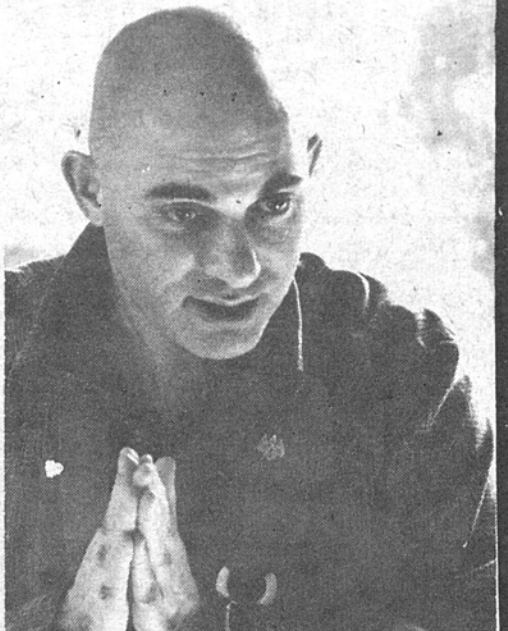
# PEACE ASSEMBLY

CONTINUED

## Much Ado About Nothing

We all know there is suffering. The world is full of suffering, and we all see it; but each of us has to see it as "my" suffering. In Buddhism we say there is no "my" or "I," but in the experiential sense, we have to feel it as "my" suffering. Then it is not a question of seeing or doing anything about it, we do it naturally.

Let me give you the analogy of two hands, each with its own consciousness. Let us call one "Harry" and the other "Joan." Harry and Joan have read all the texts about how they are part of one body, and they strongly believe it, but they each have their own consciousness. Someone offers them money. Joan reaches for it and Harry feels jealous, so he tries to take it. Or worse, Harry catches on fire. Joan sees Harry burning and says, "Maybe I should help." Then she thinks, "But I might get sued." Eventually she does help, or maybe she just walks away and pretends nobody saw her.



cannot wait. We have to do it right now, muddy ourselves right now.

Peace or harmony does not come about by making everyone the same. That seems like a simple idea, but it does not work. We think if we can get everyone to have the same idea or the same way, we will have happiness. In talking about the Three Treas-

ures, we say Buddha is the aspect of oneness or sameness, Dharma is the aspect of differences. It is very important to understand that they are the same thing, and that they have to exist together. We call that sameness Sangha.

I was once with Jonas Salk, the inventor of the Salk vaccine, and he was talking about the Zen communities he had seen springing up. He thought that was the way

to make this sick world sane and healthy again. He used the analogy of a body with a disease, full of unhealthy cells. If you just try to fix up the unhealthy cells, it is endless. But if you start injecting healthy cells into the sick body, they duplicate and thrive. Little by little the body becomes healthy again. Salk felt that Zen communities were healthy precisely because they have so many facets to them. They don't try to make everything into one entity. There are many things going on, people living together and accepting various forms, perhaps living in small communities.

## Seeing Suffering

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doing? Why are you sprinkling those bread crumbs around?" He answered, "I do it to keep the tigers away." So his friend said, "But there are no tigers within thousands of miles of here." And Mulla replied, "Effective, isn't it?"

In a way our ceremonies, our gatherings, and our demonstrations are somehow like sprinkling crumbs around. All of Buddhism, religion, and politics can be seen in that way. It's something artificial, something conceptual. It's removed from the direct situation. What is the direct situation?

First, there's suffering in this world, and there's a lot of it. The beginning of the teaching of the Buddha, and our own understanding of the problem of world peace, is to look at that suffering. At this time on the planet, today, there are hundreds of millions of people who are starving, malnourished, and don't have enough to eat. People like us—no different—eyes, ears, hand, bodies, stomachs, hearts, hundreds of millions so impoverished that they have little or no shelter and clothing to protect them from the elements of sun, wind, and rain. There are hundreds of millions of people who are sick with diseases that we know how to cure with a simple kind of medicine. But they can't afford the medicine or don't have access to it. This is happening here today, on this planet, which is not very big. Many of you have traveled some distance to come to this gathering know that—you can fly around this planet in a day.

For us to begin looking at the direct situation is not a question of ceremonies or religion or Buddhism or any of that nonsense. It's really to look in some very deep way at the sorrow and suffering that exists now in our time, in our world, to look at our personal, individual, and collective relationship to it, to bear witness to it, to acknowledge it, instead of running away. The suffering is so great that mostly we don't want to look. We close our minds. We close our eyes and hearts.

Do you know about Somalia? Do you know how bad the starvation is in sub-Saharan Africa? Every one of us in this room is actually rich in some fashion or other, fantastically rich by comparison to most of the people in the third world: rich in Dharma, rich in teachings, rich in clothes, rich in food. It's not easy to look directly at something like starvation. What we do is close our minds to it and make ourselves somehow separate.

It's so easy to make excuses for hoarding, for greed, for taking care of Number One first. It's so hard to really look at what's going on in the world, at the sorrow, and suffering. That's really what's asked of you if you want to do something. If you want to make a change, a difference, it means looking at the world with real honesty, unflinchingly and directly. Then look at yourself and see that this sorrow is not just out there, but it's also in ourselves. It's our own fear and prejudice and hatred and desire and wanting and neurosis and anxiety. It's our own sorrow. We have to look at it and not run away.

There are two sources of strength in this world. One source of strength is people who aren't afraid to kill. They run a lot of the world, if you look at it from a political point of view. People who aren't afraid to kill run nations, run wars, run much of our world. It gives one a lot of strength to not

be afraid to kill. The other source of strength in the world—of real strength—is people who aren't afraid to die: people who have looked into the very source of their nature, have looked in such a deep way that they understand and acknowledge and accept death—and in a way, have died. They bring to life fearlessness and caring. They bring not just a sense of small I, taking care of only myself and my family and my country—all these things—but something that transcends that separateness.

