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The Time of Koans or a Message of Peace

Threatening clouds of misfortune have been gathering over our restless planet. We are continuously experiencing yet misunderstanding the same lesson over and over in history, the wheel of which is perpetually and inevitably revolving in space and time. We have reached such an ignorant degree of human consciousness that we have forgotten the universal laws, the ancient guide of human intuition. Spiritual teachings of Lao Tzu, Shakyamuni Buddha, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed have been neglected.

No races or societies have been able to escape the miseries of disease and poverty, greed and violence. All around us we can see injustice practised on naive, innocent and good people. We see people suffering from unreasonable hardships. We meet with unexpected accidents, sudden deaths, or unforeseeable misery. In our ignorance we are unable to see the cause and effect, the mechanism of the movement of life. According to ancient Oriental teachings, we have reached the last stage of human degeneration, the arrogance and ignorance, with war as the ultimate goal, turning us away from the natural developmental ways. We have forgotten the original message that we came to this world with.

The causes of these antagonisms could be understood better by a closer elaboration of the eternal dualisms between spirit and matter, mind and body, intuition and rationality, good and evil, peace and war, a synchronic and diachronic development of societies in space and time.

The emergence of modern sciences was preceded by such a development of philosophical thought leading to an extreme definition of the dualisms between spirit and matter. By this definition the scholars perceived matter as dead and the material world was conceived of as a multitude of different objects, lacking in spirit, assembled in a huge mechanism. This philosophy has influenced greatly the whole of Western thought ever since.

According to this way of thinking, the mind is separated from the body, thus creating an illusory antagonism between the conscious will and intuition acting independently. This inherent division reflects man's idea about the real world consisting of a multitude of divided objects and events. This divided idea about the real world is reflected in the idea of society being divided into different nations, races, religions and political groups. The belief that these fragments dwelling within us in our environment and society are really divided is probably a fundamental cause of contemporary social, ecological, and cultural crises. This might be the reason why we have been alienated from our environment. We bear witness to an unjust distribution of natural resources creating economic and consequently political chaos, leading to more violent waves of crime, spontaneous as well institutionalised, and the creation of an ugly and polluted environment in which life has become physically and mentally unhealthy.

Differing from the Western mechanistic view, the Oriental idea of the real world is viewed as a causality of things and events representing different aspects of the same fundamental reality. Our habit of dividing the world into individual and separate things and our feeling of being isolated in this world is an illusion derived from our mentality tending to measure and categorise. In Buddhism this is called ignorance, the state of a confused, chaotic mind. A confused mind creates a multitude of different things. With a restful mind the multitude disappears.

In the same context we could view the dichotomy of rationality and intuition. Our rationality derives from our experience with objects and events in our environment and belongs to the intellectual part of the mind that is capable of categorising, separating, comparing, and measuring. When our rationalistic mind is at rest, our intuition leads us to integration with our environment. This is how we reach the state of awareness without divisions, integrating all things and events into an indivisible environment. In reality, being unaware of this unity, we divide

things into separate things and events. Even though this division is useful and necessary for orientation in this world, it still does not represent the fundamental reality. The division is an abstraction created by our discriminating intellect. It is thus necessary to make a great effort to overcome the world of antagonism, the world created out of intellectual distinctions, and to devote ourselves to the revelation of the spiritual world of non-differentiation.

This brings us to the eternal dilemma concerning good and evil as absolute or relative categories. With a thorough understanding of good and evil, victory and defeat, as different aspects of a single phenomenon, we come to the conclusion that one side cannot exist without the other, good cannot exist without evil, and they are not mutually exclusive. The end of a conflict is not a complete victory of one of the antagonistic parties but the resumption of their dynamic equilibrium.

With the loss of such equilibrium, the miseries of war prevail and we come out of it morally and materially degraded. Stopping warfare does not necessarily eliminate its cause. It would serve as an effective symptomatic treatment for the problems, but not as the cure of the underlying cause. Peace is not merely the absence of war. It is a state in which no cause for war exists. Such a state is possible when all conflicting factors are complementary. In other words, peace can be realised only when we have no concept of war in our consciousness, a mentality not gained through public education but through the biological, psychological, and spiritual improvement of humanity.

