

The hope of the world 望願之世界

Ven. Sumangals Bhikkhu.

The ancient Chinese philosopher Chang Tzu who lived some two thousand years ago, taught that life is divided between joy and sorrow, pain and pleasure, light and darkness, day and night, positive and negative. In one of his essays he stated: "Man passes through this life in the same way that a beam of sunlight passes through a crack in the wall-it is here one moment and gone the next moment. The sight of beautiful mountains fill the heart with joy, and to look upon the green rice fields is pleasant, but sorrow is always close to joy; they go hand in hand together like twins. the solace of the wise is to hope. Without hope man can not endure the pains of life.

As we look about us in the world of today, we see much to cause us pain and sorrow and much to fill our hearts with fear. The forces of nature create earthquakes, the great rivers of the world overflow and their floods kill millions of people each year, the winds come with typhoons and cyclones and hurricanes and countless thousands die in the windstorms every year. In many lands disease is always greatly to be feared and epidemics kill large number of human beings year after year. Nature is our enemy, old age is our enemy, sickness is our enemy, our fellow-humans are our enemies, Chang Tzu says "The greatest enemy of all is the heart of mankind."

If it were possible for us to calculate all the damage that has been done by nature in the past hundred years and then calculate the damage done by wickedness in the heart of mankind, it is certain that man's wickedness is far more dangerous than all the forces of nature. In World War No. 1, it is known that 17 millions of people died from the effects of war and this includes death in battle, death from disease, death from starvation and many other causes all related to war. In world war No. 2 the number of dead from all causes was even greater. It seems probable that as many as twenty or even thirty millions died from all causes during the recent war. Thus we see that the hatred that is in the heart of mankind is far more powerful than any dangerous force of nature. Thus we come

to understand the saying of the great Chang Tzu-"The greatest enemy of all is the heart of mankind. "But when the night of life is darkest, we hope for light and believe that when morning comes our lives will be easier and better. If we did not have hope in our hearts it would be difficult indeed to live in this world.

One of the greatest fears that is in the hearts of people every where at this time, is the fear of another war. There are many who believe that if we have another world war, then all civilization will be destroyed and we shall see the human race become like animals, with all culture destroyed and all religion, forgotten, with all philosophies despised and all moral laws thrown away. When we consider the extremely great destructive power of the hydrogen bomb and all the many modern inventions for destruction in war, it is easy to understand why people every where are filled with fear when they think of the possibility of another world war. If we did not have hope in our hearts we should find the thought of war to be unbearable. We hope that war may not come, we hope that we shall always have peace in the world, we hope that famine may not come, we hope for no floods, no storms of wind, no vast epidemics of disease. T'ai Kung Tiao said: "Wood rubbed against wood produces fire and both sticks are consumed until nothing is left. But if the two sticks lie peacefully side by side then there is no fire and they are not destroyed. But it is man who rubs the sticks and creates the fire. Nation can exist in peace with nation until hatred enters in and creates fire. Then the nations are destroyed. If hatred is replaced with wisdom, then peace will take the place of war and contentment will replace fear"

Among the many fears in the world of today is the fear that buddhism will be destroyed and its place taken by materialism or Marxism or by some other religion. We hope this will not be the case and if we study the history of Buddhism we find reason for our hopes. In centuries past, various Chinese emperors were enemies of Buddhism and destroyed

the temples and monasteries and killed or imprisoned many monks, burned the sacred books and destroyed statues. Sometimes these persecutions lasted for a century or more and almost all trace of Buddhism seemed to disappear. Yet, when another emperor came to.

One imperial throne and ceased the attack on Buddhism, it was always found that Buddhism was stronger than ever. It had "Gone underground" and had continued to live in the hearts of the people despite the fact the all its temples and monasteries were destroyed. At many places in the world today we find that all religion is persecuted. However, We need not fear that the Buddhist religion will die. It will be stronger than ever when the persecution is ended. The weak monk and the unfaithful will drop away but the sincere monks and lay men will be faithful and will pass along the light of truth to the younger generations. Perhaps the worst enemy of all religion is the worship of money and power and fame and pleasure. There are so many people who worship there false gods who never bring peace of mind or happiness to anyone, but only disappointment and misery. Usually we see that when people grow older and wiser they make a return to Buddhism because they find that the worship of material things brings nothing to comfort the heart. We are now in the year 2500 of Buddhism and it has endured wars persecutions, famines, floods, enemies and all disasters and is still a living religion. It is my belief that the Dhamma of Lord Buddha can never be destroyed. The hammer that beats the anvil is gradually broken by the anvil.