In this world these days, people think that strength comes from guns, from the power to kill, from force. They feel that love and compassion is a weakness. When India was separated from Pakistan and became independent in 1949, there were many riots. Millions of people were refugees—Muslims and Hindus moving from one country to another. In the west—in what is now Pakistan—Nehru and Lord Mountbatten sent tens of thousands of Gurka troops to keep the riots down. They didn't do a very good job, but he sent them there to try. To the east—in what is now Bangladesh, (it was East Pakistan then)—he sent Gandhi. Gandhi went to the east and he said, "I'm going to walk on foot from one village to another and talk to people and ask them to stop. And I'm going to stop eating, I'm going to fast. And I'll die—that's fine with me—but I'm not going to take any more food until you stop this nonsense." When people heard this, it did much more to bring peace in the east than those tens of thousands of troops in the west. Why? How did that happen? Because of his love and courage, because Gandhi truly wasn't afraid to die, because he cared about something much greater than himself.

The world doesn't need more oil, or more food, or more energy, or more medicine. It doesn't need more resources. There's plenty to go around. The world needs less greed, less prejudice, less fear, less hoarding, and less of all those forces that keep it from being fairly distributed and that keep darkness going.

So the first teaching of the Buddha is to see suffering very directly, unflinchingly acknowledge it in the world, in ourselves, and to see its source, which is fear and attachment, greed and separation. Only if we look directly can we see its end, because the end of suffering is an acknowledgement of light and dark, up and down, sorrow and joy. We have to see all those things without attachment, without separation.

We really have to look at how we make separation. How do we make this world of "I want this; I want to become that; this will make me safe; this will make me powerful?" How do we create it? How do you do it? Race, nations, age, religion. Look in your heart and see what is "us" and what is "them" for you. Who is "us?" Does "us" mean Koreans or Buddhists or Christians or Americans or white people or capitalists or... Who is your "us?" Whenever there's a sense of "us," then there's a sense of "other." Do you have an "us," if you look really honestly? That's it, folks, right there. You want to know what is the source of the trouble in the world? That's it, that point, that "us." Give it up.

Why should you give it up? Why not "us?" It's not because it's bad, or because it's immoral. It's because morality hasn't worked. The Ten Commandments and the Buddhist Precepts have been around for a long time and everybody's still killing each

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Bernard Tetsugen Glassman, Sensei, an ordained Soto Zen Buddhist priest, completed Koan study (1976) and formal Soto Zen training (1977) in the United States and Japan with Taizan Maezumishi Roshi. He is Roshi's Dharma successor. He was installed as Abbot of Zenshin Temple, the Zen Community of New York, at Riverdale, New York, in June 1982.

He holds a Ph.D. in mathematics from UCLA, and was a branch chief in charge of computer documentation at McDonnell Douglas Corporation. He co-authored with Maezumishi Roshi "Hazy Moon of Enlightenment" (Center Publications, UCLA, Los Angeles, 1977).

Zen Community of New York was founded in 1980. It is a residential training center with approximately 40 residential students, and another 100 active members who live in the New York Metropolitan area.

Then suddenly something makes Harry and Joan's consciousness rise. Now it is here, in my head. I see everything else as separate, but my two hands are part of me. That is so obvious I do not talk about it any more. It would be absurd to go around telling people that these two hands are mine, or to try to convince one hand that it is part of the same body as the other hand.

The point is we will have problems until this realization occurs. Even after it occurs, one hand is still going to catch fire, but it will get taken care of immediately, even if taking care of it destroys both hands. The problem of what we should do is gone. We cannot stand here just talking about what to do. Shakyamuni Buddha said, "Wake up!"

Consciousness has to drop out of both our hands and our hearts, in order for us to experience this world as one body. Then naturally we take care of things. That does not mean the world is at peace, but at least we know what to do. We can say everything is fine, but if our body has diabetes, we do not just say, "Fine." We do something about it.

What can we do? First, wake up and then do something. That is the only message I know. That is what Buddhism is about: wake up! How do you wake up? That is another story. But when somebody does wake up, a group naturally forms around him or her. For every circle there is a center. I am a mathematician and I love this aspect of mathematics. The center of a circle is a point which has no dimensions. If it has some dimensions, it is a blur, and then it is not the center of a circle anymore. It is another circle.

The circle is the Dharma, or all things. Whenever we have a center (which means, a nothing), immediately a circle forms around it. As we wake up, a circle forms, a community, a sangha. That second step happens immediately in the evolution of peace.

As a community, I think you should do the activities that the head of your community, as the clearest person, gets into. If that does not feel right, then do what you want to do. Everyone has a lot of ideas of what's good or appropriate, and ideas are all right, or all wrong. But you have to pick something. It is a cop-out to say, "I am going to wait until I've gotten my own practice to the place where I want it." You will never do that. It is also a cop-out not to get your practice to that place.

Ideally, first you realize the way, then you get right into the midst of what we call attachments and delusions and do your work. Shakyamuni said we are already enlightened, so practically speaking we

Room, board, training fees are covered. A monthly stipend is given.

The Zen Community of New York is an interreligious Zen practice center under the guidance of Bernard Glassman, Sensei, Dharma of Taizan Maezumishi Roshi.

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The Zen Community of New York, Yonkers, New York, offers a comprehensive Zen training program consisting of daily zazen, monthly retreats, workshops, classes, work-practice, and communal living.

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