In order to solve our current national and territorial conflicts, it is necessary to understand better the idea of a synchronic, joint, interrelated development of nations sharing the same space as well as their diachronic, different and independent historical development. With only a complete analysis of synchronic and diachronic development of nations through history and their spiral interrelationship in time and space could we fully understand their cause and effect relationships and suggest viable solutions for their harmonisation.

This idea about the real world is helpful in understanding man's place and role in the universe and society. It is not difficult to realise that he abides by the universal and social laws. His intuition is influenced by heaven's force expressed through spiritual, mental, and emotional categories. On the other hand, man's rationality is influenced by the earth's force expressed through physical, materialistic and social categories. This relationship can be illustrated by a simplified parallel of centrifugal and centripetal forces influencing man. The disorder of these forces can bring about easily foreseeable effects.

Basically, the dual forces which influence us should be maintained in harmony. This can be reached by performing our activities in accord with the aforementioned universal laws and influences. We cannot solve problems in the domain of physical, materialistic, and social categories by not harmonising them with their counterparts in the domain of spiritual, mental, and emotional categories. With only an overall view of a problem can we understand its cause and effect relationships and consequently suggest harmonising solutions. On the other hand, if we try to solve our problems one-sidedly by utilising only the segments of these categories as independent entities in time and space without the harmonising parameters, we easily draw extreme conclusions that initiate aggressive activities.

If we observe things from the national point of view alone, they look antagonistic, without a common denominator. Solutions of national problems without considering universal categories inevitably lead to conflicts of unmanageable proportions and the establishment of new national boundaries.

Why do we, mankind, particularly modern man, create limitations, and live within certain boundaries and insist on the rigid concept of sovereignty? National boundaries do not exist in nature. They exist only in a concept that we have come to believe through modern education.

We experience similar difficulties in societies organised on scientific and ideological principles. This way of social organisation unavoidably incorporates all the deficiencies and deviations of such a theoretical concept or ideology. Recently, there has been a chain collapse of societies organised on these principles. It is pointless to emphasize how much suffering, persecution, and spiritual degradation has been brought about by the dogmatic obedience of these laws. The system of values deteriorated to such a degree that some nations were led to hopelessness.

The principles of organisation of future societies can easily be understood. They cannot be unilateral, based solely on spiritual, mental, and emotional categories or physical, materialistic and social categories. If a future society developed only political, economic, and social relationships, there would continuously be numerous physical and mental disorders. A sound biological foundation must also be secured. This would prevent modern man degenerating and the internal structure of the society decomposing. Without the biological and psychological

improvement of humanity through the understanding of the order of nature and the law of the universe, all social, political, and economic systems would be temporary. Such systems would become ineffective and would eventually become harmful. Education would be standardised and reduced to regulated forms and concepts hindering individual creativity. Legal structures would regulate human activities and human relationships would become dominated by the concepts, contracts and laws instead of love, sympathy, and understanding. This tendency would stimulate the decline of human nature in the direction of mechanical existence.

Our spiritual principles however are guided by our physical and mental state being in accord with the natural cycles of our environment. They consist of the overcoming of all differences of nationality and race, tradition, and culture, belief and ideology, the recognition of everyone as brothers and sisters of one great family of the universe, care for ancestors and off-spring, spirit of gratitude for whatever we receive, material and spiritual. They exclude complaints and accusations among people and include the spirit of apology for whatever we may do that affects other people's lives, through our thought and conduct.

So let us keep a spirit of endless marvel at the immeasurable beauty and perpetual order of nature and the universe, and about how we have come from the infinite universe, materialising ourselves upon this earth as members of the human race. Let us maintain a spirit of endless appreciation for nature and universe, and for the numerous lives that have lived, are presently living, and will be living, with us. When we come close to misery, let us remember that nature and universe are still constantly cycling, and our miseries are caused by nothing more than our loss of harmony with them. Let us move out of despair and knock on our next door neighbour's door - with respect and gratitude.