

what was hitherto seen as "self" and "other" and "the world." The Total Person is the new-age being, totally awake and aware, at peace with him/herself and interacting in a loving and caring way with all forms of life as well as with all non-forms. The Total Person expresses respect for all things, but relies only on Dharma, realizing that by far the greater power and stability are not to be found in the world of objects and ideas, but in their underlying principle of emptiness. Emptiness or non-form is the ultimate mode of form—and ultimate form is liberation.

Ordinary human existence is frustrating and unsatisfactory until we gain insight into the nature of Real Life. The full discovery of this Potential of human consciousness has within it the seeds for growth and a power for development never yet realized on this earth. It has the power to blaze the trail for the equality of beings of all races, cultures, and nations; and for the opportunity to live in harmony and peace with each other on this planet earth, our temporary home. In the words of Dr. Albert Einstein:

The religion of the future will be a cosmic religion. It should transcend a personal God and avoid dogmas and theology. Covering both the natural and the spiritual, it should be based on a religious sense of arising from the experience of all things natural and spiritual as a meaningful unity. Buddhism answers this description....If there is any religion that would cope with modern scientific needs it would be Buddhism.

I cannot think of a better place for this to come to fruition than in the socio-political structure of North America.

May all beings attain enlightenment and grow as happy as they can be. □

¹Ven. Gesshin Prabhasa Dharma, Roshi, GOING HOME (Los Angeles, IZIA), pg. 5.

A TEA CEREMONY

Another aspect of realizing is to have moments of silence in our lives. This afternoon we will practice this in the tea ceremony. The Japanese have created a way in which leaders and servants, masters and assistants and even children from a certain age on up sit together and everyone is regarded as equal.

This sense of equality becomes apparent even in the structure of the tea rooms. A tea room in Japan does not have a standard-sized doorway. It has a tiny two foot opening in the wall, through which you practically have to crawl into the tea room. Whether you are the president or the president's assistant, you have to crawl through this door. Even though at the end of the tea we wear different clothes and show other signs of difference, in the tea ceremony we are all regarded as the same.

It is the same with the tea master, who takes responsibility to guide us through the event. Tea is for tea, it's not just a culturally beautiful thing to do. I'm presenting it because I would like to suggest that all political meetings, all summit conferences, should start this way with people coming into the room through a small door, sitting in a circle around a conference table, and having a cup of tea together followed by a few moments of silence and mindful awareness.

What distinguishes us from animals is that while animals are one with the Dharma, they don't know it. They cannot enjoy it. They live in fear and anxiety. We human beings, who have the capacity for deep meditation and for coming back from that disappearing act into a consciousness in which we can reflect on that, can come into the full enjoyment of living the Dharma here and now as it is. This is how we must begin to make peace in the world, not thinking that we have to do something "out there" to change it. What we are saying when we do that is that it is the others who have no peace and that they need to be taught.

What is nice about the tea ceremony and the way we're going to do it is that you are both "host" and "guest." At the moment you receive the tea from one side, you are the guest. When you put your cup down and pass the tray to your neighbor, you are the host. In the world you should realize constantly that you are the "all." When Jesus realized the truth, he said, "I am the all." Buddha said, "The Dharma and I are one. When you want to see the real me, look at the Dharma. When you want to see the Dharma, look at me."

When we do this tea ceremony, we should first collect ourselves, like the Buddha did. Take your seat mindfully, arrange your clothes around you. When you are



Photo by Sonia Alexander

seated, sit a few moments in silence. Then we will drink tea **together with the whole universe.**

I want you to contribute something to the ceremony in the form of a word, a poem, or music. I would like you not to be tense about having something already created, but trust your intuition. Enjoy the tea, and then let come up just exactly what comes.

Thank you all for your patience. □

We sit here in a circle
a skylight in each teacup.

A silent circle. Rhythmic sounds of chopping; steaming tea graciously poured, passed and sipped. intermittent bows.

Two hands
One teacup
Never empty
Never full

In my always planning ahead
I almost missed the steam
coming from my cup of tea

Praise to the thoughtless thought!

Hot tea, blue rug
There is nothing so difficult
about this practice

(These spontaneous poems were some of those offered during the tea ceremony.)

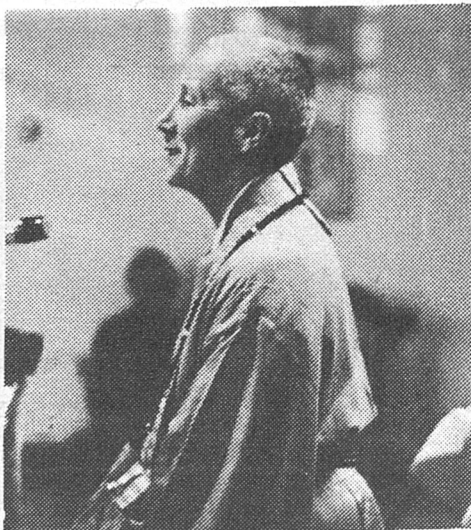


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(Ven. Gesshin Prabhasa Dharma, Roshi, received confirmation as a Zen Master in 1985 from Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Man Giac. She trained as a Zen nun for 15 years under Rinzai Zen Masters in the U.S. and Japan. Founder of the International Zen Institute of America in Los Angeles, she teaches in the U.S. and Europe. A book of poetry entitled "A Sudden Flash of Lightning" with her and Ven. Thich Man Giac's work was published in 1983 by IZIA.

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