

INTRODUCTION

What contributions can Buddhism make to solving the most pressing problems that threaten the survival and well-being of humankind in the present era? The fourth International Seminar on Buddhism and Leadership for Peace sought answers to this question.

To assist the search, we first asked three distinguished colleagues to share their general reflections from the perspectives of Buddhism (Sulak Sivaraksa), leadership (Kinhide Mushakoji), and peace research (Johan Galtung). This continued the tradition of our seminars in which we have tried to understand and to promote relationships among Buddhist thought, social action, and inquiry. To these three theme papers we have added a fourth contribution by A.T. Ariyaratne, originally written for the third seminar, that integrates all three themes in an exemplary case study of Buddhist problem-solving action in Sri Lanka. By global problem-solving we mean to include relevant actions from the individual to the world community.

Thus we were able to benefit from the insights of a renowned lay Buddhist thinker from Thailand who is deeply engaged in social action for peace, freedom, and justice; a globally-respected scholar from Japan who writes as Vice-Rector from the problem-solving perspective of the United Nations University; and from the world's leading peace researcher, a native of Norway, who is keenly interested in Buddhist

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contributions to global well-being. [See Johan Galtung, *Buddhism: A Quest for Unity and Peace* (Honolulu: Dae Won Sa Buddhist Temple of Hawaii, 1988)]. We benefit here also from the experience of the esteemed leader and founder of Sri Lanka's Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement which has demonstrated how Buddhist values can serve as the basis for comprehensive problem-solving action in a specific context.

Although Mushakoji was unable to be present in Ulan Bator he kindly prepared a paper that was read for him by Hiroharu Seki, dean of the Faculty of International Relations, Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan. Galtung was also unable to attend but he participated by means of a tape recording generously made to accompany his paper.

The four papers provide a surprisingly complementary and thought-provoking beginning. Whereas Sulak calls for Buddhist awakening and engagement in social problem-solving action, Mushakoji identifies the roots of the contemporary crisis of global civilization as a "spiritual crisis" of "human values." Based on his world-encompassing experience, Mushakoji concludes: "The sustainability of the coming global civilization can only be built on *ahimsa*, nonviolence and care for all living beings." For his part, Galtung sets forth the need for purposive restructuring of military, economic, cultural, and political institutions, "softening" them to be more responsive to transnational human and ecological needs. Ariyaratne demonstrates the combination of all the foregoing--Buddhist principles expressed in cooperative action to benefit all members of society.

Following presentation of the three theme papers, seminar discussion was devoted to focus Buddhist thought, leadership experience, and scholarly inquiry upon five principal global problems: disarmament, economic justice, human rights, ecological viability, and universal problem-solving cooperation.

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No papers were specifically commissioned for these explorations, but participants were invited to prepare in advance to discuss these problems and to contribute papers as deemed relevant.

Thus in the second part of this volume we have included seven papers that explore various aspects of the five major problems. All but two were presented at the seminar. Sulak Sivaraksa's essay on human rights was originally presented to a conference on "Building Understanding Between People of Diverse Religions or Beliefs" held during May, 1989, in Warsaw, Poland. The essay on environmental protection was kindly written especially for the present volume by Leslie E. Sponsel and Poranee Natadecha-Sponsel.

Each of the problem-related essays conveys a major insight that merits further reflection and development. Thich Minh Chau's call for a "new global moral order" comes as a much-needed advancement over widespread violent power-based conventional thinking about new global political-military and economic orders at the end of the twentieth century. Yoichi Kawada's explanation that the concept of karma can be applied not only to individuals, but also to societies, nations, and to humankind as a whole opens up a vast perspective of time, space, and substance that greatly assists understanding of both strengths and weaknesses of contemporary problem-solving efforts. He helps us to see that present global conditions are the result of past actions and that future conditions will be the product of the quality of present decisions.

On disarmament, Yoichi Shikano shows how the Mahayana principles of active engagement to improve society, based on the Lotus Sutra, have led to global action by the Soka Gakkai International under the inspired leadership of President Daisaku Ikeda to support United Nations problem-solving efforts on this and other issues. Seeking global economic justice, Sumanatissa

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reminds us of the egalitarian Buddhist tradition that can contribute to the simplicity and sharing that is essential for the material well-being of the world's rapidly increasing population.

In the field of human rights, Sulak celebrates the global contribution that can be made by "buddhism with a small b" to affirming the common bond of universal love that is shared by all of the world's great religions. Thus can be avoided the dogmatic, egocentric, "tribalism" that leads to the violent repression of other religions and beliefs and inhibits social and economic development. In the field of the environment, the Sponsels introduce the concept of "nonviolent ecology," reminding us that Buddhism is essentially "ecocentric" rather than anthropocentric in nature, and suggest principles to guide efforts to save the biosphere from destruction.

Recognizing the need for social cooperation to solve global problems, Zhao emphasizes that Buddhism is primarily a this-worldly faith that embodies a strong sense of compassion to relieve the suffering of others. This combination of compassion and commitment thus provides a basis for cooperation among people of different factions, historical traditions, social systems, and viewpoints for the benefit of all.

The concluding section of this book draws upon seminar discussion of the five global problems (disarmament, economic justice, human rights, environmental protection, and human cooperation) to present a nonviolent perspective upon them. Except for general agreement on the five general principles cited at the outset of the essay, the summary interpretations are the responsibility of the author who served as seminar coordinator and general rapporteur.

These brief summaries reflect the seminar experience that seeking to solve problems on the basis of principled commitment to nonviolence offers a fruitful approach to global well-being.

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The seminal importance of the first Buddhist precept "not to take the life of living things" serving as a guide to both means and ends, is affirmed once again as the twentieth century nears its end. This is especially significant for global cooperation since the same principle can be found at the heart of all the great spiritual traditions and can be elicited by gentle and skilful Buddhist responsiveness to human needs.

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