As we look at the world of today we see that Buddhism is not only alive and healthy in Asia but is also gaining attention in Europe and the two Americas. Thinking people in the Western world are no longer attracted to the religions that have been their traditional faiths for so long. We see university people looking for a new philosophy and new religion and there is now a wide spread study of Buddhism in most of the universities of Europe and America and in almost every large city of the West there is a Buddhist Society with many member. It is well know that Buddhism is growing in th West and it seems probable that withe another twenty five years there will be perhaps a million Buddhists in Europe and the

Americas and Australia. Forty years ago when I became a believer in Lord Buddha, there were only thirteen American Buddhists. Now there are about 13,000 Americans Buddhists. Only twenty yoars ago there were no Buddhists at all in Australia and now there are four Buddhist societies and about five hundred Buddhists. In Europe there were less than one hundred Buddhists only fifty years ago. Now there is a Buddhist Society in almost every city and in Berlin (German) alone we find three thousand Buddhists. In Pasis there are more than 3,000 Buddhists and more than seven thousand in England. The number of converts to Buddhism increases every day and we find that most of the people who became Buddhists are highly intelligent. Most of them are graduates of universities. The books that are written on Buddhism in English, French and German and other languages are of high quality and such books are read by many thousands of people. Whenever a public lecture on Buddhism is given, there is always a large crowd of people who come to hear about the teachings of Lord Buddha.

Twenty years ago I lived in the city of San Francisco in california where there are almost 75,000 Chinese people. I searched to try to find some Chinese Buddhists. I could not find one. All the Chinese people were members of the Christian religion. Now there are thousands af Chinese Buddhists in California. They are returning to the Buddhist religion and there is now a magnificent temple in San Francisco erected by the Chinese. It is expected that soon The Chinese in New york City, in Chicago and Los Angeles will also build temples. The reason why the Chinese people in America are returning to Buddhism is that they have seen Christianity has failed to stop wars. In fact the wars that begin in Europe always are products of Christian civiliration. The only religion which preaches true peace and brotherly action is Buddhism Lord Buddha taught us that our life is what we make it. If we do evil we must expect evil results and if we live good, peaceful, brotherly lives, than no one can rob us of peace and contentment. There fore it seems that our only hope for a peaceful world is to spread Lord Buddha's religion to all peoples every where on earth If we can do this, then we can expect to prevent

world wars and the destruction of civilization. If we do not spread Buddhism all over the world then we can expect only war and bloodshed and cruelty and the ruin of the world. Soon the Buddhists of the world will be celebrating the Buddhajoyanti the 2500 th anniversary of Buddhist In India, Ceylon, China, Japan, Siam, Burma, Cambodia and Laos and wherever there are Buddhists. there will be special honors paid to Lord Buddha on this occasion. It is right and proper that such honors should be paid. But the best way we can honor Lord Buddha is by giving His teaching to all people everywhere. Hundred of years ago when Buddhism come to China it reached a very high stage of development and then China give Buddhism to Korea and Japan. The writings of the great Chinese Buddhist philosophers have spread to the Western world and have influenced western thought very greatly. We see that Chinese civilization has influenced the cultures of all the countries of eastern Asia and to a large extent. the entire world has accepted portions of Chinese thought and culture. The best gift to the world that Chinese Buddhists can mak is the gift of Lord Buddha's teaching. Now that the world is in danger of another world war. Our only hope for peace is to know and to practice Lord Buddha's way of life. The Christians and Muslims send Missionaries to all parts of the world but Buddhists of the morden world seldom do this. The Lord Buddha told us to tell all people about his message. I am trying to do this, and I have preached Buddhism all over Europe and the Americas for many years. I exchange many letters with students of Buddhism all over the world. Soon I expect to go to Australia. Please remember that Lord Buddha told us that: The gift of truth is the best of all gifts. We wish to give the truth of the Buddhist religion to the people of Australia and the Philippine Island and in Indonesia we respectfully ask you to help us and we assure you that your good actions will bring good results to you we thank you for the honor you have done us in asking us to come to lecture to you and we wish for you all good thing in life May you be happy.

佛學問答

Questions on Buddhism

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Q. During a great war the people of the opposing countries pray for their own victories. Of whom will Buddhas satisfy the offers? (P.43)

A. Buddhas are pitiful and equal minded. They do not hate anyone and help others to conquer him. Perhaps they have pity on the weak and invaded to answer the pray by super power protections.

Q. Mahayanists should donate their wealths to erect temples, hospitals and schools to save the human beings. How to realize the Mahayanist doctrine if one is poor and lack of power? (P.43)

A. To benefit the human beings is to let them to quit from bitter life and to get a happy one. A being has two lives: one is the physical life and another is the wisdom one. To help the poor and to release the unfortunate are benefitting the physical lives. To teach to turn to the good and to advice to believe in Buddhism are benefitting the wisdom lives. If you determine to do this, it is very easy to do when you are rich and you can also do it by action and speech when you have not much money. Even if your speech has not much effect, you must develop your will power to the ultimate. These are all Mahayanist disciplines.

Q. Is it also greed for one to desire to be reborn to the west pure land by repeating the name of Amitaba? (P.45)

A. It is a good will and not a bad greed because one want to be reborn to the west to purify one's mind and to be reborn back again to save all others.

Q. Is praying to Bodhisatva Avaloketesvara (Kuan yin) for releasing from pain and misery considered to be greed? (P.45)

A. On the stand point of unenlightened idea, it is not greed if you pray for release. On the stand point of categories of reality, it is greed if you hanker after the physical body.

