

FROM 'FOR THE SAKE OF PEACE' UNITING IN A SHARED MISSION

'Each of us must awaken to our unique mission as protagonists in the transformation of history,' writes SGI President Ikeda. 'And we must unite in a shared human struggle to confront and resolve the pressing problems facing our planet.'

The following excerpts are taken from SGI President Ikeda's book, For the Sake of Peace: Seven Paths to Global Harmony, A Buddhist Perspective, available from your favorite neighborhood or online bookseller, or at www.middlewaypress.org.

Now we stand at the start of the third millennium. At this moment in history, we should determine to eliminate all needless suffering from this planet that is our home. In our efforts to realize this goal, we will find the key to ensuring that the new century does not mimic the last but begins an era of peace and hope. Now is the time to build a new age that shines with the glory of humanity and culture by focusing again on the sanctity of life.

We are charged with the task of achieving not just a passive peace—the absence of war—but of transforming those social structures that threaten human dignity in order to realize the positive, active values of peace. Efforts to enhance international cooperation and the fabric of international law are, of course, also necessary. But more vital are the creative efforts of individuals to develop a culture of peace, because it is on this foundation that a new global society can be built. (p. 4)

The real seeds of peace lie not in lofty ideas but in human understanding and the empathy of ordinary people.

While radicalism is fated by its nature to resort to violence and terror, the most potent weapon in the arsenal of the gradualist—the radical's opposite—is dialogue. We see in Socrates the steadfast commitment to dialogue, to verbal combat from which there is no retreat, and an intensity that is, in some literal sense, death-defying. Such dialogue can only be sustained by resources of spiritual energy and strength far greater and deeper than will be found among those who so quickly turn to violence. (p. 41)

I believe that the essence of goodness is the aspiration toward unity, while evil directs itself toward division or sundering. The function of evil is ever to create divisions; to cause fissures in the human heart; to sever the bonds among family members, colleagues, friends and acquaintances; to engender enmity between countries as well as ethnic groups; and to destroy the human sense of unity with nature and the universe. Where divisiveness reigns, human beings become isolated and the victims of unhappiness and misery.

A person with a closed heart is one who is shut up within a self-imposed shell of selfishness and complacency. This sad and pointless act of severing self and other bears the hallmark of evil as I have attempted to define it here. This deep-rooted tendency, which has persisted throughout human history, is manifested in a singular way in our time, perhaps a fateful feature of our civilization. (p. 87)

The external manifestations of good and evil are relative and transmutable. They only

appear absolute and immutable when the human heart is in thrall to the spell of language and abstract concepts. To the extent that we can free ourselves from this spell, we can begin to see that good contains within it evil, and evil contains within it good. Because of this, even that which is perceived as evil can be transformed into good through our reaction and response. (p. 115)

Relying on the eternal law within to rise above the sway of evanescent authority in pursuit of nonviolence and humanity—it is in the course of this grand struggle that one experiences an indestructible life-condition of comfort and security. (pp. 146-47)

Courage and hope are essential; we must never lose these vitally human qualities. Each of us must awaken to our unique mission as protagonists in the transformation of history. And we must unite in a shared human struggle to confront and resolve the pressing problems facing our planet. (p. 180)